111th Congress, 2nd Session House Document 111–131

PROCEEDINGS

of the

109TH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

(SUMMARY OF MINUTES)

Orlando, Florida
August 16-21, 2008

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and ordered to be printed.

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 2010

57–405

57-405109thProc.pdf 2 7/16/10 6:59:17 AM

AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

U.S. CODE, TITLE 44, SECTION 1332

NATIONAL ENCAMPMENTS OF VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS; PROCEEDINGS PRINTED ANNUALLY FOR CONGRESS

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 Nancy Pelosi
The Speaker U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madam 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 109th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in Orlando, Florida, August 16-21, 2008, which is submitted for printing as a House Document.

Sincerely,

Allen "Gunner" Kent

Allen "Gunner" Kent
Adjutant General

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE **PAGES**
SUNDAY, AUGUST 17, 2008

Call to Order....1
Advance of Colors....1
Pledge of Allegiance....1
Invocation....1
Recognition of Family of Past
Commander-in-Chief Raymond C. Sisk....2
Memorial Ritual....2
Symbolic Tribute....3
Introduction of Speaker....3
Memorial Address....4
Benediction....6
Retiring of Colors....6
RECESS....7

JOINT OPENING SESSION
MONDAY, AUGUST 18, 2008

Call to Order....8
Greetings from National Convention Chairman John M. Carney....8
Advancement of Colors....8
Invocation....9
Pledge of Allegiance....9
Video Presentation....9
Introduction of Commander-in-Chief George J. Lisicki and
Presentation of Official Convention Badge, Bell and Gavel....9
Remarks - Commander-in-Chief Lisicki....10
Presentation of VFW Gold Medal of Merit and Citation
To Virginia Carman, National President of the Ladies Auxiliary....12
Response – National Ladies Auxiliary President Carman....13
Introduction – Ruslan Aushev, President,
War Veterans Committee....14
Remarks – General Ruslan Aushev....14
Introduction of Senator John S. McCain....18
Remarks – The Honorable John S. McCain....18
Introduction of Richard Crotty, Mayor, Orange County, Florida....24
Greetings – Honorable Richard Crotty....25
Presentation of American Flag Set to Mayor Crotty....26
Introduction of Minister Kao Hua-chu, Veterans
Affairs Commission, Republic of China....26
Greetings – Minister Kao Hua-chu....26
Presentation of the National Recruiter of the Year Award....27
Response – Comrade Peter J. Mascetti....28
Presentation of Awards to 2008 All-American Commanders....28
Introduction of Acting Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley....35
Remarks – USAF Acting Secretary Michael Donley....35
Presentation of the Distinguished Service Medal of Honor and
Citation to Past Commander-in-Chief Gary L. Kurpius....41

Remarks – Past Commander-in-Chief Kurpius 42
Introduction of Major General (Retired) Craig Whelden, Director of Community Covenant Task Force.....43
Remarks – Major General (Ret.) Craig Whelden. 43
RECESS.....45

FIRST BUSINESS SESSION
MONDAY, AUGUST 18, 2008

MIP Recruiter Contest Winners 46
Presentation of Certificate of Appreciation to the 108th National Convention Committee.....46
Report of the Credentials Committee.....47
Report of Committee on Convention Rules 47
Report of Committee on National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual 49
Report of Committee on Finance and Internal Organization.....68
Report of Committee on General Resolutions.....70
Report of Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs. 71
Report of Subcommittee on POW-MIA.....76
Report of Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions 77
Benediction 79
RECESS.....79

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS BANQUET
AUGUST 18, 2008

Welcome 80
Invocation.....80
Pledge of Allegiance 80
Introduction of Distinguished Guests. 81
Introduction of Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki 82
Remarks - Commander-in-Chief Lisicki 83
Introduction of National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW 84
Remarks – National President Virginia Carmen.....84
Introduction of VFW's Hall of Fame Award Recipient Ann-Margret. 85
Response – Ann-Margret 86
Introduction of VFW's Hall of Fame Award Recipient Mickey Rooney 86
Response – Mickey Rooney 87
Presentation of the VFW Dwight D. Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award.....89
Response – General Peter Pace, USMC (ret.) 90
Benediction 92
RECESS.....93

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION
TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2008

Call to Order....94
Opening Prayer. 94
Pledge of Allegiance 94
Report of Convention Credentials Committee.... 94
Introduction of the Honorable James Peake,
Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs 94
Remarks – Secretary James Peake....95
Introduction of Senator Mel Martinez.... 103
Greetings – Senator Martinez. 103
2008 VFW Americanism Award.... 106
Response – Mr. Eric Dryden. 106
Introduction of Senator Bill Nelson 107
Greetings – Senator Bill Nelson 108
Introduction of Senator Barack Obama 110
Remarks – Senator Barack Obama. 110
Introduction of 2008 Armed Forces Award Recipient, Lieutenant
General H. Steven Blum 117
Response – Lieutenant General Steven Blum....118
Presentation of Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of
Merit to Senator Jim Webb. 119
Response – Senator Jim Webb....120
Introduction of Rear Admiral Donna Crisp, JPAC Commander....122
Remarks – Rear Admiral Donna Crisp 123
Introduction of Elizabeth O'Herrin, Executive Director,
Student Veterans of America, and Paul Rieckhoff,
Executive Director and Founder, Iraq and Afghanistan
Veterans of America 125
Remarks – Ms. Elizabeth O'Herrin 126
Remarks – Mr. Paul Rieckhoff....127
Presentation of Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of
Merit to Diana Tremblay, GMNA Vice President 129
Response – Ms. Diana Tremblay....131
Presentation of Commander-in-Chief's Gold Medal of
Merit to Cal Rapson, United Auto Workers 132
Response – Mr. Cal Rapson 133
Presentation of Ring to Commander-in-Chief
Lisicki by Comrade Jim Chancellor....134
Presentation – Comrade Jim Chancellor 134
Introduction of VFW National Home Representatives....136
Remarks – National Home Executive Director Patrice Green.....137
Remarks – 2008 Buddy Poppy Child Marie Strefling....138
Presentation of Check to the Vietnam Memorial Center 139
Response – Mr. Jan Scruggs....139
Introduction of Captain Earl Morse, USAF (Ret.),
Founder and Operations Manager, Honor Flight, Inc....141
Remarks – Captain Earl Morse. 142
Introduction – Military Order of the Cootie Supreme
Commander Ralph Corno. 144

Response – Supreme Commander Ralph Corno 144
Benediction and Salute to the Colors. 145
RECESS.....145

THIRD BUSINESS SESSION
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2008

Call to Order.....146
Pledge of Allegiance 146
Opening Prayer..... 146
Report of Convention Credentials Committee..... 146
Presentation of Distinguished Service Medal and
Citation to Michael Gormalley 146
Response – Michael Gormalley.....147
Introduction of Victor Biggs, Executive Director,
the American Veterans Disabled For Life Memorial 148
Remarks – The Honorable Victor Biggs 148
Introduction of Ladies Auxiliary National
President Virginia Carman.....150
Response – Ladies Auxiliary National President Virginia Carman.. 150
Introduction of 2008 VFW James E. Van Zandt
Citizenship Award Recipient Patti Patton-Bader 152
Response – Mrs. Patti Patton-Bader.....153
Introduction of the Honorable Rick Perry, Governor of Texas.....154
Greetings – The Honorable Rick Perry. 155
Introduction of VFW Aviation and Space Award to
Recipient Barbara Radding-Morgan.....158
Response – Barbara Radding-Morgan 159
Introduction of Past commanders-in-chief. 160
Introduction of Bob Foster, VFW Post 2285, New York,
Canines for Combat Veterans Program 161
Remarks – Comrade Bob Foster – New York 161
Presentation of Award from the VFW Political Action Committee ..166
Presentation of Legion of Honor Bronze Medal to
Commander-in-Chief Lisicki 167
Introduction of Bradley Trowbridge, The Celebration
Veterans Memorial.....167
Response – Bradley Trowbridge 168
Introduction of Ken Ductor, Wounded Warrior Regiment 169
Remarks – Mr. Ken Ductor 169
Presentation of checks for Operation Uplink. 172
Announcement of Winners of the National
Buddy Poppy Contest.....173
Nominations for National Home Trustees.....174
Introduction of National sergeants-at-Arms. 174
Presentation of "Consecutive Years of Membership"
Citation to Department of Arizona 175
RECESS.....176
Introduction of the Honorable George W. Bush,
President of the United States 176
Remarks – The Honorable George W. Bush 176

The Proceedings of the 109th National Convention be Submitted to the Speaker of the House..... 181
Nomination of Officers. 182
Nomination of Commander-in-Chief.....182
Nomination of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.....183
Nomination of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief 184
Nomination of Quartermaster General 185
Nomination of Judge Advocate General 186
Nomination of Surgeon General.....187
Nomination of National Chaplain 187
Benediction and Salute to the Colors 188
RECESS.....188

FOURTH BUSINESS SESSION
THURSDAY, AUGUST 21, 2008

Call to Order.....189
Opening Prayer.....189
Pledge of Allegiance 189
Salute to the Colors..... 189
Completion of Convention Business.....189
Report of Credentials Committee 189
Election of Commander-in-Chief. 190
Remarks by Commander-in-Chief-Elect.....191
Election of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.....191
Remarks by Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect.....192
Election of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief 192
Remarks by Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect 193
Election of Quartermaster General 193
Remarks by Quartermaster General-Elect.....193
Election of Judge Advocate General 194
Remarks by Judge Advocate General-Elect 195
Election of Surgeon General.....195
Remarks by Surgeon General-Elect.....195
Election of National Chaplain 196
Remarks by National Chaplain-Elect 196
Presentation of caps to the Newly-Elected Council Members 196
Announcement of Appointments by Commander-in-Chief-Elect....197
Installation of Officers.....197
Presentation of Past Commander-in-Chief Lapel Pin and Gold Life Membership Card 200
Acceptance Speech - Commander-in-Chief Gardner 201
Motion to Close Convention 204
Closing Ceremony.....205
ADJOURNMENT 205

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 Orleans, 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 Orleans, 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 Wasylik	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1978-1979	Eric Sandstrom*	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1979-1980	Howard E. Vander Clute Jr.*	Elected at New Orleans, 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 Orleans, 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
2004-2005	John Furgess	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio
2005-2006	James R. Mueller	Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah
2006-2007	Gary L. Kurpius	Elected at Reno, Nevada
2007-2008	George J. Lisicki	Elected Kansas City, Missouri
2008-2009	Glen M. Gardner, Jr.	Elected Orlando, Florida

VFW NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS AND MANAGERS, 2007-2008

Commander-in-Chief	George J. Lisicki
Sr. Vice Commander-in-Chief	Glen M. Gardner, Jr.
Jr. Vice Commander-in-Chief	Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr.
Adjutant General	Allen F. "Gunner" Kent
Quartermaster General	Lawrence M. Maher
Judge Advocate General	Matthew M. "Fritz" Mihelcic
Surgeon General	C. O. "Doc" Bohlman
National Chaplain	Thomas E. Darling

National Chief of Staff ..... Pierre Lamereaux
Inspector General ..... Paul J. Chevalier
Assistant Quartermaster General/CIO ..... Robert B. Greene
Assistant Director, Quartermaster General
Administration ..... Debra L. Anderson
Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General, Operations ..... Robert W. Crow
Director, Member Dues Processing ..... Robert A. Crider
Director, Emblem & Supply Department ..... M. L. "Bud" Cale
Director, Properties ..... Billy R. Weissend
Chief Technology Officer ..... Douglas P. Butscher
Assistant Director, Information Technology ..... Brendon N. Killingsworth
Controller and Purchasing Manager ..... James J. Lierz
Manager, Human Resources/Investment Coordinator ..... Linda K. Porter
Assistant Adjutant General, Operations ..... John J. McNeill
Director, Administrative Operations ..... Kevin C. Jones
Director, General Services ..... David L. Swindler
Assistant Director, Administrative Operations ..... David E. Prohaska
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Kansas City ..... Jerry L. Newberry
Director, Membership ..... James R. Rowoldt
Deputy Director, Membership ..... Matthew C. Claussen
Associate Director, Membership Development ..... William C. Bloomquist
Associate Director, Membership Marketing ..... Troy G. Danderson
Director, National Military Services ..... Michael G. Penney
Assistant Director, National Military Services ..... Crystal M. Lauver
Associate Director, National Military Services ..... Brian H. Jackson
Manager, Special Programs & Projects ..... Linda L. Ferguson
Manager, Military Assistance Program ..... Amy S. White
Director, Programs ..... Stephen L. Van Buskirk
Assistant Director, Programs ..... Buddy J. Haney
Director and Editor-in-Chief, Publications/VFW Magazine ..... Richard K. Kolb
Assistant to the Adjutant General for Marketing ..... Mark A. Idel
Manager, Development ..... Kelly J. Jones
Manager, Special Projects-Development ..... Robert D. Kerns
Manager, Meetings & Events ..... Vanessa Kane, CMP
Service Officer, National Veterans Service, Kansas City ..... Ron Cherry
VFW Foundation Acting Director, ... Daniel M. Shea
Assistant Adjutant General & Executive Director,
Washington Office ..... Robert E. Wallace
Director, Administration, Washington Office ..... Robert J. Gardner
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Washington ..... Joseph E. Davis

Director, National Legislative Service ..... Dennis M. Cullinan
Deputy Director, National Legislative Service ..... Eric A. Hilleman
Manager, Action Corps ..... Teresa Morris
Director, National Security and Foreign Affairs ..... Michael H. Wysong
Director, National Veterans Service.....William L. Bradshaw
Deputy Director, National Veterans Service ..... Gerald T. Manar
Assistant Director, Veterans Benefits Policy .....Fredrick Burns
Assistant Director, Veterans Employment/Homeless Issues .....William C. Dozier
Assistant Director, Veterans Health Policy ..... Michael J. O'Rourke
Assistant Director, Field Operations ..... Lawrence Berman
Manager, Administration and Support Operations ..... Theresa M. Aldana
Manager, Training & Quality Assurance .....Richard G. Hirst
VFW Political Action Committee, Director .....Salvatore J. Capirchio

REGIONAL NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEMBERS 2007-2008

District No. 1 (ME NH).....Philip M. Farrell
District No. 2 (MA VT).....Rene E. Rocheleau
District No. 3 (MD NJ)..... Patrick J. Botbyl
District No. 4 (DC DE EU) ..... Mark M. Newman
District No. 5 (IN MO) ..... William A. Thien
District No. 6 (VA WV).....Daniel D. Boyer, Jr.
District No. 7 (KY TN) ..... Carl T. (Tom) Jackson
District No. 8 (AL GA) ..... James R. (Randy) Coggins
District No. 9 (NC SC) .....Richard N. Bell
District No.10 (AR OK).....Kenneth C. Pike
District No.11 (IA WI) .....Earl D. Banks
District No.12 (ND WY) ..... Harold E. Lowe
District No.13 (CO KS) .....James L. Mitchell
District No.14 (ID MT WA)..... Daniel K. (Deke) Johnson
District No.15 (AZ NM)..... Frank V. Page
District No.16 (AK HI LAT PAC)..... Robert W. Zaher
District No.17 (NV OR UT) .....Roy G. Kunzi
District No.18 (CT RI).....Robert P. Tozzoli
District No.19 (LA MS) .....Donald L. Verucchi
District No. 21 (MN NE).....Richard E. Morrison
District No. 23 (MI SD)..... Gary Knudson
District A (PA) .....Peter Krenitsky
District B (IL)..... Terry W. Vance
District C (NY) .....Elton C. (Al) Klein

District D (OH)..... Keith E. Harman
District G (CA).....Everett R. Martin
District H (TX) .....Ronald C. Hornsby
District J (FL).....Michael J. White
Past Commander-in-Chief ..... Gary L. Kurpius

NATIONAL HONOR GUARD

Ronald E. Servary, Captain..... 521 MD
Alfred Nathaniel Simmons, Adjutant..... 8509 MD
Neil William Koski, Treasurer..... 6694 MD
Kenneth L. Britter..... 2562 MD
Eugene Daisey..... 5118 MD
Raymond H. Glock..... 1858 MD
Thomas V. Kimball, Jr. ..... 10159 MD
Ronald Kitchen..... 434 MD
Gary Lee..... 3859 MD
Charles P. McConville ..... 521 MD
Micheal McGuire ..... 8849 MD
Phillip S. Medlin, Sr. ..... 2678 MD
Stephen J. Olcott ..... 9619 MD
Robert J. Patterson ..... 6027 MD
Thomas E. Ryan, Sr. ..... 10080 MD
Henry E. Servary..... 521 MD
Clinton A. Slack.....475 DE
Carroll M. Smith, Jr. ..... 8509 MD
Richard S. Udoff..... 521 MD
James L. Youngblood..... 9083 MD

NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE
August 16-21, 2008, Orlando, Florida

Convention Committee Chairman ..... John M. (Jack) Carney
Operations Officer.....W. Benny Bachand
Health Fair Chairman .....Kenneth A. Thie
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags.....Lewie Cooper
Assistant Adjutant General Operations.....John J. McNeill
Manager, Meetings & Events.....Vanessa Kane, CMP
Memorial Service Chairman .....Thomas L. Kissell
Patriotic Rally Chairman .....Billy B. Moore
Registration Chairman .....William J. Gault

Transportation Chairman ..... Stephen R. Surface
Military/Contests Chairman ..... Melvin L. Collins

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

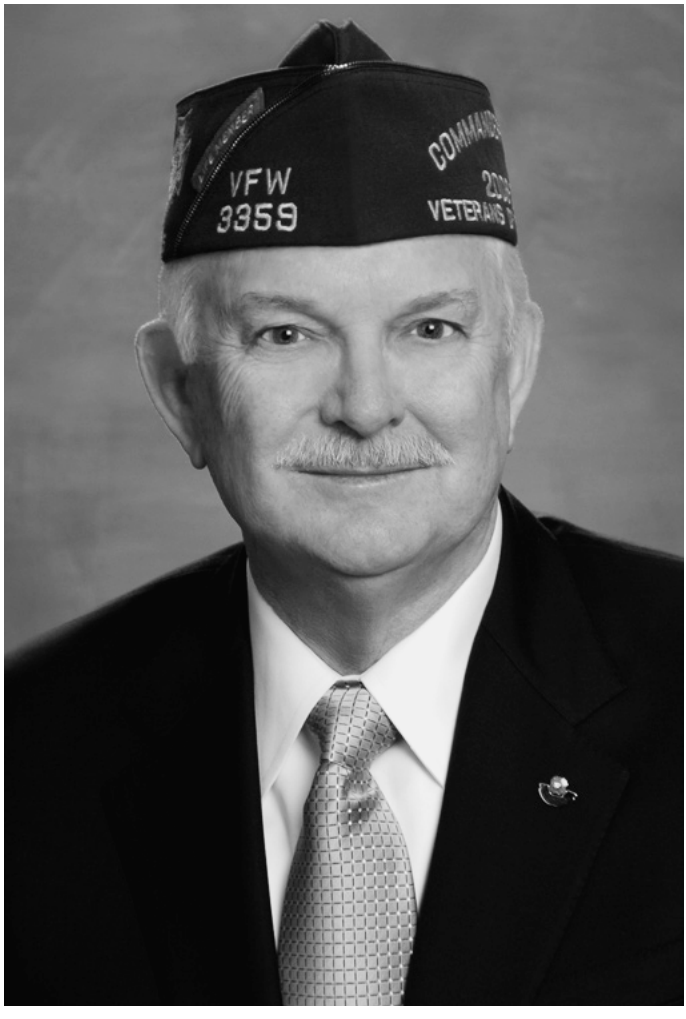
POST

Bryan P. O'Brien ..... 2394 MA

NATIONAL ASSISTANT SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

Gary W. Barringer ..... 9134 NC
Joy Ausman ..... 10043 ID
James M. Galen ..... 6802 MI
Keith J. MacDonald ..... 2275 CA
Joseph P. Schirmers ..... 4847 MN
L Edward Villiaume, III ..... 6827 FL
Lonnie Garza ..... 7110 TX

George J. Lisicki
Commander-in-Chief
2007-2008



Glen M. Gardner Jr.
Commander-in-Chief
2008-2009

VFW NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS AND MANAGERS, 2008-2009

Commander-in-Chief ..... Glen M. Gardner, Jr
Sr. Vice Commander-in-Chief ..... Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr.
Jr. Vice Commander-in-Chief ..... Richard L. Eubank
Adjutant General ..... Allen F. "Gunner" Kent
Quartermaster General ..... Lawrence M. Maher
Judge Advocate General ..... Walter Swanson
Surgeon General ..... Dr. James Tuorila
National Chaplain ..... Reverend Theodore Bowers
National Chief of Staff ..... Jimmie D. Cantrell
Inspector General ..... W. Benny Bachand
Assistant Quartermaster General ..... Robert B. Greene
Assistant Director, Quartermaster General
Administration ..... Debra L. Anderson
Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General, Operations ..... Robert W. Crow
Director, Member Dues Processing ..... Robert A. Crider
Director, Emblem & Supply Department ..... M. L. "Bud" Cale
Director, Properties ..... Billy R. Weissend
Chief Technology Officer ..... Douglas P. Butscher
Assistant Director, Information Technology ..... Brendon N. Killingsworth
Controller and Purchasing Manager ..... James J. Lierz
Manager, Human Resources/Investment Coordinator ..... Linda K. Porter
Assistant Adjutant General, Operations ..... John J. McNeill
Director, Administrative Operations ..... Kevin C. Jones
Assistant Director, Administrative Operations ..... David E. Prohaska
Director, General Services ..... David L. Swindler
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Kansas City ..... Jerry L. Newberry
Director, Membership ..... Matthew C. Claussen
Associate Director, Membership Development ..... William C. Bloomquist
Associate Director, Membership Marketing ..... Troy G. Danderson
Director, National Military Services ..... Michael G. Penney
Assistant Director, National Military Services ..... Crystal M. Lauver
Manager, Special Programs & Projects ..... Linda L. Ferguson
Manager, Military Assistance Program ..... Amy S. White
Director, Programs ..... Stephen L. Van Buskirk
Assistant Director, Programs ..... Buddy J. Haney
Director and Editor-in-Chief,
Publications/VFW Magazine ..... Richard K. Kolb
Assistant to the Adjutant General for Marketing ..... Mark A. Idel

Manager, Development ..... Kelly J. Jones
Manager, Special Projects-Development..... Robert D. Kerns
Manager, Meetings & Events ..... Vanessa Kane, CMP
Service Officer, National Veterans Service, Kansas City..... Ron Cherry
VFW Foundation Acting Director, ... Daniel M. Shea
Assistant Adjutant General & Executive Director,
Washington Office ..... Robert E. Wallace
Director, Administration, Washington Office ..... Robert J. Gardner
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Washington ..... Joseph E. Davis
Director, National Legislative Service ..... Dennis M. Cullinan
Deputy Director, National Legislative Service ..... Eric A. Hilleman
Manager, Action Corps ..... Teresa Morris
Director, National Security and Foreign Affairs ..... Michael H. Wysong
Director, National Veterans Service..... William L. Bradshaw
Deputy Director, National Veterans Service ..... Gerald T. Manar
Assistant Director, Veterans Benefits Policy ..... Fredrick Burns
Assistant Director, Veterans Employment/Homeless Issues ..... William C. Dozier
Assistant Director, Veterans Health Policy ..... Michael J. O'Rourke
Assistant Director, Field Operations..... Lawrence Berman
Manager, Administration and Support Operations ..... Theresa M. Aldana
Manager, Training & Quality Assurance ..... Richard G. Hirst
VFW Political Action Committee, Director ..... Larry W. Rivers

REGIONAL NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEMBERS 2008-2009

District No. 1 (ME NH) ..... Philip M. (Mike) Farrell
District No. 2 (MA VT) ..... John A. Martin
District No. 3 (MD NJ) ..... Patrick J. Botbyl
District No. 4 (DC DE EU) ..... Richard F. Kennedy
District No. 5 (IN MO) ..... William A. Thien
District No. 6 (VA WV) ..... Melvin L. Reed
District No. 7 (KY TN) ..... Carl T. (Tom) Jackson
District No. 8 (AL GA) ..... John W. Hancock
District No. 9 (NC SC) ..... Richard N. Bell
District No.10 (AR OK) ..... A. M. Armstrong
District No.11 (IA WI) ..... Earl D. Banks
District No.12 (ND WY) ..... Wayne L. Paulson
District No.13 (CO KS) ..... James L. (Larry) Mitchell
District No.14 (ID MT WA) ..... Raymond M. Lutz
District No.15 (AZ NM) ..... Frank V. Page

District No.16 (AK HI LAT PAC).....Preston (Nick) Nelson
District No.17 (NV OR UT) .....Roy G. Kunzi
District No.18 (CT RI)..... Leo r. Swider
District No.19 (LA MS) .....Donald L. Verucchi
District No. 21 (MN NE).....Richard E. Morrison
District No. 23 (MI SD)..... Gary Knudson
District A (PA) .....Peter Krenitsky
District B (IL)..... Terry W. Vance
District C (NY) .....Elton C. (Al) Klein
District D (OH).....William K. Seagraves
District G (CA).....Everett R. Martin
District H (TX) .....A. R. (Russ) Richards
District J (FL).....Michael J. White
Past Commander-in-Chief ..... George J. Lisicki

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

POST

Bryan P. O'Brien.....2394 MA

NATIONAL ASSISTANT SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

Gary W. Barringer..... 9134 NC
Joy Ausman .....10043 ID
James M. Galen ..... 6802 MI
Keith J. MacDonald .....2275 CA
Joseph P. Schirmers..... 4847 MN
L. Edward Villiaume, III.....6827 FL
Lonnie Garza .....7110 TX

NATIONAL HONOR GUARD

Ronald E. Servary, Captain.....521 MD
Alfred Nathaniel Simmons, Adjutant & Finance Officer .....8509 MD
Kenneth L. Britter.....2562 MD
Eugene Daisey.....5118 MD
Raymond H. Glock.....1858 MD
Thomas V. Kimball, Jr. .....10159 MD
Ronald Kitchen.....434 MD
Gary Lee.....3859 MD
Charles P. McConville .....521 MD
Micheal McGuire .....8849 MD
Phillip S. Medlin, Sr. .....2678 MD

Stephen J. Olcott ..... 9619 MD
Robert J. Patterson ..... 6027 MD
Thomas E. Ryan, Sr. ..... 10080 MD
Henry E. Servary ..... 521 MD
Clinton A. Slack ..... 475 DE
Carroll M. Smith, Jr. ..... 8509 MD
Richard S. Udoff ..... 521 MD
James L. Youngblood ..... 9083 MD

NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE
August 15-20, 2009, Phoenix, Arizona

Convention Committee Chairman ..... James R. Currieo
Convention Co-Chairman & Assistant Operations Officer ..... Frank Page
Operations Officer ..... Ray Thomas
Medical - Health Fair Chairman ..... Robert Rankin
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags ..... Lewie Cooper
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags ..... William Silvia
Memorial Service Chairman ..... John Halstead
Patriotic Rally Chairman ..... Dennis Dole
Registration Chairman ..... Betty Gripp
Transportation Chairman ..... Chris Kozakiewicz
Military/Contests Chairman ..... Shorty Larson
Manager, Meetings & Events ..... Vanessa Kane, CMP
Assistant Adjutant General, Operations ..... John J. McNeill
Administrative Assistant to AAG ..... Diane Putthoff

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE 109TH NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
ORLANDO, FLORIDA, AUGUST 16-21, 2008

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE SUNDAY, AUGUST 17, 2008

(The Memorial Service of the 109th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held at the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Florida, was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki presiding. The Gold Star Parents, Gold Star Wives, National Officers and Past National Chaplains were escorted by the Sergeants-at-Arms.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the hall for the Advancement and Posting of the Colors.

ADVANCE OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the VFW National Honor Guard Advanced the Colors followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Opening Ceremonies for this Memorial Service have been completed and your orders have been obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The Liberty Voices will now sing the National Anthem, followed by the "Battle Hymn of the Republic".

(Whereupon, the Liberty Voices presented the National Anthem and the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" at this time.)

INVOCATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Will you, please, stand for the Invocation by Chaplain Colonel Stanley Puckett, the 143rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

COLONEL STANLEY PUCKETT: May we pray.

O, Lord, our God, we thank you for the privilege that we have in meeting here today as we remember the sacrifices and the lives of patriots and friends who have gone before us.

Father, we thank you for honoring us with your presence here today. Dear God, we pray for the families and friends of our fellow soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who have been left behind.

We ask your comfort and your care for these families as we honor their fallen.

Our Father, we thank you for General Schultz, and the comments that he will share today. We thank you for our guests and for the honor they bestow on us today with their presence.

Father, we pray that you will help us all to be strong in our service to them, to our country and to you. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF FAMILY OF PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAYMOND C. SISK

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: I would like to acknowledge the presence of Charlotte Smith, Cindy Pitkin, Jennifer Hodges and Patricia Hawkins, daughters of Past Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk, who passed away July 6, 2008.

The Liberty Voices will now sing "America the Beautiful."

(Whereupon, the Liberty Voices sang "America the Beautiful.")

MEMORIAL RITUAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, Ladies Auxliary, 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 that there is no disturbance during the ceremony.

NATIONAL CHIEF OF STAFF PIERRE LAMEREAUX: Commander-in-Chief, your orders will be obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: I request that the National Chaplain preside.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN THOMAS DARLING: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am at your service and shall endeavor to perform this solemn duty in the spirit of faith, hope and charity.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, to whom should the true soldier look for help in the battles of life?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: Comrade Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, what assurance have we of a prolonged stay among the seasons and activities of earth?

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GLEN GARDNER: For we are strangers before Thee and sojourners. As with all our fathers, our days on earth are the shadow and there is none abiding.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: Comrade Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, have you a message of condolence for those bereaved?

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THOMAS TRADEWELL: I have. The book of life tells us that like a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth those who fear him, for he knoweth our refrain and he remembereth that we are one dust.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY BARNES: I have a message of hope that should inspire our comrades of the solemn moment and all through life. The message is from the Captain of our salvation. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me when dead, yet shall he liveth, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: Comrades, we are thankful for these inspiring thoughts. Let us learn the lesson of the hour, which is that we, too, are nearing the end of life's journey and sooner or later these services may be held in our memory. Let us so live that when our summons comes we may depart with a good conscience in the comfort of a sincere religion, belief in God and perfect charity toward all mankind. Let us pray.

Our Father, once again we come to this time of remembering those who have given their all for the nation's cause. We ask blessings upon their families and those that they left behind who were their friends and their loved ones.

Guide us now as we continue in this service that all we do and say will be pleasing to you. Amen.

Juanita Bohlman, the Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist, will now sing "Sleep Soldier Boy."

(Whereupon, Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist Bohlman sang "Sleep Soldier Boy".)

SYMBOLIC TRIBUTE

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: Comrades, in commemorating the virtues of our departed heroes who served their country in time of need, we now offer our symbolic tributes.

I place upon the sacred shrine these red flowers, which symbolize the zeal of our departed comrades in upholding brotherhood, truth and justice.

Comrade Past Commander-in-Chief, what tribute have you to offer?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARY KURPIUS: These white flowers I place as a token of the purity of affection we have for our departed comrades.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, what tribute do you have to offer upon this sacred shrine?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The blue of our national standard symbolizes truth and fidelity. Therefore, I place these blue flowers from nature's bosom in token of our sincere respect for all of our departed comrades.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: Ladies of the Auxiliary, will you offer a tribute to the memory of our departed comrades?

LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT VIRGINIA CARMAN: I place upon our sacred shrine this wreath as a symbol of eternity. Its color bespeaks life everlasting. Thus do we say that the deeds of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines, on land, on sea and in the air, are immortalized in the hearts of a grateful people.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: Juanita Bohlman will now sing "Blades of Grass and Pure White Stones."

(Whereupon, Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist Juanita Bohlman sang "Blades of Grass and Pure White Stones.")

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Brigadier General Daniel Schultz's mobilization includes Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Operation Joint Guard, Operation Noble Eagle and Operating Enduring Freedom. His military education includes Masters degrees in both International Management and Strategic Studies, plus advanced courses of study from the United States Army War College.

His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with three bronze Oak Leaf clusters; the Army Commendation Medal with two bronze Oak Leaf clusters, and the Army Achievement Medal.

Brigadier General Schultz has held numerous command assignments and is currently serving as the Commander for the 143rd Expeditionary and Sustainment Command, Orlando, Florida.

He is also the Applications Manager of Information Services with the school district of Hillsborough County, Tampa, Florida. He resides with his wife, Amy, in Brandon, Florida.

Comrades and Sisters, Brigadier General Schultz.

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

BRIGADIER GENERAL DANIEL SCHULTZ: Thank you, Mr. Lisicki, and thank you, VFW National officers for allowing me to speak here today at this solemn event.

Veterans, Distinguished Guests, Gold Star Parents and Gold Star Wives, it is my privilege to be here today with you. I am humbled.

All of us here today share a common thread that extends beyond the uniforms we wear or have worn. It extends beyond our love of country, our unshakable patriotism, sense of duty, and dedication to the person to the left and right of us when we served.

What binds us all is that each one of us has served in our nation's conflicts. We have worn our nation's colors overseas on our uniforms, carried our colors into foreign lands and served not just the people of the United States, but all of humanity. That is what makes us American veterans of foreign wars.

We all served in different capacities, some of us on the ground, forward deployed, engaged in the fight. Others served in support roles supplying the beans and bullets to the war fighters, as we like to say in logistician vernacular.

Others, our military families, served with us, too, alongside us in our hearts and in spirit, although thousands of miles separated us. They endured months of sleepless nights not knowing how their loved ones fared in harm's way.

Ask any soldier and they will tell you they have the easy job; it is their families who have it tough not knowing what is happening to their warriors and living in prolonged uncertainty.

Yes, I am in great company today because all of you in this room at one point in time stood up and said, "If not me, then who?" Or some of you kept a family together, moving forward in the absence of your warrior.

Your sacrifices and your service affected many around the world. You made the world a safer place.

For those of the "Greatest Generation," you forged freedom for millions across the world, stopping the march of tyranny right off our shores where German U-boats patrolled our coasts for targets. And today, that spirit continues with what many call the "Next Generation."

Today, fine Americans continue to stand up and serve on the battlefields of Iraq, Afghanistan and wherever our country sends forces.

Like our warriors past, our men and women in uniform continue to make sacrifices and some make the ultimate sacrifice. They, too, are tied to those who came before them. They, too, share a common thread and they are a part of our national fabric that is as strong today as it was when our nation was born.

American soldiers have played an integral part of this nation's security

and history since its inception. Each of them serves for reasons as different as the cultures from which they hail. Only those who gave their lives in service to their country know why they are no longer with us.

Some, like Sergeant First Class Paul Smith, from Tampa, Florida, might have selflessly given their lives in order for their buddies to live. Sergeant Smith manned a weapon and maneuvered against the enemy until he was killed while fighting and while leading an attack. Sergeant Smith's family was presented the Medal of Honor in 2005 for his actions in Iraq.

Others like Master Sergeant Gary Gordon and Randell Schughart might have been following the Army's Warrior Ethos, refusing to give up and fighting until their last breath. They were inserted, voluntarily, into an intense firefight in order to save downed aircrews. Their families, too, were presented Medals of Honor for their actions in Somalia. Yet others, like Army Reserve Sergeant First Class Todd Cornell, are dedicated to their duties.

Cornell was scheduled to leave Iraq in 2004, and when he learned the Iraqi soldiers he had been training were heading to combat in Fallujah, he extended his tour and was later killed in action, serving alongside of the men he had trained since their entrance into the Iraqi Army.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am here today in the company of heroes, in a nation of heroes. While many of you are fortunate to be here physically, many of those for whom we gather here today are here with us in spirit. We honor that spirit, their memory and their sacrifices.

We are a nation that does not forget those who gave their lives in service to their country.

Nationally each year in May and November, we pause and reflect on those we lost, and we pause and pay homage to those who have served.

Our fallen are given hallowed ground where they rest eternally and that sacred ground is cherished and protected by the people of this great country.

Above all, their brethren, you, the veterans, those who bore witness to the sacrifices they made, you never forget them and it is through you that this nation remembers.

Through you, they live and because of them, we live freely.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln said some moving words in his Gettysburg Address that I think are fitting here. He said, "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

"It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

"It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain.

"That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Lincoln's words transcend time and today as we reflect and think about our fallen comrades from all wars those words ring true to us.

As veterans each day we live free. We must exercise the rights given to us by those who gave their lives to protect our freedom. That is our duty. It is their unspoken expectation.

And like our predecessors, as warriors, we will continue to endeavor to

bring those same liberties to those who have for so long lived in the shadow of oppression.

Our work is not done, vigilance is eternal for the American warrior, and in order for us to carry on the work of our fallen, we must, and will, continue on with our missions, missions that they so bravely, so selflessly dedicated their lives to.

May God bless our fallen comrades and their families. May God bless you and continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, the Liberty Voices sang "God Bless America" at this time.)

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: At this time, in memory of Past Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk, red roses will be presented to his daughters, Charlotte Smith, Sandy Pitkin, Jennifer Hodges and Patricia Hawkins. An additional rose is being presented to Ms. Betty Morris, Past National President who served with Commander-in-Chief Sisk in 2002-2003. Sergeant-at-Arms, please present the flowers.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: We have, sir.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: Remain standing for the Benediction by Chaplain Stanley Puckett.

COLONEL STANLEY PUCKETT: May we pray.

Our Father, we thank you again for the privilege that we have of being in this place and in the presence of patriots and of friends. As we leave this service, give us the grace to always be mindful of the sacrifice of life and family that others have paid that we might be free.

We pray for our leaders, for President Bush, for Vice-President Cheney, for General Schultz and for others as they plan a path for this nation and for its military in these perilous times. We pray that they will know your heart for this nation, that they will have the wisdom and the courage to lead us in the direction that we should go. Amen.

RETIRING OF COLORS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: National Sergeant-at-Arms, please prepare the hall for Retiring of the Colors.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We would like to acknowledge and thank all the participants who contributed to making this program a success. National Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the Gold Parents, Gold Star Wives, Past National Chaplains and Honored Guests from the room.

(Whereupon, National Sergeants-at-Arms escorted the Gold Star Parents, Gold Star Wives, Past National Chaplains from the assembly at this time.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the closing ceremonies for this Memorial Service have been completed and your orders have been obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: This concludes our Memorial Ser-

vice. Thank you for your attendance and enjoy your convention.

(Whereupon, the Memorial Service was concluded at 9:30 o'clock a.m.)

JOINT OPENING SESSION
MONDAY, AUGUST 18, 2008

(The Joint Opening Session of the 109th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the 95th National Convention of the Ladies Auxiliary was called to order on Monday, August 18, 2008, at 8:00 o'clock a.m., in the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Florida, by Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent.)

CALL TO ORDER

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Good morning, comrades, ladies and gentlemen, and distinguished guests: I am "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Welcome to the joint opening session of the 109th Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention.

We want to acknowledge our generous sponsors for the 2008 VFW National Convention, as they are identified on the large screen. Special appreciation goes to our lead supporters: Target, Wal-Mart, Anheuser-Busch, 24-Hour Fitness and a very special thank you to UAW-General Motors. Please join me in giving them a round of applause. (Applause)

With us this morning are the commanders and Auxiliary presidents of the 2007-2008 Outstanding Community Service posts. Please stand as a group and be recognized. (Applause)

This year, 252 commanders have earned the right to be named All-American. There are 19 Department commanders, 34 District commanders, and 199 Post commanders. Commanders, please stand and be recognized. (Applause)

Let me now introduce to you this year's Convention Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief John M. "Jack" Carney. (Applause)

GREETINGS FROM NATIONAL CONVENTION CHAIRMAN CARNEY

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: I bring you greetings from more than 16 million Floridians, which include over 106,000 VFW and Auxiliary members. Welcome to our great state and the city of Orlando.

We are extremely proud to host the 109th National Convention. We sincerely hope the time you spend with us will renew your pride in our nation, and in this wonderful organization. Our conventions are always a forum to rededicate your commitment to America's veterans and bring new excitement to your work as a member of the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Now, please rise as we officially open this convention with the advancing of the Colors.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the room to advance the Colors.

ADVANCEMENT OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the National Honor Guard advanced the colors at this time.)

INVOCATION

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: For this morning's Invocation, we have the National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Thomas E. Darling, from the State of Washington.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: God of our Fathers, from whose almighty hands this great nation we call America was formed. We come asking blessings on the men and women who guard the gates of freedom. Bless and watch over their families during these trying times. We ask that you continue to abide with us, inspiring our thoughts that we might look to you for strength and guidance.

We offer prayer for our nation's leaders and for those who lead this great organization of veterans. Expand our imagination that all our decisions, all our going out and coming in, are in good order.

Be with us in our silence and in our speech; in our haste and in our solitude; in the freshness of the morning and the weariness of the evening. We ask for grace at all times, remembering that we are your children. Help us, we pray, that we will humbly rejoice during our daily walk with you and in your loving companionship.

In your name we pray. Amen.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Please remain standing as we recite the Pledge of Allegiance, the National Anthem to be sung by Juanita Bohlman, the Ladies Auxiliary National soloist, and the posting of the Colors.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was said at this time followed by the National Anthem sung by Ladies Auxiliary National soloist Juanita Bohlman.)

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: The house lights will now dim for a special presentation.

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

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE J. LISICKI AND PRESENTATION OF OFFICIAL CONVENTION BADGE, BELL AND GAVEL

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: It is now my pleasure to introduce a gentleman who has served veterans for many years and is now our Commander-in-Chief.

George Lisicki served in the U.S. Army from 1966-'69. In Vietnam, he served with the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division in the Central Highlands near Pleiku. He was awarded the Bronze Star, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Good Conduct Medal and the National Defense Service Medal, among others.

In 1971, George joined VFW Post 2314 in Carteret, New Jersey, where he became a Life Member in 1976. He was the first Vietnam veteran in Post 2314 to be elected Post Commander, an office he held for four terms. He earned the title of All American State Commander in 1988.

George served as the New Jersey State Membership Director for nine years and the Instructor for the New Jersey Officer Training Institute for 24

years. In 1995, he was elected to a two-year term as a VFW National Council member. He has served as Chairman for the National Security, POW-MIA and Legislative committees. His other committee assignments include National Civil Service and Employment, and Resolutions.

George retired in 2002 after 33 years with Union Carbide Corporation. He is currently on leave of absence from the State of New Jersey where he works as an investigator in the Weights and Measures Division.

George is a member of the Military Order of the Cootie, the American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, Catholic War Veterans, 4th Infantry Division Association and 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Association. He also serves as the Chairman for the Carteret Veterans Alliance.

Please welcome our Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki. (Applause)

REMARKS - COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Please be seated. Thank you all very much.

Before I begin my remarks, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the magnificent men and women serving in our armed forces. I want to thank each of them publicly, and their families for the silent sacrifices they make for our nation. Recently, I had the highest privilege of visiting with our troops in Europe and in Iraq. Just last month, while in Europe, I met with wounded soldiers at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

Among those gallant soldiers were troopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, who were recovering from the much-publicized battle on a remote outpost in Afghanistan. In spite of the fact the men had endured a tremendously fierce battle, I found their spirit and morale to truly be magnificent and inspiring.

I will never forget the trooper who told me about losing his best friend during the fight or that the only regret they possessed was the fact they were in the hospital, and their buddies were back there fighting the war without them. They wanted to get back there to fight the battle because they strongly believe in their mission, with the belief that it is a just and honorable one.

In spite of what you may have heard from some of the talking heads on TV, I found the same resoluteness of spirit and remarkably high morale in Iraq. The service members I visited know, indeed are fully convinced, they will win the war on terrorism, because they believe in what they are doing. And to me, I think they are a far more credible source than the media pundits and Sunday morning news shows talking heads.

It is only because of such selfless devotion to duty, their sacrifices and their courage that we are able to live in freedom.

I urge you to pause a moment and reflect upon the freedoms that we have today and think about the service and sacrifice of today's warriors and all the men and women of our armed forces, who for over 200 years have provided our nation with the security so we can build upon those freedoms.

As all of you know, the Veterans of Foreign Wars is deeply involved in supporting the men and women of the armed forces and their families through our programs dedicated specifically for them. I am proud of what we have been able to do on their behalf, and I know that we will continue to do much more for all of them in the future.

This is a significant week for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. This 109th National Convention provides us the opportunity to conduct critical busi-

ness and pay tribute to some great Americans. During this convention, we will make definitive plans for the future and, of course, the "passing of the colors" at the end of the week that signifies a change in leadership for this magnificent organization and the very important mission we have in helping those who deserve it most.

When you hear so much about what is wrong with our nation, all one has to do is look out on this convention floor and see a visible indication of what is "right" in America.

Each of you has a choice, the choice to be here in service to your nation and community, or somewhere else, perhaps a place less demanding. The fact you have chosen to become active members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and to serve our country in this manner, indicates to me that you are true patriots. Thank you and God bless you one and all.

I appreciate the support of the many members, former commanders, and other distinguished guests who are present. Thank you for your continued interest and support of your VFW, our nation's veterans and military service members and their families. Thank you for continuing to care.

As your National Commander, I have been privileged to have as part of my leadership team two outstanding leaders: Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell. Gentlemen, thank you for your hard work and support over the past year. (Applause)

I would be remiss in not pointing out that I owe a great deal of gratitude to two men, my predecessors, who over the years offered me guidance, sage advice and acted as mentors. Most important of all, they provided me their friendship which I will cherish for the rest of my life.

Past VFW Commanders-in-Chief Jim Mueller and Gary Kurpius left big shoes to fill, and I only hope time will show that my efforts prove to be as valuable as theirs.

VFW members are doubly blessed to be well-served by Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent and Quartermaster General Larry Maher. We are all indeed fortunate to have men of their character and talent also helping on a daily basis in leading the VFW into the future.

We, the VFW, remain an exclusive and an elite club. We certainly are bound by traditions and values, but there are a litany of other things that connect and unite us and reinforce what we are all about.

The lifetime friendships we shared, based on common shared experiences;

The challenges we meet and overcome together;

The pride that swells deeply within when we see the flag of our nation and the ideals it so personifies;

The appreciation we have for each other's constant efforts to improve the lives of those who deserve it most, our nation's veterans, the military and their families.

These and many, many other relatively seemingly small events are part of the total glue that bonds us together forever. It is an intangible trait deep in our hearts, and once there, never leaves us.

This convention, by its significance, helps solidify that bond. It is a public demonstration of the continuity of mission and leadership for the VFW, its members and those we serve.

It allows us to pause for a brief retrospective look at this exceptional organization and its stellar accomplishments, but even more importantly,

to recognize your dedicated service to the world's finest veterans service organization.

Because of your determined and positive efforts, I have witnessed our melding into what is a truly remarkable team with common unselfish goals and objectives, and that has provided all of us the ability and the opportunity to accomplish some truly remarkable things during the past 12 months.

I cannot praise you enough for that truly phenomenal effort. It is also altogether fitting that we proudly recognize our accomplishments by acknowledging those thousands of "behind the scenes" individuals who made it all happen and whose endeavors are really the ones featured in the convention video we just viewed.

And while it's true that no one can predict the future, I am confident that today we are more prepared for it and are ready to meet whatever challenges might appear.

I am eternally grateful for having had the rare and honored privilege to serve as your Commander-in-Chief. It is something that I couldn't have possibly imagined when I first became a member 37 years ago. Thank you, God bless you and God bless America.

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

PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT AND CITATION TO VIRGINIA CARMAN, NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY

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

Virginia Carman of Renton, Washington, was elected National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States August 23, 2007.

In her acceptance speech, she introduced her theme "Tradition of Caring" and emphasized that traditions are important to her and to her organization as a whole. For Virginia, the tradition of caring began during her earliest years while raised in an active VFW and Auxiliary home. She learned care for and about veterans and their families from her father, Donald Bracken, who was VFW State Commander and served ten years as a State Quartermaster, and her mother, who served as Auxiliary State President.

Embracing the tradition of caring demonstrated by her parents, she began her 42nd year involvement by serving as President of the newly-formed Junior Girls Unit at the age of ten. At 16, she joined Rainier Auxiliary No. 2289, and has been an active member serving three terms as President and 17 as Treasurer.

She has served in numerous other capacities, including District President, National Hospital and VAVS Deputy Director and National Western Conference Chairman for the Community Service and Americanism programs.

When she served as State President in 1998-'99, she was named Outstanding President of the Year in her membership group.

In 2000, she earned a Bachelor's Degree at City University of Seattle, while working full-time and holding several offices in the Auxiliary.

Retired after 17 years of service as a Manager in the Parts Pricing Department for PACCAR, Inc., which is the maker of Kenworth and Peterbilt heavy-duty trucks, she previously worked for the VFW Department of Washington for 13 years as a service officer, capably assisting veterans with their

VA entitlements.

I am very pleased to now present the VFW Medal of Merit to my counterpart, National Auxiliary President Virginia Carman. (Applause)

DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS KEVIN JONES: The citation reads as follows:

"In esteemed recognition and sincere appreciation of her endless dedication and undying patriotism as the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. Her theme 'Tradition of Caring,' reflects her distinct and unique visions and will serve as the true and honorable legacy of her presidency.

"Her wealth of experience and lifelong commitment to the objectives of the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary make her the benchmark among the VFW community, justly earning her the highest level of admiration, respect and gratitude of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hand and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2008." It has been signed by George Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE – NATIONAL LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT CARMAN

NATIONAL LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT CARMAN: Thank you. Commander in Lisicki, National VFW and Ladies Auxiliary officers, Past National Commanders-in-Chief, Past National Presidents, Comrades, Sisters and Guests:

I am so very proud and honored to receive this award from the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I thank you most sincerely.

Serving as National President of the Ladies Auxiliary has been a distinct honor and privilege.

Traveling across the country to meet so many of you has re-affirmed what I already knew about our great organization. We truly care for our veterans and their families. My theme was "Tradition of Caring" for 2007-2008. Some of you may say that our traditions are outdated, old-fashioned, behind the time. To them I say you are not looking very forward.

Our organizations were started with the same passions and enthusiasm in the early 1900s as we have today. Veterans then and veterans now have many of the same life challenges to face.

Technology is different, generational mind sets are different, but what has not changed is our hearts. As our organizations move forward, there will be many decisions, many changes, but we must remember that our traditions do not lie in a book or in a ritual or in a routine. Our traditions run much deeper than that. What we used to take forward from our past must include that which we have always cared about and always will, veterans.

We all want to be there for those true heroes, don't we? We want to see them clothed, fed, given the proper medical treatment. Even more than that, we want to see them succeed. Our organizations have never settled for less for our veterans.

I want to continue my commitment to that tradition today by giving to a program that is on the front lines of our veterans' battles. All year long, I have promoted our program to our military and to their families as a priority program for the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary. Not only through our donations to those programs, but to get out and reach those families and let them know that the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary will be there for them.

So, Commander-in-Chief Lisicki, it is my honor to present to you in support of those programs this check for the Military Assistance Program in the amount of $5,000. (Applause)

May it help veterans to succeed. Commander-in-Chief, and for all of you and all your members, I wish for you a very successful National Convention. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF RUSLAN AUSHEV, PRESIDENT, WAR VETERANS COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: It is now my privilege to introduce from the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Chairman of the Committee for Warrior Internationalists, Retired General Lieutenant Ruslan Aushev.

General Aushev is a combat-wounded veteran who served several tours in Afghanistan as the Commander of a Motorized Rifle Battalion and as a Regimental Chief of Staff.

For his bravery, the General was awarded the prestigious Gold Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union.

After the war, he was elected as a people's deputy to the Soviet Parliament, and was a member of the Upper Committee Council of Military Affairs.

On February 28, 1993, he was elected President of the Russian Republic of Inguishetia, a position he held through 2001.

Perhaps his most heroic feat was in September, 2004, when he successfully negotiated the safe hostage release of 26 nursing women and their children from Chesh-en Terrace, who would eventually cowardly kill almost 350 teachers, parents and children in the Russian town of Beslan.

For the past four years, the VFW has traveled to Moscow to meet with the General to discuss POW/MIA issues that are important and critical to the families and veterans of both our countries.

We are very grateful to him and his fellow committee members for joining us here in Orlando, and for helping to break down barriers within the Russian government to aid our full accounting mission.

Please welcome the Chairman of the Committee for Warrior Internationalists, General Aushev. (Applause)

REMARKS – GENERAL RUSLAN AUSHEV

GENERAL AUSHEV: Esteemed Mr. Chairman, esteemed colleagues of the convention, before I begin my presentation I would like to present the greetings, official greetings of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federation, and this is a greeting from the government of the Russian Federation to the VFW. I will read the unofficial translation.

To the participants of the National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States: I welcome the participants to the National Convention of the VFW, the oldest association of American men and women in uniform who took part in combat operations outside their country, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, starting from World War II are participants in this meeting in Orlando.

At that time, our countries passed a serious test and it is necessary to close our ranks of anti-Hitler coalition. To rejoin efforts at the great cost of

life, we defended, we remembered the American and Soviet and other soldiers of World War II who shed their blood for their common victory over fascism. Today, Russia and the United States show a united front in their common struggle against nationalism and as a challenge to the strife of life.

The memorialization of those in battle search for America's men and women in uniform who are missing in action as well as ensuring the rights and interests of veterans who are among the most important purposes of our organization.

Russia also attaches great importance to such work. As a positive fact, I want you to know that the U.S. and Russian sides have developed close cooperation in the search for persons from both countries who are missing in action. We know the Veterans of Foreign Wars also significantly contributes to this cooperation. In many cases, it is this organization that helped us receive the reliable information about dozens of our soldiers who became prisoners or missing in action in Afghanistan.

In general, we are satisfied by the development of the relationships between the Russian and U.S. organizations of veterans. In particular, declarations of cooperation between the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Warriors Internationalists Affairs Committee attached to the Commonwealth of Independent States, Council of the heads of governments as well as the Russian Public Movement of Combat Brotherhood has been signed, establishment of the Joint Coordination Council is underway.

We expect the participation of the Russian delegation headed by the Chairman of the Warriors Internationalists Affairs Committee, attached to the Commonwealth of the United States Council and the heads of government in the present form will become a next step in the consolidation and expansion of this cooperation, which we consider as an important element of U.S.-Russian relationships in the humanitarian field.

I wish the participants in this convention every success in their work and all veterans good health and prosperity. Allow me to present this to the Commander-in-Chief.

If you will allow me, I would like to now speak to you a little bit. First of all, in the name of our Committee, let me thank your organization's leadership, Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki and Executive Director Robert Wallace for this invitation to participate in the work of this convention as well as the opportunity to speak before the open session of the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization, which is the largest combat veterans organization in the United States, and to express my heartfelt greetings to all members of the Committee, which begins its work today, as well as the many delegates and guests. And I wish all of its participants successful and effective work.

We, as I have already mentioned, our international organization which unites the veterans organizations of the former Soviet states as well as several other countries that we're part of the Soviet Union. We adopt the premise of providing them with adequate medical care and monitoring the psychological illnesses and overcoming post-traumatic stress syndromes, and encourage the cure for devious behavior, specifically alcoholism and drug abuse.

Additionally, we are definitely interested in finding work for our veterans and also in our pursuit of finding occupational training. Another separate area of interest is the prisoners of war missing in action and the finding of the location of their gravesites in these countries.

First and foremost is the responsibility of the governments of many countries, not only here in the U.S. and Russia, there are specific laws com-

municating ministries as well as other official organizations that are responsible for this issue. In other countries, notably in most nations' groups of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the former Soviet states, this issue is dealt with by social service agencies controlled by the Minister of Defense and in special parliamentary committees.

However, a large section of this work is not only controlled by governmental organizations and movements, but also the most direct participation of this civilian population. In this vein, it is a positive experience of such an influential organization such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and it is truly an impressive organization, in many ways maybe a unique guidepost for many international veterans organizations.

The basic direction of the VFW is to work within the accumulation of the experiences is worthy of all sorts of kind of studies and preferential in our practice. To us, this is good logical basis of our relations, and there is something to help an interest to each other.

As a shining example of the cooperation between our two committees, your organization and is in the search for and acquiring information on prisoners of war and missing in action. We are grateful to the American side for this help, for its help in teaching our specialists modern forensic techniques and for identification of remains.

Over the course of years, we are solving the problem. The experience to this end that on September 10 the internships in U.S. laboratories is important to us. In accordance to our agreement, we hope to receive additional information on our missing in action from the 1979 to 1989 war in Afghanistan, and there are still 251 missing in that conflict.

With the help of the ability of the American side, the continued support of those forces in that country will help account for them. I would like to repeat we can and are willing to help our American colleagues to resolve the issues. We will continue to work with the goals of resolving the question of rendering direct assistance to the work.

U.S. and Russian Joint Commission of POW/MIA, as we continue to contact with documents persons of interest, we are convinced that although the purely humanitarian aspect of the laws will be for all over others, sometime departmental bureaucratic considerations play a part. Besides, we are considering our non-governmental character and through our own efforts by working amongst veterans keeping the two issues in mind, and in cooperation with the Joint Commission, this is specifically true in finding persons who are witnesses to events during the Korean or Vietnam Wars, and these bureaus can be of help to the American side.

Without going into details, I can with full authority say that we through our own abilities and personal connections lobby the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia and recently the presidential administration as well as our governmental and legislative bodies of Russia and in the Commonwealth of Independent States in resolving this issue of direct assistance in the work.

The U.S.-Russian Joint Commission is easing access to our title documents to them. In general, I can say the work on reaching agreement on the legal status of the U.S. Joint Commission for POW/MIAs from the discussion with America and Russia are also in the home stretch.

We estimate an official exchanging ceremony will take place in Moscow in the next few months, and the Commission will begin its work with full vigor. We understand that a plenum of the Commission is planned for this year in the United States.

Once again, I would like to mention that in our view the Joint Commission will be given a new powerful impulse. We have tried to attract high level members with distinct honor to the Lower House of the Russian Parliament, the Federal Council of the Upper House and interested Russian organizations.

What has been done in the stretch currently in our initiative with the help of agencies responsible for resolving this issue, we have come to a principal consensus with the Cabinet that has legislative and powerful ministries on resolving the issues and expanding the status of the Commission and imparting its Russian more broad-based powers to solve problems and access to our materials of interest to the American side, and improving organizational issues connected with interviewing witnesses of interest.

The Commission itself has been strengthened organizationally with bringing representatives of parliament in the public chamber into its work. Much work in this direction is done by the Minister of Foreign Affairs as the representative of which I can vouch for.

The work is now being done on the formalization of the status in the infusion of renewed parameters and legal basis for the Commission's work.

I can once again say without the pressure of involving efforts of your organization, which through our contacts become known as circles of interest in this issue, the work would have gone much more slowly.

In conclusion, let me before departure, I want to say the President of the Russian Federation and his staff, have had adequate discussion with many on this topic. We agree that at a minimum the necessary orders from the President of the Russian Federation would be given to implement directions in the cooperation of the Commission with governmental orders in the direction necessary for us.

The administration was given an unmistakable signal emanating, as I understand it, from the President himself, on strengthening the humanitarian and the legal aspects of cooperation with the American side, with the goal of subsequent lessening of tensions in other aspects of our cooperation with the Americans.

As chief delegates, despite the specifics of our work, the kind of general movement is the veterans organizations to influence the governments of their own countries with a view to decreasing the threat of war and increasing the level of international tolerance of peer groups is becoming more visible.

This work is dictated by current political realities taking place in a world war of conflicts, as well as the traditions accumulated in the countries. For this reason, as well as for the expansion of international cooperation, it makes sense to unite the efforts of veterans organizations, and I don't see that on a worldwide scale, and to form an international organization of veterans which could be a powerful strong voice for the world's veterans.

It could, for example, be called the Organization of United Veterans. I am convinced that a locomotive for this movement could be the veterans organizations of the United States of America.

We must come to know each other better, to exchange information on the widest range of issues, to cultivate and strengthen trust between our countries. Now, veterans organizations, especially ones that are as powerful and influential as ours, can do much in this direction. In the name of veterans organizations of the Commonwealth of Independent States who belong to our union, I will say we will allow neither thought or cold war between our countries, and I hope such thought will find an understanding here in

this audience.

In closing my first speech, I want to again express my gratitude for the invitation to participate in the work of such an influential forum of member American veterans. Using this opportunity, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the delegates at the convention, and the warmest wishes from the War Veterans as well as those in countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

I would also like to take this opportunity to invite the leadership of the VFW to celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan that will take place on February 15, 2009, in Moscow and other regions of Soviet attention.

Thank you for your attention. (Applause) In two revolutionary times in the Soviet Union, it is necessary that the world is united. I would like to change that and the veterans of the world would be united.

In the name of our veterans organization, I would like to present Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki with this book about the Kremlin, Russia, as a sign of the friendship between us and our organization when he opens it. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: We will be just a couple of minutes and then we will have our Commander-in-Chief and special guests here. So, please be patient for a couple of minutes. (Pause)

Ladies and gentlemen, please recognize Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki and Senator and Mrs. John McCain.

INTRODUCTION OF SENATOR JOHN S. McCAIN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Before I begin, I first want to introduce a very special guest, Mrs. Cindy McCain. (Applause)

Our next speaker is no stranger to us. He has been a U.S. Senator from the Grand Canyon State since 1987, and he is currently the ranking member on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

He is a 1959 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and served 22 years in uniform, more than five of them, unfortunately, in a North Vietnamese Prisoner of War camp.

He shared in the receipt of the VFW Armed Forces Award in 1971 that was presented in absentia to POWs. He is also the recipient of the 1992 VFW Americanism Award and the 1995 VFW Congressional Award.

Comrades and sisters, may I present to you a Life Member of VFW Post 7401 in Chandler, Arizona, the Republican Party candidate to be the next President of the United States, Senator John McCain.

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

REMARKS – THE HONORABLE JOHN S. McCAIN

SENATOR McCAIN: Thank you. Thank you very much. National Commander George Lisicki, thank you for the kind introduction. Ladies Auxiliary President Virginia Carman, incoming National Commander Glen Gardner, incoming Ladies Auxiliary President Dixie Hild, Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent, and Executive Director Bob Wallace:

I thank you all for the warm welcome. I am honored to be in the company of all of my fellow members of the VFW and especially anyone here who might hail from Post 7401 in Chandler, Arizona. (Applause)

I would like to also in addition to my wife, Cindy, I would like to thank the great Mayor, Rich Crotty, who is here, and thank him for all his hospitality.

I would like to also mention the great Senator from the State of Florida, Mel Martinez, who is here, a person who came from Cuba as a young person by himself and is a great American success story.

I would also like to mention that my two comrades and friends on the Armed Services Committee are also dedicated to the veterans of America, Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, and Senator Joe Lieberman of Connecticut are here. Can we welcome them? (Applause)

I am proud to count many of you in this room as personal friends, including my good friend Retired Marine Corps Sergeant Major Paul Chevalier of New Hampshire. And there is another gentleman here I know you will want to welcome. He is as fine a friend as a man could have in a tough spot, Lieutenant Colonel Orson Swindle of the United States Marine Corps. Thank you, Orson, for all you have done. (Applause)

All of us take pride in being members of this great organization. After its founding in 1914, the VFW served many of the more than four million American veterans of the First World War. Today just one of those veterans survives, a man of 107 years of age, named Frank Buckles. Frank lives in West Virginia. And I have a feeling that word will reach him if we all join in a round of applause for the last doughboy. (Applause)

In all the years since, the men and women of the VFW have stayed faithful to their mission of serving those who have served their country. In Europe, Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere, America's veterans have faced different enemies, but they have always found the same friend and ally in the VFW. All of us returned from war with a few experiences we would gladly forget, but the friendships and camaraderie we brought home are forever. For keeping us all together and helping those most in need, we are all in the debt of the VFW.

The men and women of the VFW know the value of freedom, because you have been its protectors. You were there when your country needed you. You shouldered heavy burdens and accepted great risks. I am sure many of you will also recall from your experiences in war, as I do from mine, that when you are somewhere on the other side of the world in the service of America you pay attention to the news from back home. It affects morale.

And even during this election season, with sharp differences on the wisdom and success of the surge in Iraq, Americans need to speak as one and praise the men and women who fight our battles. (Applause) They are the best among us, as you were before them, and I know you will join me in applauding the courage and skill that will see America through its victory.

The victory in Iraq is finally in sight, a great deal still depends on the decisions and good judgment of the next President. The hard-won gains of our troops hang in the balance. The lasting advantage of a peaceful and democratic ally in the heart of the Middle East could still be squandered by hasty withdrawal and arbitrary timeliness. And this is one of many problems in the shifting positions of my opponent, Senator Obama.

With less than three months to go before the election, a lot of people are still trying to square Senator Obama's varying positions on the surge in Iraq. First, he opposed the surge and confidently predicted that it would fail. Then he tried to prevent funding for the troops who carried out the surge.

Not content to merely predict failure in Iraq, my opponent tried to legis-

late failure. This was back when supporting America's efforts in Iraq entailed serious political risk. It was a clarifying moment. It was a moment when political self-interest and the national interest parted ways. For my part, with so much in the balance, it was an easy call. As I said at the time, I would rather lose an election than lose a war. (Applause)

Thanks to the courage and sacrifice of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines and to the brave Iraqi fighters the surge has succeeded. And yet Senator Obama still cannot quite bring himself to admit his own failure in judgment. Nor has he been willing to heed the guidance of General Petraeus, or to listen to our troops on the ground when they say, as they have said to my on my trips to Iraq: "Let's win, just let us win."

Instead, Senator Obama commits the greater error of insisting even in hindsight, he would oppose the surge. Even in retrospect, he would choose the path of retreat and failure for America over the path of success and victory. In short, both candidates in this election pledge to end this war and bring our troops home. The great difference is that I intend to win it first.

Behind all of these claims and positions by Senator Obama lies the ambition to be President. What is less apparent is the judgment to be Commander-in-Chief. And in matters of national security, good judgment will be at a premium in the term of the next President, as we are all reminded ten days ago by events in the nation of Georgia.

It has been a while since most Americans, including most of our leaders and diplomats, have viewed Russia as a threat to the peace. But the Russian government's assault on a small democratic neighbor shows why this needs revising. As I have long warned, Russia under the rule of Vladimir Putin is becoming more aggressive toward the now democratic nations that broke free of the old Soviet empire.

Russia also holds vast energy wealth, and this heavy influence in the oil and gas market has become a political weapon that Russia is clearly prepared to use. Georgia stands at a strategic crossroads in a Caucasus. The Baku-Tbilisi-cehan pipeline, which brings oil from the Caspian to points west, traverses Georgia. And if that pipeline were destroyed or controlled by Russia, global energy supplies would be even more vulnerable to Russian influence with serious consequences on the world energy market.

For some time now, I have been making the case for a dramatic acceleration of domestic energy production. With high prices and growing demand for oil and gas, Americans cannot remain dependent upon others for the most vital of commodities. We should drill offshore and we should drill now. The Congress needs to come off their five-week vacation and go to work for us. (Applause) In case you have noticed, they have never missed a recess or a pay raise. (Applause)

Now we are reminded that energy policy is also a matter of the highest priority not only for our economy, but for our nation's security. We can't keep spending $700 billion a year with countries that don't like us, and some of that money ends up in terrorist organizations.

Disruption of supply abroad can suddenly raise energy prices, inflicting a great harm on our economy and on American workers. And in the term of the next President, skillful handling of such a crisis could be the difference between temporary hardship and far-reaching disaster.

When Russia first invaded Georgia, some people may have wondered why events in this part of the world should be any concern of ours. After all, Georgia may seem a small, remote and obscure place. But many of you

served in places that once seemed remote and obscure. And the Veterans of Foreign Wars know better than anyone how inattention to small crises can invite much later ones.

There are many reasons why the Russian invasion of Georgia is of grave concern to America and to our allies. Above all, Georgia is a struggling democracy where Soviet tyranny is still fresh in memory. There are reports now of Georgian villages being razed, civilians being rounded up, and innocent civilians being shot.

We have seen such things before as in the Balkans and in earlier periods of European history, and now we must ensure that events in Georgia do not unfold into a tragedy of much greater scale. When young democracies are threatened or attacked and innocent civilians are targeted, they should be able to count on the free world for support and solidarity.

If I am elected President, they will have that support. And in cooperation with our friends and allies in Europe, we will make it clear to Russia's rulers that acts of violence and intimidation come at a heavy cost. There will be no place among G-8 nations or in the WTO, for a modern Russia that acts at all times like the old Soviet Union.

The Cold War is over, the Soviet empire is gone, and neither one is missed. Least of all is that empire missed by the once captive nations of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine and Georgia. These brave young democracies have joined the free world and they are not going back.

Through decades of struggle, free nations prevailed over tyranny in large measure because of the sacrifices of the men and women of the United States armed forces. And it will fall to the next Commander-in-Chief to make good on the obligation our government accepts every time a man or woman enters the military, and again when they receive their DD-214.

Those we depend on as troops should know when they become veterans that they can depend on us. Honoring this obligation will require leadership, and I am ready to provide that, and I pledge to you that as President I will lead from the front to reform our VA system and make sure that veterans receive the respect and care they have earned.

The Walter Reed scandal was a disgrace unworthy of this nation, and intend to make sure that nothing like it is ever repeated. There are other problems as well that have not received as much media attention. And my administration will do the hard and necessary work of fixing them even when the press and the public are not watching.

Reform begins with appointing a Secretary of Veterans Affairs who is a leader of the highest caliber, and who listens to veterans and veterans' service organizations. My VA Secretary must be a forceful advocate for veterans and forthright advisor to me, so we can make the right choices about budgeting, health care and other veterans' benefit issues. He or she will also need to be a high-energy leader, too, because we will have a lot of work to do in improving service to veterans.

Veterans must be treated fairly and expeditiously as they seek compensation for disability or illness. We owe them compassion and hands-on care in their transition to civilian life. We owe them training, rehabilitation, and education. We owe their families, parents and caregivers our concern and support. Veterans should never be deprived of quality medical care and mental health care coverage for illness or injury incurred as a result of their service to our country.

As President, I will do all that is in my power to ensure that those who

serve today, and those who have served in the past, have access to the highest quality health, mental health and rehabilitative care in the world. I will not accept a situation in which veterans are denied access to care on account of travel distances, backlogs of appointments, and years of pending disability evaluation and claims.

We cannot let that happen and it will not happen when I am President of the United States, and we will fix it. We should no longer tolerate requiring veterans to make an appointment to stand in one line for a ticket to stand in another.

I am not here to tell you that there is a cost that is too high to be paid in the care of our nation's veterans. I will make sure that Congress funds the VA health care budget in a sufficient, timely and predictable manner. But I will say that every increase in funding must be matched by increases in accountability, both at the VA and in Congress. This requires an end to certain practices and abuses that serve neither our veterans, our country, nor the reputation of Congress itself.

Exactly because funding VA programs command bipartisan support, some in the Congress like to attach unrelated appropriations and earmarks to VA bills. The result is to mix vital national priorities with wasteful and often worthless political pork. Earmarks show up in bills of every kind, and not just VA bills. That is how we end up budgeting hundreds of millions of dollars for bridges to nowhere, or lesser sums for Woodstock Museums and the like.

When that earmark for a million bucks to fund a Woodstock Museum didn't come through, I don't imagine that many veterans had to change their vacation plans. The principle here is simple: Public money should serve the public good. If it is me sitting in the Oval Office, at the Resolute Desk, those wasteful spending bills are going the way of all earmarks, straight back to the Congress with a veto. You will know their names. I will make them famous. We will stop this earmarked pork-barrel spending and we will make it clear that no earmarked bill will be signed into law.

That will save many billions, many billions of dollars that can be applied to essential priorities, and above all, to the care of our veterans.

But reform doesn't end there. We must also modernize our disability system to make sure that eligible service members receive benefits quickly based on clear, predictable and fair standards. We must address the problems of capacity and access within our VA health-care system. While this will involve a wide-range of initiatives, I believe there is a simple and direct reform we should make right away.

My administration will create a Veterans' Care Access Card to be used by veterans with illness or injury incurred during their military service, and by those with lower incomes. This card will provide those without timely access to VA facilities the option of using high-quality health-care providers near their homes.

For many veterans, the closest VA facility is not close enough. Many of their local providers are already familiar with the most common needs of veterans. Often, all that prevents then from receiving local care is a system for sharing medical records among VA, DoD, and civilian hospitals and doctors. My reform will improve care, reduce risks and broaden access all at the same time.

Never again should a veteran stand in line to get an appointment to get an appointment. That should never happen again. Let me make it clear, this card is not intended to either replace the VA or privatize veterans' health

care, as some have wrongly charged. I believe the VA should always be there to provide top-quality care for our veterans, and I believe that the VA should continue to provide broad-spectrum health care to eligible veterans, in addition to specialized care in such areas as spinal injuries, prosthetics and blindness, services in which the VA sets the standard in medical care.

Even so, there are veterans that are eligible for care who are not currently able to receive it on account of distance, wait times, or the absence of certain specialties. For this group, the new card I propose will offer better alternatives to provide the benefits they have earned.

We must also recognize that greater care is needed for certain types of injuries. In the Senate, I co-authored the Wounded Warrior Act, which was the first major legislative initiative to cover post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. As President, I will build on this legislation that provides training and treatment for these injuries suffered by many in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The VA must also broaden its care for the women who are entering the armed forces in greater numbers than ever. The growing ranks of women in uniform have left the VA lagging behind in the service it provides. And here the Veterans Care Access Card will prove especially valuable, affording women medical options while the VA improves capacity and expands services.

These are among the elements of my reform agenda for the VA system. And today, as other occasions, I have stated in the plainest, most straightforward terms that the Veterans Health Care Access Card will expand existing benefits. I don't expect this will deter the Obama campaign from misrepresenting my proposals, but lest there be any doubt you have my pledge: My reforms would not force anyone to go to a non-VA facility. That is my promise. They will not signal privatization of the VA. And they will not replace any scheduled expansion of the VA network, including those facilities designed to serve veterans living in rural and remote areas.

I suppose from my opponent's vantage point, veterans' concerns are just one more issue to be spun or worked to advantage. This would explain why he has also taken liberties with my position on the G.I. Bill. In its initial version, that bill failed to address the number one education request that I have heard from career service members and their families, the freedom to transfer their benefits to a spouse or a child. The bill also did nothing to retain the young officer and enlisted leaders who form the backbone of our all-volunteer force.

As a political proposition, it would have been much easier for me to have signed on to what I considered flawed legislation. But the people of Arizona, and of all America, expect more from their representatives than that, and instead I sought a better bill. I am proud to say that the result is a law that better services our military, better serves military families and better serves the interests of our country.

No one who has worn the uniform of his or her country can ever take these matters lightly. We all learned an ethic in the service of looking after one another, of leaving no one behind, and this commitment did not end when we left the service. It is a matter of duty and of honor, whatever our commitments to veterans cost, if I am President those commitments will be kept. (Applause)

The next President will have many responsibilities to the American people, and I take them all seriously. But I have one responsibility that out-

weighs all the others, and that is to use whatever talents I possess, and every source God has granted me to protect the security of this great and good nation from all enemies foreign and domestic.

It is every veteran's hope that should their children be called upon to answer a call to arms, the battle will be necessary and the field will be chosen. But that is not their responsibility. It belongs to the government that called them. As it once was for us, their honor will be in their answer not their summons.

Whatever we think about how and why we went to war in Iraq, we are all humbled and grateful for their example. They now deserve the distinction of the best Americans and we owe them a debt we can never fully repay. We can only offer the small tribute of our humility and our commitment to do all that we can do, in less trying and costly circumstances, to help keep this nation worthy of their sacrifice.

Many of them have served multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many had their tours extended. Many returned to combat sooner than they had been led to expect. It was a sad and hard thing to ask so much more of Americans who have already given more than their fair share to the defense of our country.

Few of them and their families will have received the news about additional and longer deployment without aiming a few appropriate complaints in the general direction of people like me, who helped make the decision to send them there. And then they shouldered the weapon, they climbed in a cockpit and risked everything, everything, to accomplish their mission, to protect another people's freedom and our own country from harm.

It is a privilege beyond measure to live in a country served by them. I have had the good fortune to know personally a great many brave and selfless patriots who sacrificed and shed blood to defend America. But I have known none braver and better than those who do so today. They are our inspiration, as I suspect all of you were once there. I pray to my heavenly God that he will bless and protect them.

Thank you and God bless you.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged and standing ovation.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades and Sisters, if you will please take your seats. We need to get on with the program. We are running late now. Please take your seats.

INTRODUCTION OF RICHARD CROTTY, MAYOR, ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Our next guest directs the day-to-day operations of the Orange County, Florida, government, overseeing nearly 7,000 employees with an annual budget of over $2.5 billion.

He is a former member of the United States Army Reserve and is now widely recognized as an up-and-coming leader from his work in the Orange County community.

Please join me in welcoming the Mayor of Orange County, Mr. Richard Crotty. (Applause)

MAYOR CROTTY: Well, thank you very much for that very kind introduction, and good morning. As the Mayor of Orange County, it is my privilege to welcome you to the 109th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I am honored and humbled to be with you this morning, and I must say that I am honored and humbled to share the podium with one of America's great heroes, John McCain.

Let me begin by thanking you for choosing the Orange County Convention Center. This facility is now the second largest convention center in America, and the second busiest convention center in America, and located in the heart of the number one visitor destination in the world. You are the heroes of our nation who are here today, and I am so proud to salute you. It is a real pleasure to welcome you to Orange County, the land of sunshine and fun, and also a region of great opportunity.

Orange County is the number one destination for military veterans, those with combat experience, those with disabilities in service-related industries, and veterans in their retirement years.

More than 400,000 veterans call Central Florida home, more than any other place in the State of Florida, a state, by the way, that accounts for ten percent of all veteran benefits. I am proud to report that Orange County leads the way by helping veterans get access to benefits they have bravely earned.

In 1899, when our soldiers returned from the Spanish-American War and the Philippines insurrection, they found themselves with no support system to help them heal in body, mind and spirit. That is the situation that led to the creation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, an organization that developed many of the systems that now support veterans and their families. Thanks to those historic efforts in Orange County today, our Veterans Service Office provides assistance to all former and present members of the armed forces and their dependents.

These services include, among other things, preparing claims for compensation, sometimes the most challenging part, hospitalization, locational training, and providing access to other benefits which may be available to veterans. We have, I believe, an outstanding staff of people with military backgrounds to ensure that the men and women who serve our great nation are treated with the respect and honor they so richly deserve. So many families have paid a heavy price to preserve our way of lives as Americans.

Today, a whole new generation of families is making the sacrifice to keep the war on terror away from our shores. The democracy comes with a price. To all veterans from America's greatest generation to the present, we owe a profound debt of thanks to your dedication and valor.

While I was a member of the Florida Legislature, I worked to bring a VA Hospital to Orange County. Today, I continue to focus much of my energy in bringing a first-class VA Hospital to our medical city in East Orange County, a medical city that will not only include a state-of-the-art VA Hospital but a brand new medical school for the University of Central Florida and a Biomedical Research Institution known as the Burnham Research Center. I hope to be there on the day that the new VA Hospital opens its doors to provide you with this kind of state-of-the-art medical care to our veterans who so richly deserve it

So, as you can see, this facility is not only good for our veterans popu-

lation, it is also good for our economic diversification in our region. I am always grateful for the opportunity to recognize the courage and patriotism of the men and women who have served in the U.S. armed forces.

On behalf of my fellow citizens of Orange County, please accept our deepest appreciation for all you do for our country and this great nation. Because of you and so many of your brothers and sisters in harm's way, Americans enjoy a life and liberty in a free society. God bless you all and God bless America. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF AMERICAN FLAG SET TO MAYOR CROTTY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The Ladies Auxiliary National Patriotic Instructor will now present a commemorative flag set to Mayor Crotty.

NATIONAL PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR COLETTE BISHOP: Mayor Crotty, it is with great pride and honor that I am privileged to present you with the flag of our country. I ask that you display it proudly, and when you look at it, please remember America's veterans who have fought and some who have died so that we may display this flag proudly and be free. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF MINISTER KAO HUA-CHU, VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION, REPUBLIC OF CHINA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: It is now my privilege to introduce Minister Kao Hua-chu, the Minister of the Veterans Affairs Commission from the Republic of China. He was a retired general with 35 years of service before becoming the Minister of the Veterans Affairs Commission, which is similar to our Department of Veterans Affairs. We, in the VFW, have a relationship going back many years with his Commission, and I am very pleased that he could join us again for our National Convention this year.

He and his wife were gracious hosts to a small delegation I led to Taiwan last summer, and most recently they hosted VFW Ladies Auxiliary National President Virginia Carman just last month. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Minister Kao. (Applause)

GREETINGS – MINISTER KAO HUA-CHU

MINISTER KAO: Thank you. Commander-in-Chief Lisicki, National President Carman, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen: It is a great honor to be invited to address your National Convention again. I attended your 2005 and 2006 conventions in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Reno, Nevada.

Now, after the presidential election we had this last March in Taiwan, I am reappointed the Minister of Veterans Affairs of the Republic of China. I took office on May 20th. You can be sure that I am happy to see all VFW good friends of VAC here in Orlando, Florida.

You and we are families. Our two organizations have built a very strong relationship for nearly 50 years, and in the past thirty-some years we have maintained exchanging top-level visits. Although Commander-in-Chief Lisicki visited Taiwan and I could not be with him, I am very sure his party has been very well taken care of and has had the use of the VA facilities in the Republic of China in Taiwan.

We took them to eyewitness how we serve our veterans and what our

country has accomplished and political and economic ways. In return, the VFW never failed to invite us to participate in your annual conventions.

What is more, you passed a resolution in support of our country, the Republic of China in Taiwan every year at your National Convention. We appreciate your support and we cherish this interaction relationship. We shall put in all our efforts to make this relationship even stronger year after year.

On March 22nd of this year, we, in Taiwan, held a presidential election. Ma Ying-jeou, a Harvard Ph.D., said he would bring a much better economy and dignity to the fellow countrymen. He told the American envoy that he would leave his government in a better relationship with the United States. The people in Taiwain, Republic of China, have been pursuing a life of peace, democracy and freedom, just like the Americans.

As compliment greeting by President Bush, Taiwan has become a beacon of democracy to Asia and the world. The Republic of China is now a democracy respected by the international communities. With the inauguration of the new administration led by Ma Ying-jeou, the Republic of China will remain a physical ally of the United States.

Our dear VFW friends, the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China in Taiwan very much cherish your friendship. You always have been in support of the Republic of China, and the VAC truly appreciated, dear friends, we in the VAC, we certainly look forward to your continuous friendship and support for Taiwan to self-defend herself and engaging in more economic activities of international organization. Thank you again for allowing me to speak before you, and I wish you all a very successful convention and good health. I salute you and your armed forces. (Applause)

Now, before I leave the podium, I would like to take this honor to present to Commander-in-Chief Lisicki a declaration from President Ma Ying-jeou, the President of my country, to express our gratitude to him for his efforts in spreading our relationship. I will ask my colleague, Hans Song, to read the citation. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. HANS SONG: The certificate accompanying the award of the Order of Cloud and Banner with Cravat.

"Mr. George Lisicki, 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 George Lisicki is presented the Medal of the Order of Cloud and Banner with Cravat No. 3652, by the Government of the Republic of China, in accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Decoration Regulations."

Signed by President Lio Chao-shiuan, Premier, and Minister of National Defense La Liang Guanglie, and presented by the Minister of Veterans Affairs, General Kao Hua-chu. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL RECRUITER OF THE YEAR AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: As Commander-in-Chief, I wanted to emphatically stress the critical importance of recruiting, as well as reward those individuals who worked so hard to perform this vital mission.

This year, I have the pleasure of awarding the National Recruiter of the Year Award to an individual who has recruited a phenomenal 526 new or

reinstated members. That he hails from one of our smallest Departments, Europe, makes this accomplishment more outstanding and dear to my heart, and fully deserves to be well-recognized.

From Post 10658 in Schweinfurt, Germany, Department of Europe, please welcome someone well known to us, Peter J. Mascetti, the National Recruiter of the Year. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: The citation reads as follows: "National Recruiter of the Year Award presented to Peter J. Mascetti.

"In sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of your outstanding service in the VFW Membership Program.

"Your exceptional initiative and untiring effort during the 2007-2008 membership year contributed immeasurably toward the National membership goal of recruiting 175,000 new or reinstated members.

"You are highly commended for your ultimate professional achievements and recognized for your exemplary dedication to the goals of the 'Veterans Forever Serving' 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 18th day of August, 2008." It has been signed by George Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – COMRADE PETER J. MASCETTI

COMRADE MASCETTI: Thank you. Commander-in-Chief Lisicki, National officers and National staff, Comrades and Sisters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary:

I stand before you humbled again to have earned such recognition. I am a Desert Storm veteran in the great Department of Europe, which each year consistently has five to ten recruiters. I want to thank the fine comrades from Europe for their support and it is my honor to represent them. The Department of Europe has had a recruitment accomplishment. Am I bragging? You bet, because we take membership very seriously in Europe.

I want to thank the VFW national staff for their assistance with membership, in particular, Jim Rowoldt, Shontaye Davis, Kathy Pratt, Ladonna Miles to name a few. Please join me with a round of applause for the great staff at the National Headquarters. (Applause)

I couldn't have earned this award without the assistance of a VFW supporter and individual who believes in helping our nation's warriors as much as I do. That is my wife, Juanita, a German national citizen who has given countless hours of recruiting veterans and telling the veterans about the VFW membership. She is a heck of a recruiter who explains the reasons why veterans should join the VFW as I do. Thanks, Juanita, and I love you.

In closing, I would ask that all active National Guard Reserve members please stand. That is active National Guard Reserve members please stand. These proud patriots are the reason for what I do for them each and every day, and I will continue to do this so long as I am able. Thank you and God bless. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS TO 2008 ALL-AMERICAN COMMANDERS

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades and Sisters, at this time we will go

into the All-American program.

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. This year, we have 19 Department, 34 District and 199 Post All-Americans. Now, Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner, and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell will present All-American Commanders awards to this elite group of VFW members.

Alabama
Post:
Samuel D. Meadows, Post 5566
Raymond Brandon, Post 6073

Alaska
Department:
Joseph J. Simms, Post 12052

Arizona
Department:
Betty M. Gripp, Post 10008
District:
Timothy M. Borland, District 7, Post 9972
Post:
Dominico Tamilio, Post 720
Ronald E. DeSpain, Post 6271
Ralph F. Arvizu, Post 6310
Clarence J. Larson, Post 9972

Arkansas
District:
Stanley D. Nuckolls, District 5, Post 2330
Post:
Don F. Reynolds, Post 4548
James W. Dahlem, Post 8532

California
Post:
Jesse M. Sanchez, Post 52
Gerry R. Blake, Post 2122
Ronald Harshman, Post 5689
Gary L. Murawski, Post 9869
Franklin D. Tucker, Post 9934

Delaware
Department
Danny Steele, Post 7234
District:
Mark M. Newman, District 3, Post 3238
Post:
John R. Morrow, Post 475

District of Columbia

Department:

Dominador Carreon, Post 5471

Europe

Department:

George J. Gilgore, Post 10614

District:

Norbert Millet, District 3, Post 9342

Post:

Patrick A. Buckman, Post 9342
Matthew W. Coulter, Post 9534
Lance W. Howard, Post 10557
Amber Putnam, Post 10614
Robert L. Gambert, Post 10810

Florida

Department:

Jack T. McDermott, Post 9610

District:

Paul C. Considine, District 1, Post 7674

Post:

Roger M. Formosa, Post 2206
Albert T. Burley, Post 3282
Richard N. Ellson, Post 3911
Norman J. Evans, Post 7674
Rober J. Hernandez, Post 7909
Walter Siler, Post 8195
Willie Ellison, Post 12054
Stephen Valley, Post 12055

Georgia

Department:

Dean E. Smith, Post 5290

Post:

Lloyd D. Bailey, Post 665
Michael J. O'Steen, Post 5976
Michael E. O'Bryen, Post 7404

Hawaii

Department:

Richard JC Wong, Post 3292

Post:

Joseph F. Bragg, Post 2875
Joseph Ancheta, Post 3292
Stanley Y. Fernandez, Post 10276

Idaho

Department:

John R. Crotinger, Post 3520

District:

Donald G. Riegel, District 1, Post 889

Post:

Donald W. Landin, Post 63
DeWayne J. Mayer, Post 12062

Illinois
District:

Paul E. Kallembach, District 19, Post 2287

Post:

Donald L. Bowling, Post 2024
Miles Floit, Post 2287
Patrick T. Green, Post 2298
Kenneth W. Samborski, Post 2486
Henry M. Kowalski, Post 2791
Suzanne Ogden, Post 4308
John G. Patterson, Post 7448

Indiana
Post:

Richard Ford, Post 972
Johnny R. Capps, Post 6653
Steven Beauprez, Post 6978

Kansas
Post:

Andrew J. Culbertson, Post 6654
Bruce R. Fischbach, Post 7397

Kentucky
Post:

Alvey Gregory, Post 3167

Louisiana
Post:

Federico M. Arends, Post 5951
Ernest P. Smith, Post 12065

Maryland
Department:

Richard S. Udoff, Post 521

District:

Tomas F. Bunting, District 2, Post 2562

District and Post Commander:

George F. Helmcamp, District 14, Post 5838

Post:

Douglas C. MacArthur, Post 5337
Edward McKinney, Post 6506
John M. Reiman, Post 6694
Thomas C. Williams, Post 9862

Massachusetts
Post:

Christopher M. Colby, Post 1018
Carmen Dello Lacono, Post 2017

Michigan
Post:

Jack Pickard, Post 2780

Minnesota
Post:

Leon R. Ulferts, Post 3915
Michael D. King, Post 9625

Mississippi
Post:

Charles Purchner, Post 2539
Kay A. Perego, Post 4272

Missouri
Post:

John S. Holton, Post 7356

Nebraska
Post:

John R. Gollihare, Post 9798

Nevada
Department:

Gilbert Hernandez, Post 2350

District:

Joe D. Rigsby, District 2, Post 2350

Post:

David Sousa, Post 3396

New Hampshire
Department:

John J. Calo, Post 1772

Post:

James Golden, Post 1772

New Jersey
Department:

Robert G. Pinto, Post 1817

District:

Alfred H. Smith, District 6, Post 2179
Warren C. George, District 11, Post 6590

Post:

Allen N. Rhodes, Post 220
John F. Kane, Post 493
Thomas J. Farrell

New Mexico

Department:

Vincent B.J. Lawrence, Post 7686

District:

William D. Teweleit, District 3, Post 7686

Post:

Allan Kuchinsky, Post 7686

New York

Post:

Arthur L. Hanley, Post 672
John H. Ambrose, Post 7414
James Blount, Post 9352

North Carolina

Department:

John W. Shelander, Post 670

District:

William H. Ray, District 5, Post 9983
Richard F. Zavesky, District 8, Post 10630

Post:

Jack Campbell, Post 2423
Charles L. Cole, Post 6018
Alan E. Scott, Post 7031
Frank Foronda, Post 8073
Jessie L. Bellflowers, Post 10630

Ohio

Post:

David Perdue, Post 4931
Michael W. Maloney, Post 7262
David R. Cooper, Post 7883

Pacific Areas

Department:

Rhett O. Webber, Post 9892

District:

Ronald D. Teets, District 3, Post 10033
James E. Oden, District 5, Post 9951

Post:

Dale A. Barsy, Post 2485
David Ratcliffe, Post 9876

Pennsylvania

Post:

Edward J. McDonald, Post 1536
Douglas R. Kraeuter, Post 1810

South Carolina

Department:

Johnny L. Wilson, Post 4262

Post:

Matthew D. Gooden, Post 4262
Harold Copeland, Post 6561
David Rearden, Post 6932
Joseph M. Moravcik, Post 9539

Tennessee

Post:

Curtis B. Hudson, Post 3380
Billie S. Cassidy, Post 4973

Texas

District:

John W. Clark, District 2, Post 2775
David W. Bennett, District 25, Post 4372
Wilbur R. Dudley, District 28, Post 6115

Post:

Antonio D. Vasquez, Post 76
Jesse R. Hamilton, Post 1839
Albert L. Braneff, Post 2775
John A. Sargent, Post 3892
Edward T. Garcia, Post 4341
Roger Langford, Post 4372
Bennie J. Ellis, Post 4443
William M. Pina, Post 6115
Jerry Foreman, Post 8246
Guadalupe T. Alvarez, Post 8925
Eddie R. Maycen, Post 12058

Utah

Department:

Vernon R. Wade, Post 3586

District:

Sanford Rosenthal, District 1, Post 3586
Norman I. Nelson, District 3, Post 1695

District and Post Commander:

Charles M. Edwards, District 4, Post 4918

Post:

James C. McKee, Post 409
Karl V. Potter, Post 3586
Everett Hoddy, Post 8868

Virginia

Department:

Jimmy L. Wallace, Post 1503

District:

Joseph O. Longstreet, District 1, Post 3219
Charles D. Absher, District 3, Post 6364
Michael C. Agresti, District 10, Post 3150

Post:

David R. Goldstein, Post 392
Ronald C. Laney, Post 1503

David W. Kipfinger, Post 2820
Carl A. Penning, Post 3160
David L. Jonker, Post 9808

West Virginia
Post:

Stephen D. Rexrode, Post 6454

Wisconsin
Post:

DeWitt H. Woodworth, Post 1530

INTRODUCTION OF ACTING SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE MICHAEL DONLEY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: It is now my honor to introduce the Acting Secretary of the Air Force, the Honorable Michael B. Donley.

Secretary Donley has more than 30 years experience in the national security arena.

From 1972 to 1975, he served in the Army with the 18th Airborne Corps and the 5th Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He has been a National Security Editor for the Heritage Foundation, was a staff member on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and a Director of Defense Programs, and then Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Security Council.

From 1989 to 1993, he was the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Financial Management and Comptroller, and in 1993, he was tapped to serve as the Acting Secretary of the Air Force, before becoming a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

From 1996 to 2005, he was a Senior Vice President for a policy and analysis consulting firm before becoming the Director of Administration and Management in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, a position that is essentially tasked with running the Pentagon.

Recently, Defense Secretary Gates recommended him to the President as the new Air Force Secretary.

President Bush accepted the recommendation and nominated him on June 26 of this year.

While he awaits Senate confirmation, he fulfills the important responsibilities of organizing, training, equipping and providing for more than 300,000 active-duty airmen, 180,000 reservists and guardsmen, 160,000 civilians, and their families.

Comrades and sisters, please welcome the Acting Secretary of the Air Force, Mike Donley. (Applause)

REMARKS – USAF ACTING SECRETARY MICHAEL DONLEY

ACTING SECRETARY DONLEY: Thank you, VFW. It is great to be here in Orlando. I want to thank you for the support that the VFW provides to our men and women in uniform as well as over 23 million American veterans who have defended liberty, many in remote locations far from home. They deserve our Nation's utmost gratitude.

Our veterans have answered their country's call to duty, representing

America's unswerving commitment to individual human rights and dignity. They honored our Constitution and the ideals on which it rests with their service and commitment. As an Army veteran myself, I am grateful to be counted among their ranks.

I have to tell you, the men and women of today's Armed Forces remain just as dedicated and committed to the ideals of our country as their predecessors. Today's airmen, soldiers, sailors and Marines are making tremendous contributions to our national defense, from defending the skies above our homeland to capturing insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their daily actions honor the proud legacy of military service that organizations like the VFW continue to uphold and sustain as an essential part of the American character.

Before I begin this morning, I want to offer my thanks for your efforts with the airlines to waive baggage surcharges for military personnel traveling on official orders. This is much appreciated by our men and women in uniform.

Well, thanks for your invitation today. This is a great opportunity to share with you a snapshot of your Air Force, and in particular our contributions to the Global War on Terror.

So, who are today's airmen? Well, the total force of regular, reserve, guard and civilians numbers are about 660,000 personnel serving in over 50 different career fields. Nearly 68,000 airmen are assigned outside the continental United States in 98 countries.

Today's airmen are educated and innovative, continually improving their skills. Over 50 percent of the Officer Corps has earned advanced or professional degrees, and nearly a quarter of the enlisted corps possesses at least an Associate Degree, with many earning Bachelor's and graduate degrees as well.

In the active force, over 38 percent were born after 1982, and over 60 percent are married, many with children and other dependents. Nearly 20 percent of today's airmen are women, including 596 pilots, 235 navigators and 149 air battle managers. Additionally, military couples are now commonplace. At present, we have over 19,000 couples where both spouses serve in the armed forces.

Today's airmen fly and maintain an operational aircraft fleet that averages over 24 years old, and a tanker fleet that averages over 49 years old. For comparison, back in 1967, the age of the operational aircraft fleet averaged just over eight years.

Finally, today's airmen are busy. Since September 11, 2001, America's airmen have filled over 650,000 contingency personnel requirements, the vast majority in direct support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This past April, the number of sorties flown in those operations and Operation Noble Eagle in the skies over the United States, surpassed one million.

Today's airmen build on the great traditions of America's veterans, delivering global vigilance, global reach and global power to joint commanders in every corner of the globe with both pride and professionalism.

Let's talk about the Air Force contributions to the global war on terror. There is no question that our joint partners in the Army and the Marine Corps are shouldering the heaviest loads in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But these are fundamentally joint operations, and your airmen are making significant and critical contributions. Right now, over 33,000 airmen are deployed to contingencies worldwide, with over 26,000 of America's airmen spread

across 63 different locations through the Middle East. Thousands more stand behind them providing operational support from their home bases.

The Air Force's first contribution is global reach. Today, thousands of airmen provide the air bridge that links the United States with distant lands. On average, an Air Mobility Command aircraft takes off every 90 seconds from somewhere in the world.

For operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the men and women of Air Mobility Command average 145 sorties per day for airlift and aerial refueling. They have also airlifted over 2,800 heavy-duty MRAP, Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles to the theater, and they have recently been using a new Joint Precision Air Drop System or JPADS, utilizing GPS, to directly drop supplies and equipment to joint and coalition forces in the field with unprecedented accuracy.

Once in the theater, U.S. and coalition forces are supported by over 46 satellites, along with their network of operations centers and ground stations. Invisible but always present, these contributions from space are facilitating joint command and control, GPS-based navigation, accurate weather forecasting, and the collection, processing and dissemination of intelligence. Data moves around the globe through multiple time zones in mere milliseconds, transiting through networks and cyberspace that are defended by cyberspace warriors.

Another contribution you are not likely to hear much about is that of the "Quiet Professionals" from Air Force Special Operations Command. Embedded throughout Iraq and Afghanistan with their joint and coalition partners, they fly a multitude of specialized aircraft to infiltrate, resupply and exfiltrate special forces teams, perform special missions on the ground, undertake combat search and rescue, and to deliver surgical firepower. More importantly, as this audience would appreciate, they usually perform these missions at night under all weather conditions, and often in hostile areas.

Air Force special operators continually demonstrate their responsiveness and dedication to the joint team. In one example, by closely monitoring an emerging situation on the battlefield, an AC-130 gunship crew was able to notify a Navy SEAL team of suspicious activity occurring near their target area. When the SEAL team soon came under fire, the gunship was able to respond in just 23 seconds.

The gunship's unique configuration allows it to rapidly identify the target, ensuring the safety of friendly personnel and precisely deliver devastating firepower all in a matter of seconds. Your Air Commandos and Special Tactics Teams are in high demand and have been immersed in the Global War on Terrorism from America's earliest operations against the Taliban and Al-Qaida.

Our airmen are also maintaining a watchful eye over the Joint Commander's area of responsibility. Indeed, one of the biggest changes since I served in this position 15 years ago is the explosion of new capabilities for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, especially through the use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems. I knew them before as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, or UAVs. The name change has been subtle but truly important.

Today's capability is not just about the vehicle or platform; it's about the sensors, the instantaneous dissemination of data to intelligence and command centers, and tactical units, and fusion with other information to deliver precise situational awareness and rapid targeting. In fact, while the platforms are flying from bases in theater, the pilots and sensor managers are operating

them from bases in the United States.

The integrity of these new aerospace and communications technologies have yielded quantum increases in operational effectiveness. As these new capabilities spread through all the services, the armed MQ-1 Predator and its large cousin, the MQ-9 Reaper, have been in particularly high demand.

In 2006, DoD's Quadrennial Defense Review set the goal of having 21 Combat Air Patrols of these vehicles available in theater by 2010, four years away. Instead, in response to increasing demand from the Joint commanders, the Air Force met that goal in late 2007. Today, we are flying 26 CAPs and are on track to reach 31 by the end of this year. In addition, we have pushed out over 4,000 small electronic kits called ROVERs, which allow ground forces to connect directly with aircraft and receive full-motion video from Unmanned Aerial Systems, further exploiting the benefits of persistent overhead surveillance.

With these innovations, the time between when a target is detected and a shooter disrupts or destroys the target, what we call the "kill chain" is rapidly diminishing. During Desert Storm, time-sensitive targeting could take days, and during operations in the Balkans during the mid-to-late 1990s, it was reduced to hours. Now, in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Joint Team is completing the "kill chain" within a few minutes.

Here is an example of how it all works together in Joint Operations. On July 7, 2006, an Army Special Forces team with embedded Air Force Air Controllers converged on a suspected Al-Qaida safe house. The team received intelligence based on data from an Unarmed Predator that was flying overhead, but actually being flown by pilots half a world away at Creech Air Force Base, Nevada.

The data was interpreted by analysts at places like Beale Air Force Base, California, and Langley Air Force Base, Virginia. The exchange of information occurred in real-time over a distance of 7,000 miles thanks to the communications relay capabilities of satellites. They also had benefited from human and intelligence developed by a Coalition Team that had built the trust and confidence of the local population.

Once the Special Forces and Air Controllers were in position, they requested an air strike on the target from the Combined Air Operations Center, which is a command and control center composed of personnel from all services as well as our Coalition partners. This request was immediately relayed to a Control and Reporting Center in Balad, Iraq, which passed the tasking to already airborne F-16s.

Within minutes, the air controllers talked the F-16s on to the target to release a 500-pound laser-guided munition. It was a good hit, but for insurance the F-16s released a 500-pound JDAM, Joint Direct Attack Munition that is guided by GPS technology. The local team confirmed the re-attack was also successful. The target was at that time the most wanted terrorist in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarkawi, and I am happy to tell you the world is a better place without him.

This is a great example of how Joint and Coalition Teams, spanning multiple units, time zones, and command centers, can bring together a full array of military capabilities to yield a successful mission.

Some 3,000 airmen are embedded with ground forces in the Central Command area of responsibility, calling in fires from aircraft overhead. In addition, over 4,800 airmen are performing tasks more usually performed by the ground forces, such as convoy security. Air Force security police, engi-

neers, intelligence and EOD technicians are among the highest in demand, and over 100,000 airmen have shared with soldiers and Marines the burden of multiple deployments to the theater.

One such airman is Tech Sergeant Vilma Cantu. While deployed to Iraq, she led a two-person combat camera team to support 34 ground combat missions and 8 air assault raids, acquiring nearly 600 hours of video intelligence and documentary evidence for Multi-National Corps Iraq.

While patrolling one day with a Stryker Brigade and a local citizens group, Sergeant Cantu and her team were caught in a complex ambush along the Tigress River. Throughout a three-hour firefight, she continued to film with her video camera while returning fire with her M-4 Carbine and her side arm, shifting as necessary back and forth between filming and firing.

She not only accomplished her mission as a combat photographer while also fulfilling her duties as an American airman and warrior. Although the fire she provided helped subdue the enemy and capture three terrorists, the imagery she captured of the entire battle was just as valuable to the Brigade and Division Commanders.

Sergeant Cantu's motivation through this fight and several other combat situations was very simple. As she put it, "I was just doing my job."

Like Sergeant Cantu, America's airmen also "do their job" to care for our wounded, ill and injured in theater, and bring them back home.

America's airmen are responsible for the military hospitals operated at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan and Joint Base Balad in Iraq, as well as smaller facilities in Kirkuk and Baghdad. They deliver medical care close to the front, saving the lives of soldiers, Marines, airmen, civilians, coalition partners and the local population.

With new operating concepts, streamlined equipment, and better integration of the medical mission into the strategic airlift fleet, our care for injured warriors has substantially improved over previous conflicts. In Vietnam, it took approximately 45 days for an injured warrior to reach medical care closer to his home station, and in Desert Storm that figure was about 10 days. Today, we often are able to move injured warriors from theater to the United States in three days or less. Additionally, with advances in medical technology and operational effectiveness, we are witnessing unprecedented survival rates, and the lowest disease, non-battle injury and died of wounds rates of any conflict in U.S. history.

Once home, our injured warriors are provided with some of the most comprehensive wounded warrior programs in the nation's history. In Washington, a joint DoD-VA Senior Oversight Council is working hard to expand medical care in needed areas, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury, TBI, perhaps the signature injuries from this conflict. They are also working to cut back the confusing bureaucracy that too often impedes a smooth transition between DoD and VA medical systems.

At military hospitals around the country, we are expanding collaboration between the Services so that once returning to the United States, wounded warriors can receive medical care closer to home. The involvement of family members and local communities is an incredibly important part of wounded warrior recovery.

To ease stress on family members stationed in Alaska, Air Force and Army officials came together to establish a Traumatic Brain Injury treatment facility at Elmendorf Air Force Base to ease the burden on Army soldiers

returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The Elmendorf Hospital Clinic has screened and treated hundreds of Army soldiers for TBI. It has been a huge success, eliminating the need for soldiers in Alaska to leave their families and travel thousands of miles to Army hospitals for treatment.

As you can tell, from deployment through operations, and redeployment and care of the wounded, your Air Force is deeply committed to the current fight. I believe you appreciate that, even with the currently positive trend in Iraq, the war against radical and violent extremists is likely to be a long one. So, while engaged in this fight, we must also remain prepared for other threats that might emerge in the future: potential flashpoints or conflicts that would stress our forces in different ways, and demand different capabilities.

America's Air Force is also responsible for assisting the Joint Team with projecting our national strength abroad. With global power, we possess the capability to hold at risk at any point on the planet. This requires that we continually acquire, maintain, and upgrade a diverse set of capabilities that can thrive in a variety of operational environments, whether permissive or non-permissive.

So, my role, along with my new partner, Air Force Chief of Staff Norty Schwartz, is to "manage the mix" of assets that we maintain across the Total Force so that the Air Force remains ready to deliver air, space, or cyberspace capabilities in response to any contingency when called upon by our combatant commanders and national leadership.

And within this spectrum of potential conflict, we need to maintain a strong and balanced capability for nuclear deterrence. As you know, the loss of focus on our nuclear posture, especially since the end of the Cold War, has been a significant concern. Internal missteps by the Air Force, well-publicized and documented in several critical reports over the past years, have provided a serious "wakeup" call.

I can assure you that this issue now has the full attention of the Air Force's civilian and military leadership. Commanders at all levels are getting back to basics, emphasizing adherence to the highest standards of performance, discipline, and accountability. Just last week, a re-inspection of the Fifth Bomb Wing at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota, which had an "unsatisfactory" rating in May, yielded an "extremely strong satisfactory" rating this time around. It is a positive data point, but not yet a trend; and we have much work to do.

A Nuclear Task Force is currently drafting a comprehensive road map that will fully recommit the Air Force to its vital role in support of this critical national mission. Incorporating the recommendations from several reports, including the current panel chaired by former Secretary of Defense Jim Schlesinger, the Air Force Roadmap, which we expect to complete in October, will address every dimension of the nuclear enterprise, including education and training, organizations, leadership, material sustainment, security and inspections.

Going forward, no matter how many or how few nuclear weapons are in the U.S. nuclear arsenal, the Air Force will remain vigilant in this mission area. Our standard is perfection, and our commitment will be unshakable.

Yet, as with any large institution with a long history, our Air Force is not without its challenges.

We maintain aging aircraft fleets that are becoming more expensive to operate, while simultaneously we are trying to recapitalize critical mission areas such as aerial refueling, combat search and rescue, and the fighter/

attack fleet.

We are slowly working to migrate emergency wartime supplemental funding for critical, new capabilities into the Air Force's annual budget, so that we are fiscally prepared when wartime budgets disappear. But at the same time, just like other American businesses, we are managing rising operational costs in personnel, medical care and fuel. We are also striving to meet new mission requirements in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, in space, and especially cyberspace. And we must look at all these challenges from an enterprise perspective to achieve appropriate balance in missions, operational effectiveness, and efficiency.

Amid these challenges, however, we have at least two constants: the high quality of airmen attracted to military service and their commitment to the core values of Integrity First, Service Before Self and Excellence In All We Do.

While the Air Force has taken some knocks over the past year, I have found since arriving in late June, military and civilian leaders at all levels ready to learn from past experiences, apply corrective action, and move forward.

I am proud to once again be leading the finest Air Force in the world. Along with their Joint partners, today's airmen are dedicated and committed, responding to all their country asks, and more.

In many respects, the young people serving since 9/11 are helping to create America's future "greatest generation." Their actions build upon a long and proud history of military service to which so many Americans, and especially those in this audience, have contributed.

Thank you for all you do in education and outreach to remind our citizens of their heritage and obligations and for your support of our veterans. And on behalf of the United States Air Force, I thank you for your support of today's young warriors, and especially your airmen, as they defend the United States and its global interests, ensuring stability and prosperity across the global commons.

It has been an honor to be with you today. Thank you, VFW. God speed and God bless. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARY L. KURPIUS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Perhaps no one in our organization exhibits honor, integrity and compassion more than the next person we are about to honor.

Gary Kurpius has left an indelible mark upon the VFW and to all who have come to rely on his knowledge and expertise. As VFW Commander-in-Chief, Gary was unequalled in his unwavering commitment and loyalty to America's veterans. Throughout his year as Commander-in-Chief, Gary also proved to be an aggressive spokesman for all we serve.

For that, and much more, we owe a forever lasting debt of gratitude to him. Please join me in honoring Past Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius with the VFW Distinguished Service Medal and Citation. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to Gary Kurpius.

"In lasting appreciation and spirited recognition of 37 years of unyielding commitment and stalwart service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the

United States. As a dedicated leader and highly involved member, he proactively fulfilled many duties including All-American Post Commander and All-American District Commander. He served as a Department of Alaska Service Officer for 19 years and as the Department of Alaska Adjutant for 17 years. Through his illustrious endeavors, he earned All-American Department Commander honors and ultimately reached the pinnacle of VFW achievement as Commander-in-Chief.

"His steadfast commitment to the visions of the VFW, along with the professional presence and sound integrity with which he performed his duties are in the finest tradition of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hand and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2008."

This has been signed by George J. Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

REMARKS – PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KURPIUS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KURPIUS: Thank you, "Gunner", and Commander-in-Chief. Mr. Phelps, you won the Certificate of Appreciation to the 108th National Convention, and this one is more than the eight that you won. (laughter) It is a great honor. To receive such a prestigious award is something that you don't do by yourself.

I would like to thank my Department of Alaska, my home Post 963 in Wasilla, and all the other officers I had the opportunity to serve with on the National level, the Furgess-Mueller-Kurpius team on down to the Mueller-Kurpius and Lisicki team, and finally the Kurpius-Lisicki-Gardner team. They were all great individuals. I will tell you what, comrades and sisters, the friendships you make with them as you go through the chairs is second to none. That is something I will treasure forever.

I also have to thank my wife, Nancy, who is back there, and my children. When you jump into these endeavors, and any of the officers that go through it, you give up a good seven years of your life. But it is something that each and every one of them has done willingly, as I did. There is nothing that is more satisfying than being able to work for the veterans.

You are not only the leader of a 1.7 million organization. When we go out and travel and we speak on veterans' entitlements, veterans' benefits, we are representing the 25 million veterans in this country. You are representing the two million veterans, and to have success such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars has, it takes a great team. It takes a great team in Kansas City. It takes a great team in Washington, D.C., and it takes a great team out in the field, and that means each and every one of you.

I want to thank all of you for all that you do each and every day, for what you have done in the past, for what you are doing today and what I know you are going to do in the future for our great organization, our veterans, our active duty veterans in our communities. You are all number one in my book. I will treasure my years going through the chairs, having the opportunity to represent this great organization. And I hopefully will be able to serve for many more years the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the veterans of our great country. Thank you so much. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF MAJOR GENERAL (RETIRED) CRAIG WHELDEN, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY COVENANT TASK FORCE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: One of the important factors in retaining good soldiers is maintaining their quality of life, not just for the soldiers, but for the families. And it is more than just a soldier's pay. It is the medical, the housing, youth services, and education that are some of the issues which help define the ultimate warrior.

To do these vital mission for Army families worldwide, the Army leadership, in February of this year, created the Army Community Covenant Project, a $1.4 billion investment in fiscal year 2008 for the purpose of bringing together all the components of the Army family, including local employers, educators, and civic and business leaders.

Not only does the covenant project unite the soldier and the community, but it also recognizes and emphasizes the value of the soldier and his or her family within the community.

As one officer put it, "The Army family covenant is a way for Army leaders to let soldiers and their families know that the Army truly appreciates their service, and we are absolutely committed to their well-being and quality of life."

Fort Benning signed the first Army Community Covenant on April 17, and to date, more than 25 covenants have been signed at major installations across the nation.

Quality of life issues are certainly the Army's number one priority and always a monumental task, but thanks to the leadership and expertise of such exemplary people as Major General Craig Whelden, the covenant has the factors in place to ensure the project will succeed.

From 1998-2000, Major General Craig Whelden served as the Commanding General of the U.S. Army's Community and Family Support Center, overseeing all Army soldier and family programs, as well as the Army's Morale, Welfare and Recreation Programs.

For the past nine years, he has been a member of the Executive Committee of the United States Army's Morale, Welfare and Recreation Board of Directors.

Please welcome our good friend, Major General Craig Whelden. (Applause)

REMARKS – MAJOR GENERAL (RET.) CRAIG WHELDEN

MAJOR GENERAL WHELDEN: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. My daughter has told me many times the best speech is a short one. I will try to get you on track or try to get you back on track as soon as possible.

I know I am the last thing between you and lunch. I am honored and humble to be here among a group of people who have selflessly served their country during wars and have served their country so well. I am indebted to you and I am humbled and honored to be in your presence.

Last January, I got a call from the Pentagon and they asked me to come up to Washington, D.C., and head up a program called Army Community Covenant. I drove up to Washington in early February, and I have been there ever since. So, what is Army Community Covenant? It is an opportunity for America's communities to connect with its soldiers and their family members.

In recent months, as this has developed, we have expanded this beyond just the Army. It is now a program that wraps its arms around all service members. We do this in two ways. First, we have a series of community covenant signing ceremonies all over the country.

You heard Commander-in-Chief Lisicki say the first one was at Fort Benning, in Columbus, Georgia. We have had 25 to 30 since then, and we have another 35 to 40 scheduled. That is a symbolic demonstration of America's communities' connection to its service members and its families. We do this to raise the level of visibility of the need for support from America.

There are many people out there who are supporting this, and certainly the VFW does and other veterans organizations, but there are a lot of people that are a little bit complacent. Some people want to help, but they don't know how. This is an opportunity for us to put on the table the connection between America and its armed forces.

We have had a number of ceremonies hosted by governors, by city mayors, by business leaders and civic organizations. We encourage all of you to attend and participate in those ceremonies as you learn about them. How do you learn about them? I am going to position myself at the Army display next door for the next couple of hours.

Regrettably, I will have to leave later this afternoon to go to Fort Riley where we are having a ceremony in a day or two with the Governor and the Secretary of the Army. We have 6,000 of these trifolds. I encourage you to mention this to your brothers and sisters about this trifold. Stop by the Army desk at the Exhibit Hall and pick one of these up.

In this trifold, what you will find is a Web site. The Web site identifies best practices of community support at the national, state and local levels. What we are doing is promoting and promulgating throughout America those best practices so other people can learn about this. Again, it is a two-prong endeavor.

The covenant ceremonies are all over the country at the state and local levels, and seek a proclamation of best practices so we can plant seeds in new communities where support is perhaps lacking a little bit.

I was at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, last week. I have a building there named after Sergeant First Class Paul Smith, killed in combat in Iraq in 2000, and a Medal of Honor winner. It reminded me of an interview done by Katie Couric just a few months ago with Sergeant Smith's family. She asked his son, 12-year-old David, what it was like to have to talk about the death of his father.

Here is what David said and I quote: "I am doing this to help out the kids who have lost a father or mother in the war. When I speak out and I go on the news, they probably see me, that I have lost my father. Then they will feel better because they will see they are not alone. They are not the only one who has lost somebody."

I left the ceremony and went to St. Louis to catch an airplane to come here. When I walked up to the American Airlines counter, I saw 20 or 30 young soldiers that looked like they were 16, 17, 18 years old standing in front of the counter with their duffel bags. I got behind one and struck up a conversation.

A 17-year-old named Joshua, he had just finished basic training. I said, "Where are you headed?" He said, "I am going home to Minnesota. I am going home and I will be there until next summer." I said, "Home, didn't you just graduate from basic training?" He said, "Yes, sir, but I am going home to

finish high school." He is 17 years old, between his junior and senior year in high school. He is now a soldier, completed basic training and going back to his senior year, and then going off to war.

Twelve-year-old David Smith, son of a Medal of Honor winner, 17-year-old Joshua, a soldier headed back to high school and then off to war, there is the future. I said to Joshua before I left him, "Take care of yourself. I used to wear the uniform that you are wearing now." You know what he said to me? He said, "Thank you for your service, Sir." I could have cried. There is the future, there is the generation that is going to take over where you and I left off.

You know, in World War II they were bombing England just before the Americans entered the war. Winston Churchill said of the brave pilots, they went up each and every day in flight in their bombers, he said, "Never in the history of mankind have so many owed so much to so few."

Ladies and gentlemen, that is the way it is today. It is 300 million people in this country. Less than one-half of one percent are wearing the uniform of the armed services. We are now in our sixth year of war, the third longest war in our nation's history. Certainly, the longest war with an all-volunteer force, and the soldiers are facing their third and fourth rotations. This is not going away any time soon, and we are going to have 12-year-old David Smith probably following in his father's footsteps and joining the military to protect you and I.

So, what we are doing is trying to connect America's communities and remind them this is a nation at war, that we still have an obligation to take care of our soldiers and their families in any way we possibly can. The way you can help us do that is to stop by the Army booth and tell your comrades, brothers and sisters to stop by the Army booth, pick up the trifold and go to the Web site and find out where they are in your backyard and in your state.

There is one in Lawton, Oklahoma, at Fort Sill. There is one the next day at Manhattan, Kansas, Fort Riley, Kansas. They are scheduled now and until the end of the year 2009. Then when somebody says to you, "I really would like to help but I really don't know how," pull this trifold out, show it to them and say, "You know, if you go to that Web site, you are going to see dozens and dozens of examples of ways Americans are helping their armed forces, to wounded warriors, bereavement for spouses that have lost soldiers, soldiers and family members. You might find something related to any host of a number of different kinds of programs we have listed on that Web site. Get on board.

So, I thank you for what you have done for the nation and service to your nation. I thank you for being members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and I thank you for what you continue to do and what I know you will continue to do in the future.

I am once again very, very privileged to be here among you. Thank you and God bless America. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades, brothers and sisters, this concludes this morning's session. We will recess until 1300 and we will go into the convention business in this room. Thank you very much for your attendance. Please go and have lunch.

(Whereupon, the meeting was recessed at 11:55 o'clock a.m., to reconvene at 1:00 o'clock p.m.

FIRST BUSINESS SESSION
MONDAY, AUGUST 18, 2008

(The First Business Session of the 109th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars United States, was called to order at 1:00 o'clock p.m., with Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner presiding.)

MIP RECRUITER CONTEST WINNERS

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: This year, the Commander-in-Chief implemented a program to recognize those individuals who diligently worked to gain additional members for the VFW. Each of the following members has recruited 500 or more Military Initiative Program members.

I would like to now ask the following individuals to stand and be recognized:

Arnold L. Marion, Post No. 660, Department of Indiana.

John M. Raymond, Post No. 6694, Department of Maryland.

Edward A. Deissroth, Post No. 477, Department of Pennsylvania.

Congratulations and thanks, comrades, for the great work that you have done during this VFW year. Give them a round of applause. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO THE 108TH NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: It is now my distinct pleasure to present a Certificate of Appreciation to the 108th National Convention Committee for their work in planning and conducting last year's very successful National Convention in Kansas City.

Here to accept the award on behalf of the Committee is Lewie Cooper.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Certificate of Appreciation presented to the 108th National Convention Committee.

"In special appreciation and distinguished recognition of their absolute dedication and incessant drive to ensure the success of the 108th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in Kansas City, Missouri, August 18-23, 2007.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2008."

This has been signed by George Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General.

COMRADE LEWIE COOPER: Comrades, Steve Phelps was supposed to receive this. He could not be here this afternoon, and he asked me to do it. I would like to thank everybody from the State of Kansas and the State of Missouri that helped with this last year, and most of all I thank the delegation for showing up to make it a successful convention.

Robert Shiller should be here because he was one of the Past commanders of Kansas, and he passed away this spring. So, he was instrumental and he ran the delegate booths and all of that for both conventions in Kansas City. He was a tireless worker. On behalf of all of those folks, I accept this. Thank you.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Before the Commander-in-Chief comes up

and asks for the report of the Convention Credentials Committee, please remember, comrades, if there is any voting to be done, it can only be done by registered delegates. You must be a registered delegate to cast a vote on this convention floor. You also will be asked to show your delegate card if you come to the microphone to speak. So, if you plan on speaking, please make sure that you have your delegate card handy, because the Sergeant-at-Arms will request it.

(Whereupon, Commander-in-Chief Lisicki assumed the chair.)

REPORT OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: I call on David Butters for the report of the Credentials Committee.

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 – Delaware): This is just an announcement before I give my report. There are a few Department Commanders that have not picked up their Department Commander credentials. You need to do that today so that your Commander's vote can be added to the tally for tomorrow. There are also a couple of National Council members that have not picked theirs up, and the same holds true.

I am David Butters, a delegate from Post 475 in Newark, Delaware, the Credentials and Registration Chairman, to report to you the number of delegates registering their credentials as of the close of business, 4:00 p.m. yesterday, August 17th.

Total delegates, 9,761; total Department Commanders, 45; total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 30; total National Officers, 34. That is for a grand total of 9,870.

Now, any delegates registering their credentials by 4:00 p.m. today will be added to tomorrow's total up to the maximum authorized per Post.

Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. That is my report.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONVENTION RULES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We will call for the report on Convention Rules, Chairman Clifford G. Olson, Jr.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OLSON: Thank you, Commander. Good afternoon, comrades. It is a little more excitement this afternoon, comrades. That is what we need is a little activity. First, I must tell you that my Co-Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief Mueller, cannot be here today. He is having his eye operated on. So, bear with me. I will have to give this whole report myself, and I will have a glass of water.

The report of the Committee on Convention Rules to the 109th National Convention, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Orlando, Florida.

Your Committee on Convention Rules met Sunday afternoon, August 17, 2008, and agreed on the following recommendations, which are respectfully submitted for your consideration:

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.

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.

A registered delegate shall be permitted to speak but twice on any one subject or any pending resolution for a period not to exceed ten minutes each, except by consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the convention present; provided, that the Chairmen of Convention Committees may speak as frequently as necessary in connection with reports of their committees.

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.

All resolutions offered by individual registered delegates must bear the endorsement of the Department Commander or, if absent, 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. Tuesday, August 19, 2008, and must be accompanied by a written explanation as to why the resolution was not presented to the Department Convention for consideration.

All resolutions offered on the floor at 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.

Committee Chairmen, in reporting on resolutions referred to their committee, shall first read those resolutions on which favorable action is recommended. Specific resolutions may 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.

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 organizational funds.

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, on any subject before this Convention.

10. Unit rule of voting is not allowed.

11. Voting strength shall be determined by those delegates registered as of the close of the credential 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 commanders 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 man-

ner, 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 can be demanded by 10 registered delegates representing Posts in 10 separate Departments, or by order of the Commander-in-Chief.

17. Nominating speeches for the National Officers shall be limited to five minutes each. The time allocated to encompass all seconding speeches shall be limited to four minutes. Nomination and election of National Officers will be held according to the Congressional Charter, By-Laws, and Section 609 of the Manual of Procedure.

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.

I move that these rules be accepted for the Convention.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: You have a motion on the floor to approve the Convention Rules. Any questions on the motion? All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

We will now have the report of the Committee on National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual by Past Commander-in-Chief Larry W. Rivers.

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

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Commander-in-Chief, thank you very much, and initially let me thank you on behalf of our Committee for our appointment and the trust you put in us. The Committee worked very hard. Let me introduce the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier, who worked very hard as well. And, Chief, to you and the Adjutant General, I want to make special mention of the hard work of Kevin Jones and David Prohaska. They did a good job in helping us prepare for the Committee work and being prepared to bring this to the floor.

Comrades, I hope you have the yellow book with you. As you can see, we have quite a few By-Laws that we will be addressing; By-Laws and Manual of Procedure changes. I would suggest what you might want to do is to number your book. Take just a second and start with this page, which is Page

1, because as we go through it will probably be a little easier when we are referring to a "B" number or "M" number, if I could say look on Page 18 or look on Page 16.

Usually, we don't have such a large number, so it might help us locate and move a little quicker if, in fact, you would number your book. You should have a total of 30 pages. If you would take a second and do that, I think it may be helpful.

I would like to tell you as well we had a rather lengthy Committee meeting yesterday. We had all the members of our Committee present, plus we had quite a few VFW members who were not members of the Committee that were present as well. We conducted our meeting so that anyone who wanted to speak on any of these By-Laws had the opportunity to do so, whether they were a member of the Committee or not a member of the Committee. So, I want you to know that everybody that had an interest, that showed up at our Committee meeting yesterday, had the opportunity to have their voice heard.

When it came time to vote on the acceptance or rejection and recommendation, we limited that vote, of course, to the members of the Committee.

I would also mention that it does take a two-thirds vote to pass a By-Law amendment, as most of you know. It only takes a majority vote to pass a change to the Manual of Procedure.

At this point, Chief, I would move for the purposes of getting it on the floor for any possible discussion, the adoption of B-2, B-3, B-5, B-6 and B-9.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES NIER: I am Jim Nier, a delegate from Post 8819, Texas, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, you have before you a motion aforementioned on the adoptions. Any questions on that motion? All in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; all opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Chief. You have had a chance to review these recommended By-laws since you have been here. What we refer to as the 400 series that are found on Pages 10 through 18 of the yellow book, if you have numbered it, those changes which encompass B-12 through B-31, those are primarily the changes recommended by the By-Laws Study Committee that, in essence, now puts our District Commanders in the chain of command.

All of those, B-12 through B-31, deal with the changes made to the District Commander. The way we dealt with these in Committee yesterday, and with the Commander-in-Chief's permission, the way I would like to deal with them today is to deal with those as a group.

The reason is because if one fails, they all need to fail, because they are all intertwined as to the new changes for the District Commander in our chain of command. One follows the other, and they are all changes that have to blend together if you accept the concept that the District Commander should be placed in our chain of command.

So, what we would like to do is move for adoption of B-12 through B-31. Once the Commander-in-Chief opens it up for discussion, please come to the microphone and discuss anything on B-12 through B-31 that you have concerns about, or questions about, or care to comment on. With that caveat, Chief, I move the adoption of B-12 through B-31.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JIM NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: You have a motion on the floor properly seconded to adopt B-12 through B-31. Any questions on the motion?

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE MIKE MUSGROVE (Post 2350 – Nevada): I have concerns with B-12 about our smaller states in the West being able to put together 10 Posts and 750 members in a geographically sizable area where our District Commander could service them.

We have six Posts in the Department of Nevada. Most of them run around 500 members and most of them have about six or seven Posts. So, by this By-law we would have to completely redistrict our whole state to still hang in there.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you very much. This was a question that came up in the Committee yesterday. This applies only to the formation of new Districts. If you redistrict, you can have less than that. All this applies is to the formation of new Districts.

Kevin Jones indicated to us for the last several years we have not had any formation of any new Districts. We have had quite a bit of redistricting going on, restructuring and realignment, but no creation of new Districts. That is the only thing this would apply to, Mike.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Chief, very much. The next group we refer to as the 500 series. That would be B-32 through B-53, and would encompass Pages 18 through 28 in the yellow book. The 500 series pertain to the Departments, but primarily all it is is recaptioning and renumbering and modifying the Department version in order to comply with the changes we made in the 400 series.

There are no substantive, and please correct me if I am wrong, Kevin, there are no substantive changes that are applicable in B-2 through B-53. These were primarily housekeeping, renumbering and reformatting the Department.

The Parliamentarian says that this is Nos. B-32 through B-45 and B-47 through B-53, not B-46. That is the only one that is not included in that series.

Commander-in-Chief, I move the adoption of B-32 through B-45, and B-47 through B-53.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We have a motion on the floor, properly seconded, to accept B-32 through B-45, and B-47 through B-53. Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye." Those opposed? The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Chief. At this time, I would like to move on to B-54, and B-54 is on Page 28 of your yellow booklet. I won't read it. I am sure you have read it. In essence, B-54 is the change that would allow us to hold a National Convention at any period of time between July 1st and September 1st, which in the future would allow, if our chair officers decided to request that, to have the National Convention in July and in some month other than August. That is B-54. The Committee recommended that we adopt B-54. I would move its adoption.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: There is a motion on the floor to adopt B-54, properly seconded. Any questions on the motion?

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DAVID SOUSA (Post 3396 – Nevada): I argued on this last time trying to move the National Convention near a holiday weekend or real close to a weekend for the purposes of active-duty soldiers or National Guard to try to take the time off to come to these.

We have a hard time. Like for me, when I come in June, I go to my District, my Department meetings, I have got to take off time for that. If I try to come in July to come to the National Convention, it will give me two months off in a row. August is the best month for me, but I know it does affect a lot of people.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other discussion on B-54? Hearing none, all in favor of adoption of B-54 will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I would like to move on to B-55. In essence, this is sort of a realignment and updating of the National committees. The By-Law Committee moved and voted to recommend adoption of B-55. I would move its adoption.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Commander-in-Chief, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The motion is to adopt B-55, properly seconded. Any questions on the motion?

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE M.C. "CONNIE" AGRESTI (Post 3150 – Virginia): I would like to understand the reasoning why the By-Laws Committee moved to adopt this when part of the issue is taking away the By-Laws Committee as a standing committee.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: I think the query was as to why the change took away the By-Law Committee as a standing committee. Perhaps I can address that. One of the reasons, the way I understand it, that the By-Law Committee was taken out as a standing committee because that is mandated then to have such a committee whether or not the Commander-in-Chief feels like a review of the by-laws is in order on the National level or not.

In the past few years, I know there have been By-laws study groups that I was going to introduce before, that the Commander-in-Chief has asked to look into the By-laws as well. I think the whole idea was, and somebody please help and me if it was not, there was the idea it was not an ongoing year-after-year standing required By-Law Committee.

COMRADE M.C. "CONNIE" AGRESTI (Post 3150 – Virginia): Thank you for that explanation, sir. I think I am going to vote against this because my concern is what this does it opens up for by-law changes without the necessary committee work being done.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you very much. The one thing I might point out, the By-Laws Study Committee is a new creation. I know I was one of the first members of the By-Laws Study Committee. It has not been in our organization for 50 or 60 years like some of our other committees have been.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, "Gunner" Kent, a delegate from Post 997, Arizona. Comrades, the purpose of this is because the old By-Laws Review Committee was a committee that was formed years and years ago to study the By-laws and make changes on any new things that would be done in the By-laws to bring to this convention for approval.

The By-Laws Review Committee, the members of it were appointed by the Commander-in-Chief, the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief and the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. They only met in Washington, D.C., when we had the Washington, D.C., conference, and they met here at the National Convention.

The committee that was formed three years ago is the By-Laws Review Committee, and they have been working for three years to review, re-write and bring to this convention, the rule changes and By-law changes that you have adopted for the last three years.

By doing away with the By-Law Review Committee would not be duplicating the work. Right now the study group sends their recommendations to the By-Law Review Committee. The By-Law Review Committee looks at it and then we bring it to the convention floor. We just felt as the National Organization we didn't need to duplicate the work we are doing, so we are having the By-Law Study Review Committee make the study, make the recommendations, bring it to you, because you have the final decision. That's the reason for it. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor of adopting B-55 will signify by the usual sign of "aye";

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Chief, thank you very much. B-56 is on Page 29 in the booklet. All B-56 does is a housekeeping chore. It changes 60 days to 90 days for having the Council of Administration after the convention in the event we would go to a July convention at some later date. The committee recommended adoption of this proposed By-law change and I so move.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Commander-in-Chief, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The motion is to adopt B-56, properly seconded. Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye." Those opposed? The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Chief, the other proposed By-laws, B-1, B-4, B-18, B-11, B-46, B-57 and B-58 were rejected by the committee, and B-7 was withdrawn.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 – Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Benny Bachand, a delegate from Post 4287, Florida. I ask that B-11 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Will you put that in the form of a motion?

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 – Florida): I move for adoption of B-11.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Thank you.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE PAUL MANLY (Post 1474 – Washington): Commander-in-

Chief, I am Paul Manly, Post 1474, Spokane, Washington. I request B-10 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We are on B-11. Do we have a second on B-11?

COMRADE ERNIE SANDMAN (Post 2500 – Florida): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: There is a motion on the floor, properly seconded, to accept B-11. It is on Page 6 in the yellow book. Any discussion on the motion?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 – Florida): I would like the delegates and I want to read this because what we are doing here is proposing that we change, and by deleting Subsections (a) and (b) and substituting the following: "The Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster and Trustees shall be elected. Unless provided for in the Post By-laws, the Judge Advocate, Chaplain and Surgeon will be appointed."

What this does if you think back to your Post elections that took place in March or April, I think most of those sitting in this hall realize we have a difficult time filling the chairs of our Post officers. Quite honestly, most of the election reports that are sent to National Headquarters are not complete.

Therefore, most of our Posts are in violation of our own by-laws because they fail to elect all of the positions. So, they submit those names to National Headquarters. This By-law change only affects the Post. It does not affect any other section in the organization. All it does is provide for us a flexibility for the Post to decide whether they want the Chaplain, the Surgeon or the Post Judge Advocate to be elected or appointed.

This change would make them automatically appointed and it would then allow the Post to decide if they wanted to elect them. By doing so, again, we would give more of our Posts to be in compliance with the By-laws of our organization. So, we in Florida urge that you seriously look at this.

This is not a drastic change. This is not going to eliminate any of the positions on the Post level. It is not going to make it any more easier or difficult to fill those positions as some may suggest. What it does really is allow our Posts in these changing times to make a decision on what is right for the organization, and if you can't fill all those chairs, then you are in violation. This gives you the flexibility at least of being in compliance. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other questions on B-11? Any other questions on B-11?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: I just wanted to comment, we had a lively discussion about this in our Committee yesterday. One of our Post Judge advocates indicated that he felt like he might lose his independence if he had to be appointed by the Commander.

One other thing I would point out is that as we all know in the VFW the power to appoint also takes with it the power to remove. That was part of our discussion that we had on this resolution just for your information.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other questions on B-11? All in favor of adopting B-11 signify by the usual sign of "aye". Those opposed. B-11 is defeated.

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE NORBERT ENOS (Post 2875 – Hawaii): I request to set aside B-1.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We need a motion, comrade.

COMRADE NORBERT ENOS (Post 2875 – Hawaii): I make a motion that we adopt B-1.

COMRADE FRANK MADISON (Post 970 – Hawaii): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We have a motion and a second to adopt B-1. Any questions on the motion?

Microphone 2 on B-1.

COMRADE NORBERT ENOS (Post 2875 – Hawaii): The Department of Hawaii is again proposing that the VFW amend its eligibility to permit all our brothers and sisters to join our great organization. I ask for your support to get it approved. When we first brought this up last year, it was stated that Samoans are not citizens. The Samoans are U.S. nationalists who may reside, work, travel throughout the United States without restrictions. They make no distinction from your citizens and U.S. nationalists, other than U.S. nationalists cannot hold federal office.

Previously, the residents of Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam were U.S. nationalists until citizenship was granted through the Act of Congress. All are now U.S. citizens. Now, they can vote in the U.S. presidential elections. They are elected delegates to Congress but do not have the same privileges as that afforded to members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate.

I must note that elected delegates from the District of Columbia also do not share the same privileges afforded to the Congressmen and Senators. Every definition of United States of America includes the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands and America Samoa, Swan Islands and the Northern Mariana Islands, except for voting. All U.S. citizens and U.S. nationalists share the same rights, freedom and protection under our Constitution.

This should not bar U.S. Samoans from being members. We need to add this to the VFW By-Laws. Samoans also have the right to be members of our great organization through their service and sacrifice in the uniform of our great country. America Samoa is one of the pillars in the Vietnam War and others. Samoans have suffered more fatalities per capita in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan than any other state or territory in the union.

According to the recent Military Times article, their fatality rate per 1,000 residents is 4.14. That is more than four times the other states. Vermont had 2.89 per 100,000, and they are more than 50 times than the lower one. Just recently, Commander-in-Chief, a Canadian in the United States Marine Corps got killed in Iraq six weeks ago. He was an American U.S. nationalist. Thank you.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: The Chief asked me to comment on the reasons for the recommended rejection. The reason the committee rejected or recommended rejection was because the way this reads, and let me read it to you, it is real short. "Any citizen of the United States or any United States National may be a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States who is serving or has served honorably in the Armed Forces of the United States."

We are not sure what is meant by the word "National". There is no clear definition of the word "National". Every person that wants has the

right to apply for U.S. citizenship, which you know is now a requirement for membership in the VFW. That is the reason the By-Law Committee actually rejected this.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other questions on B-1?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE FRANK LAMSON (Post 970 – Hawaii): This By-law change does not really affect anyone in this room. These are American Samoans, as mentioned by Norbert, who have the highest rate of casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan. These people down there are some of the most loyal people we have to the United States of America.

They are not told when they join the military that there is any difference between their U.S. nationalist's position, and their U.S. citizenship is affected. They don't know that they must go and become a U.S. citizen to be able to join our organization. They just fight for our country, and fight and fight and fight.

You cannot go down to Samoa and not find a family who has not served our country. They all serve our country loyally and they will do it forever, but they would like to join our organization. We should allow them to join our organization. They are not told there is any difference. They don't know.

They are just U.S. citizens or U.S. nationalists. They don't know the difference. So, it is just very simple that we should allow them to join our organization. You can get a whole lot more members by doing this. Thank you.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: It is my understanding that a Samoan has the right. All they have to do is to ask to become a U.S. citizen. If they remain a U.S. nationalist, that is by choice; is that correct?

COMRADE NORBERT ENOS (Post 2875 – Hawaii): If they are told this. They are not told this. Most of those people, especially our National Guard people coming down there, they don't know any difference.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: The answer is yes, a Samoan can be a U.S. citizen by saying I want to be a U.S. citizen; isn't that correct?

COMRADE NORBERT ENOS (Post 2875 – Hawaii): Yes.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone 2. You have 30 seconds left on your five minutes.

COMRADE NORBERT ENOS (Post 2975 – Hawaii): They know they have the choice. I spoke to several of those returnees. Once they get back to the island, once they get back to Hawaii to become citizens. In Iraq, there was a large assembly for all the people without citizenship, and they had a choice to join. Some of them, their mission did not include them to come back, so they didn't have that privilege. Yes, they want to be American citizens. Therefore, I urge all of us support this By-law because they are dedicated.

When I sent in the By-law to National, I said amend Section 101 by adding the words "or any United States Nationalist" in the first sentence of the paragraph. It is really incorrect the way the yellow tab shows it, but it was close enough. It still remains the same, United States Nationalist. They are not a green card member.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Your time is up.

COMRADE NORBERT ENOS (Post 2875 – Hawaii): Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other questions on B-1?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JAMES E. JAMES (Post 9179 – Texas): I understand the mo-

tion is primarily that the proponents are concerned about this national business. I would ask for clarification of the final sentence.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Microphone No. 3, could you speak right into the microphone? We can't hear you up here at all.

COMRADE JAMES E. JAMES (Post 9179 – Texas): I would request clarification of the final sentence that says "eligibility be extended to anyone who is serving or has served honorably in the Armed Forces of the United States." There is no mention there in the theater or combat role.

Taken at its face value would mean to me that all members of the military, regardless of service, would be eligible for membership. If that is the intent, I am certain I would not support it. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other questions on B-1?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE PAUL WORTHINGTON (Post 1168 – Kentucky): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I agree with my fellow comrade here. This clearly states what they are saying on this, that any member that has been in the military can join the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and apparently another veterans organization that you can join if you have been in the military. If we pass this, we might as well change our name to "Veterans".

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other questions on B-1? There are no other questions on B-1?

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE M.C. "CONNIE" AGRESTI (Post 3150 – Virginia): I just verified with the comrade from Hawaii that what is being read there, what is printed in the booklet that was handed out to everybody is not correct. His submission, according to him, simply said to add the words "or any U.S. National" to the existing by-law in our current by-laws.

It did not stop currently serving in the Armed Forces issue that is causing this angst among my comrades, who just most recently spoke. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrade, if that was misprinted, that should have been brought up prior to this. It should have been brought up prior to, and that your comments are out of order.

COMRADE M.C. "CONNIE" AGRESTI (Post 3150 – Virginia): The comrade was trying to do that when you cut him off.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: He used his five minutes and that is the convention rules. I am just enforcing the convention rules.

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE WILLIAM THOMPSON (Post 6192 – New Jersey): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am just sitting here and I am listening, and I am looking for clarification as to who we are eliminating, because from what my understanding is, I am starting to get the feeling that we have people who are serving in our armed forces who are on the battlefield, and we are saying because they choose to remain a nationalist and not claim U.S. citizenship, we are not going to allow them to be a member of our organization.

Is that the understanding?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Under the VFW By-Laws, you have to be a citizen of the United States to be a VFW member.

COMRADE WILLIAM THOMPSON (Post 6192 – New Jersey): Which is why we have the By-law amendment; is that correct? Is that why it was offered? That is my understanding.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: That is hard to answer because

it says "National", and I don't know what "National" means. We have a lot of people serving in the military and may not be a U.S. nationalist or a U.S. citizen. During the Vietnam days, we had a lot of Canadians in service, and years ago we had this huge debate whether we should let Canadians that served in Vietnam become VFW members. It is the same issue. They were not citizens. The bottom line is the citizenship requirement is at issue here.

COMRADE WILLIAM THOMPSON (Post 6192 – New Jersey): Let me go one step further. Since you don't understand what that means, I can only go by my interpretation, which was given to me by the United States Marine Corps when I was a recruiter who said the parents who were nationals, that their children were nationals.

Now, they also had a choice to become a U.S. citizen. They were in this country legally and had all the claims of citizenship, and they were national citizens, which is why we were accepting them in the U.S. Marine Corps. Again, I want to make sure before I vote that you are saying that a person who is a nationalist, serves in our armed forces, is not allowed because they chose not to be a U.S. citizen?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: What I am saying is under the VFW By-Laws, if you are not a U.S. citizen, you cannot be a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It doesn't matter if it is you or a nationalist, a non-citizen, an ex-patriot, or whatever terminology we want to put. It doesn't matter even if you are the recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor. If you are not a U.S. citizen, under the VFW By-Laws, you can't be a member. That is all I am saying.

COMRADE WILLIAM THOMPSON (Post 6192 – New Jersey): But this amendment would allow for that?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: I will read the language for you. That is all I can do.

COMRADE WILLIAM THOMPSON (Post 6192 – New Jersey): I have read the language. I am saying would this allow for a nationalist who may even be a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient to be a member of this organization?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: The language is what it is. It says that a person that is a United States nationalist, in essence, does not have to be a citizen to be a VFW member. That is all it says the way I interpret it.

COMRADE WILLIAM THOMPSON (Post 6192 – New Jersey): I understand the interpretation. I am asking if the amendment, your interpretation of the amendment, is that it would allow for that?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: That is the way I read the By-law, the proposed By-law language.

COMRADE WILLIAM THOMPSON (Post 6192 – New Jersey): Very well.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: There was a comment made a little earlier that was submitted was "nationalist" was submitted and what was printed was "national". I have a copy of what was submitted to the VFW National Headquarters on July 2, 2008. It is exactly as it is printed in this book.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: Comrades, I am "Gunner" Kent, a delegate from Post 9972, Sierra Vista, Arizona. Comrades, all this By-law

does is it makes nationalists to be eligible for the VFW. What we are going to say to all the comrades that fought from Canada in Vietnam and some are fighting in Iraq today, you can join the VFW, you don't have to be an American citizen?

What this By-law does is makes a small special group eligible for the VFW. If we start doing that, next year we will have another small group, and then another small group. Our By-laws are very specific. You have to be a citizen of the United States of America. The nationalists have a choice to be a United States citizen if they want to be a citizen. They choose not to be an American citizen.

The delegates of this great organization have stated if you are not a citizen of the United States of America, you cannot belong to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I belong to the same Marine Corps as the other comrades did, and, comrades, I will tell you we took some people as long as they could see lightning and hear thunder, we took them.

So, that is not a special thing for the Marine Corps. Let's be honest here. We are trying to just take a small segment of America's veterans and say they belong to this organization. If you don't want to be an American citizen, then don't ask to join this fine organization. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

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

COMRADE RON GASCON (Post 792 – Vermont): I endorse what "Gunner" Kent just said. What I came up for was about the wording of this. There seems to be a problem that you didn't put it in here right. What people are not doing, they don't realize this is only talking about the first paragraph of Section 101.

It says, "Any citizen," dah, dah, dah. But underneath that, there are one, two and three other paragraphs that say you have to be a U.S. citizen, but you also have to have done these other things, like served on foreign soil, hostile fire pay, and all those other things.

I am only here to clarify for those comrades who got up and said, well, anybody can be in the VFW. That is only the first paragraph. There are three more paragraphs below that that define exactly what you have to do. Thank you, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Thank you for your comment.

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE WILLIAM THOMPSON (Post 6192 – New Jersey): A point of personal privilege, Commander. When I was recruiting people, they had to do more than hear thunder and see lightning.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: If you have any discussion on B-1, we will accept that.

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE FRANK LAMSON (Post 970 – Hawaii): Comrade Commander, there seems to be a problem with this U.S. national, that they don't understand what it is. Earlier, when Norbert was speaking, he stated that people in Puerto Rico were U.S. nationalists, people in the Virgin Islands were U.S. nationalists, and these other areas people were U.S. nationalists. It took an Act of Congress to change that.

The people in Samoa have been fighting forces since World War II, since they became American Samoa. When they became American Samoa, they felt their duty to America was their job, and they have been fighting for us since then. Now, maybe we just should go to Congress and just have them to do it.

I feel that our organization should honor those people that are fighting for our country that are already U.S. It is not nationalists from other countries we are talking about; we are talking about U.S. nationalists, United States nationalists. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, we are going to call for the question. I think we have had enough discussion on this issue.

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DON FOSTER (Post 5263 – Oklahoma): I call for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We have a motion and we need a second. Do I hear a second to the motion? Go to the microphone, please.

COMRADE DON ROEPKE (Post 8884 – Iowa): I second that call for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We have a motion on the floor, properly seconded, to call for the question. All those in favor of the motion will vote by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The motion, comrades, is to adopt B-1.

We need a two-thirds majority to pass this adoption. All in favor of adoption of B-1 will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; opposed "no". The motion is defeated.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you. Commander-in-Chief, I would like to move into the Manual of Procedure. Chief, you have some folks at Microphone No. 3.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE PAUL MANLY (Post 1474 – Washington): I move for adoption of B-10.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RANDY HAHN (Post 10435 – Washington): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, we have a motion to adopt B-10 properly seconded. Any questions on the motion?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE PAUL MANLY (Post 1474 – Washington): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, B-10 is similar to B-11. Again, that is the shortage of officers, but B-10 allows the Trustees to hold one of the lower offices if there is no conflict in the Post itself. The Trustees are often willing to hold those offices, but because the rule says you can't hold two offices they are not allowed to.

By allowing them to hold Chaplain, Surgeon or Judge Advocate, which are not the line officers, then that would help resolve some of the issues in the smaller Posts, the Posts that cannot get large turnouts for our elections.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Chief, the By-Law Study Committee recommended rejection of B-10 in favor of the By-Law Study Group's submission of B-9, which we previously adopted at this convention.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Did everybody understand that explanation? It was rejected in favor of B-9. Any other questions on the motion to adopt B-10? Hearing none, all in favor of adopting B-10 will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The motion is defeated.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Chief, we would like to move into the Manual of Procedure, beginning with M-3 that is on Page 1 of the

yellow sheets. M-3 is recommended by the National By-Laws Study Group and proposed by the Commander-in-Chief. I have got myself confused.

All M-3 does, comrades, is make the changes for the District Commander, placing the District Commander in the chain of command. You have already adopted those by-law changes to accomplish that. This just makes the Manual of Procedure conform with the By-laws. The Committee recommended adoption. I would, therefore, move for the adoption of M-3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: You have a motion on the floor, properly seconded, to adopt M-3. Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor of adopting M-3 will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: I would like to move to M-4 that is located on Page 3 of the yellow book. M-4 deals with the Life Membership Fund, and gives the authority of the Life Membership Fund Committee, consisting of the chair officers, the Commander-in-Chief and the Quartermaster General, the authority, with the recommendation of an actuary and concurrence of the Committee to adjust the Life Membership fee with concurrence of the Council of Administration.

The By-Law Committee recommended adoption of M-4, and I will move its adoption. Again, we passed the By-law and this is housekeeping. All of the M's are housekeeping measures and not By-laws changes. We move the adoption of M-4, which is a housekeeping measure that would affect the By-law change.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The motion on the floor is to adopt M-4. Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. There is no doubt. It passes.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Moving to M-5. M-5 deals with housekeeping on the surrender of the Charter and the disposition of the property. The Committee recommends approval of M-5, and I move its adoption.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: You have got a motion on the floor to adopt M-5, which has been properly seconded. Any questions on the motion to adopt M-5? Hearing none, all in favor of adopting M-5 will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Chief, the By-Laws Committee recommends the passage of M-6. That is on Page 4 of the yellow booklet. That deals with the suspension and revocation of charters. It is actually by the Department Commander regarding Suspension and Revocation. Again, that is a Manual of Procedure change. I would move the adoption of M-6.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Commander-in-Chief, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The motion is to adopt M-6, which has been properly seconded. Any questions on the motion to adopt M-6? Hearing none, all in favor of adopting M-6 will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: I will call the body's attention to M-7 on Page 5. The Committee recommends adoption of M-7. It is very brief. It simply says if a Post has any outstanding financial obligations due National Headquarters that remain unpaid on September 1, it provides the

mechanism wherein the National Organization can collect those funds. The committee recommended approval. I, therefore, move the adoption of M-7.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The motion is for adoption of M-7, which has been properly seconded. Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor of adopting M-7 will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: I would call the body's attention to M-8 on Page 5 in the right-hand corner of the sheet. M-8 pertains to the Election or Appointment of Officers and Committees, and the Committee recommends the passage of M-8. I would, therefore, move its adoption.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The motion is to adopt M-8, which has been properly seconded. Any questions on the motion to adopt M-8? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Chief, I would call the body's attention to M-11. It pertains to Posts and Nomination, Election, Installation and Other Procedures. The Committee recommends adoption of M-11. I move its adoption.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The motion is to adopt M-11, which has been properly seconded. Any questions on the motion to adopt M-11? Hearing none, we will vote by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Hang in there, everybody, we are almost there. I call your attention to M-12 on Page 7. M-12 is recommended by the National By-laws Study Committee and recommended by the Commander-in-Chief. It is Posts, Officers: Duties and Obligations. The Committee recommends adoption of M-12. I, therefore, move its adoption.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The motion is to adopt M-12, which has been properly seconded. Any questions on the motion to adopt M-12? Hearing none, you will signify by the usual sign of "aye." Those opposed? The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Chief, I would like to call the body's attention to M-17 through M-36. Those are between Pages 10 and 18. All of those suggested Manual of Procedures changes pertain to putting the District Commander in the chain of command, which we have already done through adoption of the necessary By-laws.

These are really the procedural aspects of implementing that change and putting the District Commander in the chain of command. I, therefore, move that we adopt M-17 through M-36 as recommended by the Committee.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The motion on the floor is to adopt M-17 through M-36. It has been properly seconded. Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: M-37 through M-52, and M-55 through M-58 pertain to the changes we made with the 500 series, which were basically renumbering and word-smithing of the Department aspects

of the By-laws. These are the implementing articles in the Manual of Procedure for those changes.

I, therefore, move that we adopt M-17 through M-52, and M-55 through M-58, as recommended by the Committee.

Commander-in-Chief, let me correct that. I meant to say I move the passage of M-37 through M-52, and M-55 through M-58.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Commander-in-Chief, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, you have a motion on the floor, properly seconded, to adopt M-37 through M-52, and M-55 through M-58. Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, you will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Commander-in-Chief, Manual of Procedure M-60 is on Page 28, recommended by the By-Laws Study Committee, proposed by the Chief. Basically, it is just a word-smithing change, as you can see.

I move adoption of M-60, as recommended by the Committee.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The motion on the floor is to adopt M-60, which has been properly seconded. Any questions on the motion to adopt M-60? Hearing none, you will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Chief, M-61 was proposed by the Department of Washington and it pertains to Uniforms, Badges, Etc., and more particularly Section 803 of the manual.

The Committee recommends adoption of M-61. I move its adoption.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: A motion is on the floor to adopt M-61, which has been properly seconded. Any question on the motion to adopt M-61? Hearing none, all those in favor of adopting M-61 will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Chief, the Committee does not recommend adoption of any other Manual of Procedure changes and rejected in Committee M-1, M-2, M-9, M-10, M-13, M-14, M-15, M-16, M-53, M-54 and M-59.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RONALD RUSKO (Post 9460 – Connecticut): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ron Rusko from Post 9460, Connecticut. I ask that M-1 and M-2 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Ron, we have to have a motion to adopt.

COMRADE RONALD RUSKO (Post 9460 – Connecticut): I move adoption of M-1.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE ALFRED MEEK (Post 2046 – Connecticut): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We are going to read M-1.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: It reads, "Article I – Members.

"Section 101 – Eligibility.

"Amend Section 101 – Eligibility, Manual of Procedure, by adding the

following at the end of the section:

"National Defense Service Medal (30 consecutive days or 60 days non-consecutive duty outside the continental limits of the United States). 27 June 1950 to a date to be determined."

It would amend the eligibility for membership in the VFW.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any discussion on M-1?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RONALD RUSKO (Post 9460 – Connecticut): Thank you very much. You know, it is very good to hear that the organization needs to be changed and we need change in the organization. I wouldn't disagree with that at all. I was very happy to hear my good friend, Benny Bachand, help a little bit by saying that he knows that everybody is having an awful lot of trouble putting commanders, seniors and juniors and other officers into the Post. I would agree with that as well.

The National Defense Service Medal, we have provided to this convention before for its consideration and adoption, requires that someone would have to be overseas for 30 consecutive or 60 non-consecutive days in order to belong to the VFW with the National Defense Service Medal.

That doesn't mean that somebody who stayed in the United States of America could get in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. We accept that in Korea now. If you were in Korea for 30 consecutive or 60 non-consecutive days, you could join the Veterans of Foreign Wars without any medal.

There is no doubt in my mind that we have an awful lot of people in the Veterans of Foreign Wars, because I see it as a State Adjutant, who are in the Veterans of Foreign Wars because they have the National Defense Service Medal. I have got one on my desk, Chief, to send to you, because it is being challenged.

We are getting a lot of Life Members-at-Large and Members-at-Large who we have in our state that belong to the Post, and the only thing they had on it was the National Defense Service Medal. The people who have the National Defense Service Medal didn't do anything different than anybody else in this room.

They went and raised their hand, they went into the service and put their life on the line for this country like all of us did. Yes, maybe they didn't shoot a gun or hold a pistol, or fly a plane and drop the bomb, but neither did everybody else in this room.

If you look at the folks like we have, like Dr. Horn, he could not join this organization, because he only had the National Defense Service Medal. He was in the Philippines sewing up Vietnam vets, and he got it through Desert Storm and got to be the National Surgeon General.

I am not saying just bring these comrades in, because we need their leadership and effectiveness in making sure all veterans get compassionate health care in our VA centers. We need their services and their help, and most of all, we need them to be a part of this Veterans of Foreign Wars organization.

They didn't do anything different than us, they just happened to be in a different part of the soil in the country. They served and we served, and everybody didn't shoot a gun, and they didn't shoot a gun but they certainly did their part for America.

I would move this convention adopt this Manual of Procedure to allow the National Defense Service Medal, those who were overseas service to join this great organization and be a part of it. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GWIZDAK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am John Gwizdak, a delegate from Post 58, Lake City, Georgia. I rise in opposition. If you didn't shoot a gun and didn't do certain other things, then you don't belong. I also rise to this occasion.

I would feel it would be more proper to put a charge under Article IX that anybody, any unit that ever brings up a motion such as this is a slap in the face to every person that has ever served in this organization, that they be charged. It is a slap in the face to the person that is missing his arm and two legs to sit beside somebody who "ain't" never been anywhere. I object to that.

Not only do I object to it, maybe we can solve it. We can do this. We have a Ladies Auxiliary and then we have a Men's Auxiliary. Why don't we have a National Defense Service Medal Auxiliary? Then we can solve it that way. I object. I ask the comrades on this floor today to think of those who are not with us today.

Think of those that you have drug across the battlefield. My comrades, this delegation on this floor today has earned every right to be a member of this organization and holding the National Defense Service Medal does not give that criteria to the special, unique and different.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE HAL ROESCH (Post 3219 – Virginia): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, we are the greatest combat veterans organization in the world. We need to keep it that way. Those that have been there have earned the right to join this organization.

I have been stationed overseas where I have not been in combat environment. I do not deserve to have that. I got the National Defense Service Medal right out of basic training. I earned my right in Desert Storm. We need to remain the best combat veterans organization on the face of the planet. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE ALFRED MEEK (Post 2046 – Connecticut): Commander, I didn't like it when I first read it. Then I saw the words 60 days and 30 days. I have a lot of friends in their mid-sixties who were on intelligence that cannot join the VFW because the United States will not give them a medal for what they did.

I understand that some people in Germany could not drive the same route to work because they might get blown up. What about the kid in the Army under the light at the Berlin Wall and had some sniper take a shot at him? I think if we look at this a little bit careful, and look at it with the days involved, not just I got it out of boot camp, with the days involved overseas, and the people that we have that are eligible but the government won't give them an award, I think this ought to pass. Thank you very much, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE FRANK LAMSON (Post 970 – Hawaii): I would like to point out the way this manual is written it says outside the Continental United States. That would be everybody serving in Hawaii or Alaska would be al-

lowed to join.

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

COMRADE DAVID SOUSA (Post 3396 – Nevada): I call for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: I need a second.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE ROB MYERS (Post 10708 – Europe): I second the call for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We have a motion on the floor and a second to call for the question. All in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

We will now vote on the motion to adopt M-1. All in favor of adoption of M-1 will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no". The motion to adopt is defeated.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: We have two suggested changes to the Ritual. R-1 is on Page 30 of the yellow sheet and pertains to amending the Ritual to add a special prayer by adding the prayer that reads as follows: Well, you have it there, and there is no sense to read it.

The Committee recommended approval of R-1, and I move its adoption.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We have a motion on the floor to adopt R-1, properly seconded. Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor of adoption of R-1 signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: On Page 30 of the yellow sheet, R-2, proposed by the Department of Washington, would amend the Ritual Order of Business. The Committee recommended approval of R-2. I would move its adoption.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The motion to adopt R-2 has been properly seconded. Any question on the motion to adopt R-2? Hearing none, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Commander-in-Chief, that completes the report of your Committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 – Connecticut): We asked that M-2 be set aside, and I assumed it was.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: M-2, do you want to make a motion?

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 – Connecticut): I make a motion that M-2 be adopted.

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

COMRADE ALFRED MEEK (Post 2046 – Connecticut): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We have a motion on the floor, properly seconded, to adopt M-2. Any questions on the motion?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RON RUSKO (Post 9460 – Connecticut): Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. I can't tell you how I hate to come back to the

microphone after the National Defense Service Medal to come back to the microphone on this one. At any rate, that was certainly interesting.

Commander-in-Chief, we voted on this last year, and if you remember we also did not vote the way they had done it last year, and they are doing it this year also, which is okay now, taking a By-Law and the Manual of Procedure. One is two-thirds and one is a majority. This one happens to be a majority vote. We believe it had to reach two-thirds last year.

M-2 is simple. If somebody belongs to your Post and doesn't pay their dues for five, six or seven years, and then comes back, according to the By-law as they amended it last year, they can just simply come into the Post. The Post Commander can collect the dues and they are a member again.

Someone also can do the same thing and go to the Post Commander, the same situation, and the Post Commander says no, you have to go before the floor with your DD-214 and be voted on. I think that as an organization we should be fair. If you have paid your dues, after three years you can come in, we understand that. That is in the By-laws in another part.

But after that, if you have not paid your dues in three or twenty years, who knows where you have been? I think the members have a right to find out from you where you might have been, whether in jail or somewhere, and that you should be revoted in and taken back in as a new member.

If you approve this Manual of Procedure, that is the way it will be from here on in. The National By-Laws Study Group, the reason they want it to stay the same like it is is so that you would have the option to do what you wanted, either show your DD-214 or not. We may not be here in ten years if that happens.

I think in fairness this particular By-law amendment is not fair to all the VFW members or those coming back in. The adoption opens up the door for a little bit of misuse. I think we ought to adopt this Manual of Procedure amendment and leave it alone, like it was for our first 108 years.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Chief, the thought process of the By-Law Committee was simply that this was a Post issue and let the Post handle it as they would. They are not required to. Let the Post do it like they want. We were trying to make sure that the long tentacles of National, bring them back in as much as possible so the posts could make their own decision.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ROBERT WEISS (Post 2406 – Michigan): I agree with Comrade Rivers on this. The language in here, changing from "may" to "must" should be left up to the Post. After three years, an annual member, the National Organization takes them off the list, and in order to get them reinstated at the National Organization you have to do an application anyway. It is up to the Post and not the National or Department to look at that. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other questions on M-2?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE NICK NELSON (Post 1046 – Alaska): We have had members who have been gone for three or four years and they came back. We didn't ask to see his DD-214 again because we had it on file. We never get rid of them. If we lose a member, they may be gone 10 to 15 years, and the family may come in and want a copy. We have it.

Any time they come back in and have been out three or four years, the only thing we ask for is to make sure we have a copy of the DD-214 and

do the paperwork to make sure we have a current address so we know how to get in touch with them and where to send the mail to them and to the National and to our Post.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other questions on M-2? The motion is to adopt M-2. All in favor of adopting M-2 will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; opposed "no". The motion is defeated.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Commander-in-Chief, that completes the report of your By-Laws Study Committee. Again, on behalf of Vice-Chairman Jim Nier and the entire Committee, we want to thank you for the compliment of entrusting us to do this job for you.

I want to make a special mention of your By-Laws Study Committee that prepared and worked with us to make this a success. Could I ask the members of the By-Laws Study Committee to please stand and thank them on behalf of the Committee for their service. (Applause)

PARLIAMENTARIAN FRITZ MIHELCIC: Since it was brought up, I would like to address it and give you a little parliamentary law. If you have a copy of the Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law, look at Page 93. It says if a motion for a previous question is adopted, then that cuts discussion. However, it must be seconded, put to a vote and must be carried by a two-thirds vote.

If you want to discuss parliamentary procedure, get one of the books and come to the microphone and we can discuss it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We have an announcement at this time. As you know, Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller had some eye surgery this morning. He had his surgery, and all went well, and it is great news for all of us. Past Commander-in-Chief Mueller's surgery went well. I wanted to pass it on to you.

We will have the report of the Committee on Finance and Internal Organization. The chairman is Past Commander-in-Chief Paul A. Spera.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much. Comrade Commander-in-Chief and Comrades: Let me first thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, for the appointment for myself and the members of my Committee. We met in session, and I would also like to introduce and thank for his assistance the co-chairman, John Moon, Past Commander-in-Chief from Ohio, and those staff members that helped us, Bob Crow and Matt Claussen. I thank them also for their help.

As you are going to see, it was a very long and arduous Committee meeting that we had! We have three resolutions. I will, with your permission, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, read the title of the resolution and the "Be It Resolved."

Resolution No. 201, Support for the Young Marine.

"Be It Resolved, that the VFW acknowledges and supports the mission and programs of the Young Marines and urges its Departments, Districts, County Councils and Posts to support the Young Marines in their respective jurisdictions."

The Committee recommended rejection of this resolution.

Resolution No. 202, Black Beret Authorized Head Covering.

"Be It Resolved, that we allow the black beret be added to the VFW

Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as an authorized head covering at regular meetings."

The Committee rejected.

Resolution No. 203, "Discontinue the National Convention Banquet.

"Be It Resolved, that as soon as the current convention site contracts and agreements permit, that the National Convention Banquet be discontinued."

The Committee recommended adoption of this resolution, and I will second the motion, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We have a motion for the adoption of Resolution 203. Any questions on the adoption of No. 203? Hearing none, all in favor of adoption of 203, please say "aye".

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE SAMUEL HASKINS (Post 1034 – Vermont): My question on the Committee was that $50 has been taken out for that banquet each year, and a few years ago we reduced the committee people on these committees down to that $500 mark. If we eliminate that at the National Convention, I guess my question is, where does that $50 go? What are we going to do with the $50? Are we going to reduce the committees to $450?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrade, if that passes, then we don't have a banquet, you don't have to pay that $50 for the banquet. You get the full $500 allotted to you.

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I am Glen Gardner, a delegate from Post 3359, Garland, Texas.

Commander and delegates to this great convention, I asked that this resolution be drawn up as a guideline for looking at the convention next year and in the future. As we traveled around to the Flying Squadrons meeting, we asked the District Commander and the Department officers present their feelings toward these banquets.

I know a lot of Departments are now starting to eliminate their banquet. I know from my homecoming, the banquet is costing $80, which is becoming a burden on many of the comrades in this great organization, especially if they have to buy banquet tickets for themselves and their spouses.

I know that appointees get $50 taken out in a pre-banquet ticket have to buy a ticket for their spouse. This year we have less people going to the banquet than we have had for several years. This is a discussion with the National Officers and discussion with the Adjutant General that if we eliminate the banquet we will take the savings we are going to save with the banquet, that it costs the National Organization a lot of money on top of what it costs the delegates, and put that into expanding perhaps the Patriotic Rally, getting better entertainment and doing something that will be more entertaining to the delegates that attend these conventions in the future. That is the reason for this resolution.

I would ask the delegates to pass it. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other questions on the adoption of Resolution 203? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA (Post 9083 – Maryland): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move the adoption of Resolution No. 201.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RICHARD KOEL (Post 2916 – Maryland): Commander-in-Chief, I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We have a motion on the floor, properly seconded, to adopt Resolution No. 201. Any questions on the motion?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA (Post 9083 – Maryland): Comrade Commander-in-Chief and delegates, this resolution does not involve the expenditure of any funds of the VFW. It merely announces the VFW supports this wonderful program, the Young Marines, for young people of high school age. The VFW has supported youthful programs. There is no need why the VFW should not endorse the Young Marines, since it is no cost or obligation whatever. It is merely a statement that we support that program. I urge you delegates to approve it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the reasoning behind the recommendation for rejection, there were a couple of them. The first is this is a Marine Corps League program, the Young Marines.

The second is that any Post or Department that wishes to support the program on their own is free to do so. There is no necessity for making it a national program. That was the recommendation that was given to the Committee and that was the reasoning that they used. There is nothing to stop anyone from supporting the Young Marines program, but not to add it as a national program.

The third reason for recommending rejection is that over the last few years the National Officers and the staff in Kansas City and in Washington have been working on returning our organization back to what is considered the core programs of our organization, programs that directly affect veterans' benefits, veterans' health care, active duty personnel and their families, and quality of life.

The effort now is to get us focused back on those. All of the other programs, Posts and Departments are free to do on their own but not as a national program.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA (Post 9083): I want to make it clear that this is not requesting that the Veterans of Foreign Wars start a program or make it part of its program. It is merely announcing its public support for the Young Marines.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other questions on Resolution 201? Hearing none, we will move the motion. All in favor of adopting No. 201 will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no". The move for adoption is defeated.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, that concludes the report of your committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We will call on the report on General Resolutions. The chairman is Past Commander-in-Chief Edward Banas.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Commander-in-Chief, thank

you very much. Unlike some of the other committees, because of the rain and thunder, we don't have those issues. I would like to say, Commander-in-Chief, and to the body that the General Resolutions Committee consisted of myself and co-chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief Tom Pouliot, Past Commander-in-Chief Wally Hogan, and Past Commander-in-Chief "Bulldog" Smith. We have two resolutions, Commander.

Resolution No. 301, Prisoner of War and MIA Recognition day, which is submitted by the Department of Florida. What I would like to do is read the intent of the resolution, "To petition Congress to designate the third Saturday in September as Prisoner of War and Missing in Action Recognition Day, instead of that Friday when everyone is working."

On Resolution 301, Commander-in-Chief, I move for adoption.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TOM POULIOT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, we have a motion on the floor, properly seconded, to adopt Resolution 301. Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor of adopting 301 will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Comrades, Resolution 302, which was to clarify protocol for the POW/MIA Flag, I will read the "Resolved" portion.

"Be It Resolved, that the POW/MIA flag be granted precedence over any other flag, except the United States Flag, and that it be directly beneath the United States Flag when flown from a pole; and when carried in a 'line-of march', it is to be immediately to the left of the United States Flag."

The Committee has recommended rejection, and I will read the staff's comments.

"Comrades, we recommend rejection. Although not addressed in Federal Flag Codes, the POW/MIA flag does fall under the category of pendants of society. As such, its relationship to the U.S. Flag was established with passage of Section 1082 of the 1998 Defense Authorization Act during the first term of the 105th Congress.

"Sufficient visibility has been afforded these flags and the staff feels it is not in the best interest of the VFW to seek to elevate the POW/MIA flag above all others." The Committee recommended rejection.

Comrade Commander, that is the end of our report. We will stand by until the end of this convention. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We will now have the report on National Security and Foreign Affairs by Past Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, Chairman.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That will teach our Adjutant General to talk about thunder and lightning, right?

Commander-in-Chief, it is my pleasure to report that the Convention Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs convened yesterday, Sunday, 17 August. Your instructions were read. Roll call was conducted and action was taken on resolutions referred to this Committee.

A portion of the Committee members were designated to participate in the POW/MIA Subcommittee. Comrades, we had 100 members in that

Committee, and more than a third were broken out into a Subcommittee on POW/MIA, which shows the importance this organization gives to that very important issue. That subcommittee will report later today.

For this report, for the wisdom and guidance, I would like to thank the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, James Goldsmith from Michigan, and the Vice-Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, John Gwizdak from Georgia, and Vice-Chairman George Cramer from Illinois, and Norm Staab from Kansas. Also I extend the Committee's gratitude and my personal appreciation to our Committee Advisor, Mike Wysong, Director of the National Security and Foreign Affairs.

A very special thank you, Chief, is extended to all members of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee and the POW/MIA Subcommittee for their thoughtful deliberation and active participation in the Committee meeting yesterday.

At the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, we had two very special guest speakers that traveled from different parts of the globe to be with us. We had Minister Kao from the Veterans Affairs Committee, Republic of China, and Retired General Ruslan Aushev, President of the War Veterans Committee from the Russian Federation.

Mr. Kao discussed the military cooperation between the United States and the Republic of China, and thanked the VFW for its friendship and consistent support to the security of his nation.

General Aushev spoke about his organization's relationship in cooperation with the Veterans of Foreign Wars on many different fronts, including veterans' health care and MIA issues.

Commander-in-Chief, the Committee carefully deliberated each resolution. They are included in the Schedule of Resolutions in the white book. I will now move forward with the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee the recommendations. If any delegate to this convention would like a resolution set aside for further discussion, please so indicate after I have completed the approval section of the report and moved for adoption.

If you will follow me, I will read these by number. These are the resolutions the Committee has recommended for approval as submitted: 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 445, 447, 448 and 449.

I now move for the adoption of these resolutions.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES GOLDSMITH: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: You have a motion on the floor, properly seconded, to approve the before mentioned resolutions. Are there any questions on any of these resolutions recommended for adoption?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE CARL ROHDE (Post 1764 – New York): I would like to have set aside Resolution 446.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: That hasn't been recommended. Comrades, we are voting on the recommendations from the Committee right now. If you want any resolutions set aside afterwards, you can set them aside.

COMRADE CARL ROHDE (Post 1774 – New York): I misunderstood what he said. I thought he said as soon as he made his report to come up and set them aside. I will wait.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE WILLIAM THOMPSON (Post 6192 – New Jersey): Chief, go ahead and I will come in after the vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor of adopting the above aforementioned resolutions will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Now, the resolutions that the Committee recommended for rejection and the reason. After the list is read, you will have an opportunity to move the adoption of any of these resolutions. Each motion will be taken up and disposed of in order.

If no motion is made by any comrades with respect to a specific resolution, the resolution, under the Convention Rules, is automatically rejected by the convention.

Let's go to 427, Expand the Dates of Eligibility for the Vietnam Service Medal. That was rejected in favor of 437, which we just approved.

Let's go to 428, Re-Designate the Position of Secretary of the Navy as the Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps.

That was rejected in favor of 445. Resolution 445 was previously accepted.

Resolution 438, Expand the Dates of Eligibility for the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal. That was rejected in favor of 437, which we approved.

Resolution 444, Shore Up Our Borders. That was rejected in favor of 416, which we approved.

Resolution 446, Call for an Independent Review and Investigation of Current Armed Forces Preventive Medical Procedures and Protocols. That was rejected by the Committee. It lacks factual liability and it poses an impossible solution to a perceived problem.

This concludes the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee's report.

COMRADE CARL ROHDE (Post 1374 – New York): I move for adoption of Resolution 446.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chairman is finishing up his report, and then you can set aside your resolutions.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That concludes the Committee's report, Commander-in-Chief, subject to any other discussion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Are there any resolutions that need to be set aside.

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JACK SHIVERDAKER (Post 5579 – New Jersey): I move to set aside Resolution 410.

PARLIAMENTARIAN FRITZ MIHELCIC: I understand we are going back and forth. You will get your turn over at Microphone 3. I know what you are trying to do. Right now, Microphone No. 2, since the Committee did not recommend any of these, there is nothing to set aside. What you want to do is to make a motion to adopt that number.

COMRADE JACK SHIVERDAKER (Post 5579 – New Jersey): This was accepted by the Committee. I said I wanted to remove it. We should not support this one.

PARLIAMENTARIAN FRITZ MIHELCIC: You need to request for reconsideration.

COMRADE JACK SHIVERDAKER (Post 5579 – New Jersey): I move for

reconsideration of Resolution 410.

COMRADE WILLIAM THOMPSON (Post 6192 – New Jersey): I second the motion.

PARLIAMENTARIAN FRITZ MIHELCIC: Did you vote for that or did you vote against it?

COMRADE JACK SHIVERDAKER (Post 5579 – New Jersey): I voted in favor. I was on the prevailing side and I would now like to reconsider.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, we have a motion on the floor to reconsider the vote on Resolution 410. Any questions on the motion?

COMRADE JACK SHIVERDAKER (Post 5579 – New Jersey): I would like to explain the reason for the reconsideration, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: There is no debate on this. All in favor to reconsider will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; all those opposed "no". The majority is "no".

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE ART LAUR (Post 672 – New York): I second the motion to adopt Resolution 446.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: You have a motion on the floor, properly seconded, to adopt Resolution 446. Any questions on the motion?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE CARL ROHDE (Post 1371 – New York): Chief, I recognize some of the problems they had with this resolution. I just wanted to explain to the comrades what this is about. A young man went to the military from New York and before he was sent overseas he went to the doctor because he had a skin rash.

The doctor gave him something like Calamine Lotion and sunblock and to stay out of the sun. When he got back from Iraq, that same kinko had diagnosed it and it was a melanoma. The family, because of federal law and federal statutes, is not allowed to go after the doctor that made the misdiagnosis, who is still a practicing doctor. We have had other soldiers, undoubtedly, misdiagnosed, and the intent of the resolution is to allow misdiagnoses to be examined and checked out.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you. The National Office heard that speech, and I would like our advisor, Mike Wysong, to comment.

COMRADE MIKE WYSONG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the chairman mentioned, the staff did spend quite a bit of time in researching this resolution before it made its recommendation to the Committee. Let me just read the actual research that we did, because that will explain it.

The resolution begins by providing background into a high-profile case regarding Sergeant Carmelo Rodriguez.

The resolution goes on to state, and I quote, "Whereas, the above example is only one case of many cases of medical mismanagement that had been identified since the starting of Operating Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom; with most of the aforementioned cases occurring at permanent duty stations and not in battlefield environments."

It begs the question, have there been other cases similar to that of Sergeant Rodriguez? How many? Were they related to melanoma, misdiagnosis of disease or injury? This "Whereas" clause lacks the facts to support the claim and leads us to believe this resolution was written specifically in response to Sergeant Rodriguez, whose death is a tragedy and regrettable,

does not substantiate the claim of this specific "Whereas" clause.

The third "Whereas" clause states, "Whereas, the medical practices of the Armed Forces are not transparent; and as such, are not available to public scrutiny, due, in part, to the Feres Doctrine, which prevents lawsuits to be filed by military members and family members against the United States Government."

Medical practices in the armed forces are the same as medical practices in the private sector. Would you want your doctor explaining your treatment or care to the public? Transparency has nothing to do with the person's ability or inability to file a lawsuit.

The "Resolved" paragraph "calls upon Congress to immediately establish an independent commission who would be responsible for the review of all preventive health-care treatment practices and protocols; provide recommendations for safer health-care treatment practices and protocols; ensure medical personnel are held accountable in accordance with the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and provide the public said recommendations and status of implementation of said recommendations within the Armed Forces."

My friends, my comrades, Congress can establish a commission to review, recommend and report. Congress cannot, however, abrogate or relinquish its oversight responsibilities as set forth in the Constitution. A Congressional Commission, for example, could not hold anyone accountable in accordance with any regulation, law or mandate. That responsibility rests with Congress.

Further, a Congressional Commission reports only to Congress, not to the public. There is no mechanism in the Constitution that would allow for any type of quasi-governing body or commission to operate independently of Congress. The best you could do with this resolution would be to create a Commission to study military health care, policies and procedures, as they relate to OEF, OIF veterans.

That would be indicative as to what has already occurred with the Dole-Shalala Commission. That is the research done by the Washington National Security staff.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, does that explanation clear up your understanding?

COMRADE CARL ROHDE (Post 1374 – New York): I thank the comrade for the input. I just want to make one comment based on what he said. I would like to get a copy of that report to bring back to the comrades who wrote this. I want to clarify one thing.

That is what you did state in the very beginning was this was directed just towards Rodriguez. In our District meeting and several other meetings, we have offered the Rodriguez family monetary assistance. We have offered them a lot of things over the year.

The only thing the Rodriguez family says they want, they refused all of our offers, and all they want is to make sure this doesn't happen to another family. That is the Rodriguez family request. I would still like to see this passed, but I understand what you have said, and I would just like to get a copy of it. Thank you.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Mr. Wysong said we will provide you with a copy of that report. Comrade, thank you for bringing that up.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, you have a motion on the

floor, properly seconded, to adopt Resolution 446. All in favor of adopting Resolution 446 will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no". The motion is defeated.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Commander-in-Chief, this now concludes your National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee report. We think you for your appointment.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Thank you, John. I will now dismiss the Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs.

We are now going to have the report of the Subcommittee on POW-MIA by Past Commander-in-Chief John F. Gwizdak.

REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON POW-MIA

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK: Delegates to this convention, I am pleased to report that the POW-MIA Subcommittee of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee convened at the Convention Center at 2:30 Sunday, August 17, 2008. Your instructions were followed.

All members were present or accounted for, and action was taken on the resolutions that were assigned to this Committee. I thank the Vice-Chairmen of the POW-MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief George Cramer from Illinois, and Past Commander-in-Chief Norm Staab from Kansas. Their expertise and extensive knowledge on this issue was most valuable in our discussions.

Also, I extend the Committee's gratitude and my personal appreciation for our Committee advisors, Mike Wysong, Director of National Security and Foreign Affairs, and Bob Jackson, the Assistant Director of National Security and Foreign Affairs.

A very special thank you is extended to all members of the POW-MIA Committee for their genuine, keen and active participation in our Committee's deliberations.

We had two guest speakers at our meeting, Ambassador Charles Ray, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW-MIA Missing Affairs, and Mr. Johnnie Webb, Deputy Commander of the POW-MIA Accounting Command in Hawaii. Ambassador Ray outlined the mission of his office and updated the Committee on policy and oversight matters. Mr. Webb presented an overview of the Joint POW/MIA Command issues and their present activities and future operations.

The Committee carefully reviewed and deliberated each resolution. I will outline the POW/MIA Subcommittee's recommendations. If any of the delegates to this convention would like a resolution set aside for discussion, please so indicate after I have completed the approval segment of my report and move for the adoption of the same.

I will now read the resolution numbers that the Committee recommends for approval as submitted. All the resolutions that we did receive, we did recommend approval, so I won't have any recommendations for rejection.

The first resolution was Resolution 401, recommended for approval.

Resolution 402 was recommended for approval.

Resolution 403, approval.

Resolution 404, approval.

Resolution 439, approval.

Resolution 440, approval.

Resolution 441, approval.

Resolution 442, approval.

Resolution 443, approval.

I now move the adoption of these resolutions.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE CRAMER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, we have a motion on the floor, properly seconded, to adopt all the resolutions presented to the POW/MIA Committee. Any questions on the adoption of all the resolutions presented by the POW/MIA Committee. Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no". The motion carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GWIZDAK: Comrade Commander, from our Committee we want to express the thought that about 20 years ago, we had 100 and some resolutions on POW/MIA solutions, and since that time many things have been adopted and put in law. That reduced very much the resolutions.

The Committee also instructed me to advise the National Headquarters on one of the issues that did come up. On some of the issues and some of the resolutions, the word Vietnam Conflict was used and some of the resolutions Vietnam War was used. We recommend strongly the Committee, that consideration be given that the word "War" be used instead of "Conflict" in all resolutions.

That concludes our report of the Subcommittee on POW/MIA.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The Committee on POW/MIA has been dismissed.

We will now have the report of the Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions by Chairman Past Commander-in-Chief John W. Smart.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SMART: Thank you. Comrade Commander-in-Chief and delegates to this convention, I report that your Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions convened at 2:00 o'clock p.m., on Sunday, August 17, 2008. Roll call was taken, and preliminary matters were discussed.

The Committee was divided into three Subcommittees to carefully deliberate each of the 47 resolutions they were assigned. The Subcommittees that were established were as follows:

Subcommittee 1 was Medical Programs.

Subcommittee 2 was Employment.

The Subcommittee on Veterans Benefits and Entitlements was chaired by Tom Hansen from Minnesota.

Before proceeding, I wish to report that I appreciate the assistance of Bill Bradshaw, Director of Veterans Service, and Dennis Cullinan of the National Legislative Services, for the valuable and technical guidance to which they gave and provided to the staff.

I also want to thank Past Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius from Alaska for serving as Vice-Chairman of this very important Committee, and to Bill Dozier, Associate Assistant Director at NVS Employment and Homeless programs, who served on our Committee.

Commander-in-Chief, with your permission, I will begin the Committee's report by presenting those resolutions and Committee recommenda-

tions to be approved as written.

Past Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius will read and then proceed on resolutions that were approved, as amended, and finally I will conclude by presenting resolutions of the Committee's recommendations as rejected. If for any reason, if you or the delegates to this convention would like to have a resolution to be set aside for further discussion, please indicate after we have completed each segment of the report.

I will now proceed and read the resolution numbers as reported as approved:

Resolution No. 601.
Resolution No. 603.
Resolution No. 604.
Resolution No. 606.
Resolution No. 607.
Resolution No. 608.
Resolution No. 609.
Resolution No. 610.
Resolution No. 611.
Resolution No. 612.
Resolution No. 613.
Resolution No. 614.
Resolution No. 615.
Resolution No. 616.
Resolution No. 617.
Resolution No. 618.
Resolution No. 619.
Resolution No. 620.
Resolution No. 622.
Resolution No. 623.
Resolution No. 624.
Resolution No. 626.
Resolution No. 627.
Resolution No. 628.
Resolution No. 630.
Resolution No. 631.
Resolution No. 632.
Resolution No. 633.
Resolution No. 646.
Resolution No. 647.

I have been instructed that Resolution 605 has also been approved.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move to accept the Committee's recommendation to approve these resolutions as passed.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARY KURPIUS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: A motion is on the floor to adopt the aforementioned resolutions. Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KURPIUS: I will now read the resolutions that the Committee recommends for approval, as amended, and they are basically just some housekeeping amendments that they did. They are Resolutions Nos. 602, 629, 634, 639, 641, and Resolution 643.

Commander-in-Chief, I move to accept the Committee's recommendation to approve these resolutions as amended.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SMART: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The motion on the floor has been properly seconded to accept the aforementioned resolutions as amended. All in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no". The motion carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SMART: Comrade Commander-in-Chief and delegates, I will now read to you those resolutions that have been disapproved or rejected: Resolutions 625, 635, 636, 637, 638, 640, 642, 644 and 645.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: There is no motion and those resolutions will die.

At this time I would like to thank the Committee on Veterans Service, and the Committee is now dismissed. Thank you, comrades.

COMRADE M.C. "CONNIE" AGRESTI (Post 3150 – Virginia): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, could I have some clarification on Resolution 621? I don't recall hearing that one called by the Committee.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SMART: It was approved as read.

. . . Convention Announcements. . . .

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, please rise for the Benediction.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: Let us depart in peace and love our fellow man. May God, the Father, grant to the living grace; to the departed: rest, and, to this great country: peace.

To your service and promise of everlasting life. Amen.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, facing the flag of our country, join me in the salute.

(Whereupon, the assembly gave the Salute to the Colors.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, tomorrow morning the meeting will start at 8:00 o'clock a.m., if we are not blown away. (by the weather)

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 3:30 o'clock p.m.)

NATIONAL CONVENTION BANQUET
AUGUST 18, 2008

The National Convention Banquet of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, meeting in the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Florida, was called to order at 7:00 o'clock p.m., by Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner.

WELCOME

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the 109th VFW National Convention Banquet.

I am Glen Gardner, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and your Master of Ceremonies for the evening. I hope all of you have enjoyed your time here in Orlando so far. We are pleased to have you with us this evening, our VFW National and Department leaders, the Ladies Auxiliary leadership, but especially you, the members. We are also honored by the presence of our distinguished guests who will be introduced following dinner.

At this time, the VFW would like to acknowledge our generous supporters for the 2008 VFW National Convention. They are identified on the large screen.

Special appreciation goes to our lead sponsors, who have representatives joining us at this banquet: Target, Wal-Mart, Anheuser-Busch, UAW and GM, and also our good friends from Hallmark, Lockton Affinity, Pinnacle Insurance, and Humana Market Point. Please join me in giving all of them a round of applause. (Applause)

Please stand for our Invocation and remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem.

INVOCATION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: Let us pray. O, God, we come to you this moment because we believe you are our God and we are your people. We acknowledge that every diligent and perfect gift comes from above, and that all that we have comes from your hands.

We thank you for this food and ask your blessings upon us as we enjoy. Teach us to be always mindful of your loving and tender mercies. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We will have the Pledge of Allegiance at this time.

(Whereupon, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Gardner led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the playing of the National Anthem.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Please be seated and enjoy your dinner.

(Whereupon, the dinner was served at this time.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: If everyone would please take their seats. Once again, let me say how honored we are to have all of you here tonight at the guests banquet for the 109th Convention. Did everyone enjoy their meal? If you enjoyed your meal, thank Jack. He did it.

We have been concerned the last couple of days because of the weather, and I believe over the years Past Commander-in-Chief Carney has done a lot of things. He was always able to point out where the casinos were. I now find out he is a meteorologist and he has been advising me here the last two days what to do during the storm.

He told me that he had been to get a generator at Home Depot. We think that it is downgraded quite a bit from what it was. We may get a lot of rain, but if you stay indoors, stay until Friday, we will have a great convention.

You know, I was a little concerned because on May 15, the two days I was home during the last six months, there came a hail storm, and they had just put a new roof on my house last week, and I had $4,000 worth of damage to my pickup. Two weeks later I was in Maryland, and they had a tornado. How many times have they ever had a tornado in Maryland?

A week later, I was in Kansas and they had another tornado. But I was really concerned in Kansas, because I was just in my room about 9:00 at night and they turned on the alarm system and said, "Everyone please come to the basement. There is a tornado one-half mile from the hotel."

We all go downstairs and I go to the basement, and I am down there and they are having a banquet, and all these people came out of the banquet. About 250 people came out of the banquet. I said, "What is this?" They said, "This is a Bar Association meeting." I will tell you, comrades and sisters, I have heard about Kansas and the tornadoes, and that was one.

I would like to introduce to you the head table guests that we have. I will ask you to hold your applause until we have introduced the bottom tier and then give them a round of applause, and then the top tier. It is a pleasure that I start with my right and on your left, and introduce the National Recruiter of the Year, Peter Mascetti, and his wife, Margita. (Applause) Please hold your applause. You must have paid some people to do that, Pete. (Laughter)

Next is the Ladies Auxiliary National Senior Vice-President Dixie Hild and her husband, Ron.

Next is the Chairman of the Commonwealth of Independent States Committee for Warriors International, Mr. Aushevrusian Sultanovich, also Mr. Zakharovalexandr Konstantinovich, who is the head of the United States-Russia Bilateral Relations Division.

Next is Mrs. Juanita Bohlman, and her husband, VFW National Surgeon, Dr. Curtis Bohlman.

Rear Admiral Donna Crisp, the Commander of the Joint POW/MIA Command.

Next is Paul Chevalier, VFW Inspector General, and his wife, Catherine.

Past Commander-in-Chief and Chairman of the 109th National Convention, Jack Carney, and his wife, Joan.

Retired Brigadier General Jack Nicholson, the Secretary of the American Battle Monument Commission.

Next is Connie Atkinson, Secretary-Treasurer of the Ladies Auxiliary.

Then we have Mr. Hans Sang, Director of Overseas Liaison of the Veter-

ans Affairs Commission for the Republic of China and General Kao Hua-chu, Veterans Affairs Commission Minister from the Republic of China.

We have VFW Judge Advocate General Fritz Mihelcic, and Ambassador Charles Ray, the Deputy Assistant Security of Defense for POW-MIAs.

Next is Ms. Jan Tittle, Ladies Auxiliary National Junior Vice-President.

Ms. Laurie Lamereaux and her husband, National Chief of Staff, Pierre Lamereaux. Give them a big round of applause. (Applause)

Now, on my right and on your left, the upper tier, Mrs. Celeste Eubank, and her husband, the endorsed candidate from the Western Conference for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Richard Eubank.

Next we have Ms. Jan Rooney, who will be introduced later this evening.

We have Mrs. Sharon Tradewell and her husband, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell.

Mrs. Gloria Lisicki, and Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki, who will be introduced later. Give them all a big round of applause. (Applause)

On your left and on my right, my wife, Jean Gardner.

Mr. Roger Smith, husband of the guest of honor, whom we will introduce later, Ann-Margret.

Next is the Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent and his wife, Becky.

Dr. James Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Mrs. Peake.

Quartermaster General Larry Maher and his wife, Judy.

Mrs. Thelma Darling and her husband, VFW National Chaplain Tom Darling. Please give them a big round of applause. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE LISICKI

It is now my pleasure to introduce a gentleman who has so ably served America's veterans for many years. It has been a privilege for me to be a part of his "Veterans Forever Serving" leadership team for the past year. And he certainly 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.

George 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.

George served in the U.S. Army from 1966-'69. In Vietnam, he served with the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry, Fourth Infantry Division in the Central Highlands near Pleiku. He was awarded the Bronze Star, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Good Conduct Medal and the National Defense Service Medal among others.

In 1971, George joined VFW Post 2314 in Carteret, New Jersey, where he became a Life Member in 1976. He was the first Vietnam veteran in Post 2314 to be elected Post Commander, an office he held for four terms.

He earned the title of All-American State Commander in 1988.

George served as the New Jersey State membership Director for nine years and the Instructor for the New Jersey Officer Training Institute for 24 years. In 1995, he was elected to a two-year term as a National Council member. He has served as Chairman for the National Security POW-MIA and Legislative Committees. He has also served on the National Civil Service and Employment Committee.

George retired after 33 years from Union Carbide Corporation in 2002.

He is currently on a leave of absence from the State of New Jersey, where he works as an investigator in the Weights and Measures Division.

George is a member of the Military Order of the Cootie, American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, Catholic War Veterans, 4th Infantry Association and 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Association. He also serves as the Chairman for the Carteret Veterans Alliance.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join with me in welcoming our distinguished Commander-in-Chief, George J. Lisicki.

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

REMARKS – COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Thank you very much. I hope everybody is enjoying this convention. Jack Carney met me at the door when I first arrived here in the rain and said, "Welcome to the Sunshine State." I have not seen it yet.

My comrades, sisters and friends, let me say thank you to each and every one of you for all the support you have given me as a chair officer of this great organization, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. These past three years have been most memorable.

I cannot stand here today and explain to you how memorable that it was to actually serve in this position and have these happy memories, to be given the opportunity to travel around the world, this year alone, to foreign countries on foreign missions.

The POW-MIA Initiative, that is very, very close to my heart, to have the opportunity to travel to Russia, to China and Vietnam and work on this issue to bring closure to our members back home. This is something that we need to continue to work for because we have still over 80,000 missing in action from World War II. This is a program that needs to continue to put our utmost efforts into closure for our families.

The most memorable trip I took to Europe, I had the opportunity to visit Landstuhl Medical Center and visit our wounded warriors who had just returned from Afghanistan, and that terrible battle with the 173rd Airborne Brigade where we had nine killed in action and fifteen wounded.

I had the opportunity to hold the hands of the wounded and listen to their stories, of touching them. How nice to be there when they write home and tell a true story. That is why we need to go overseas, that is why we need to visit our troops, because we need to tell the truth. Apparently, the mass media does not.

I have had the opportunity to return from Iraq and Kuwait, and visit our warriors overseas and to hear their stories and to see firsthand the progress that has been made, how the Iraqis are starting to take over their own country and starting to defend their own freedom.

The success of the surge and to listen to all warriors, how proud they are because they never gave up hope. They believed from day one that their mission was right. They believed from day one that they would accomplish their mission and, by God, they are doing it and we stand so proud. (Applause)

I have had the opportunity to travel around this great country of ours, and what a beautiful country it is. With all the overseas travel that we as National Officers take on, there is no place like home. There is nothing more beautiful than the United States of America, no greater people than Americans. (Applause)

This country believes in freedom and this country is not afraid to fight for our freedom. That is why I am honored here today to have the opportunity to speak to a room full of heroes. If we could put together all the years of experience, all the years that the men and women in this room have worn a uniform to defend our freedom, I don't think I could calculate that tonight. That is the cost of freedom. Freedom is not free.

My friends, as my time winds down as your Commander-in-Chief, in some ways it is sad and in some ways it is glad, because I know that I have a lifetime of memories that I will remember for the rest of my life about this great organization and how much it meant to be an officer of this organization the past three years. Most of all, I can remember all the friends I have met in this organization of 37 years of service, and how grateful and honored I am to have that opportunity to meet all of you.

I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity. I want to thank you for giving me the support as your Commander-in-Chief, and I want to thank you for allowing me to be a leader of this great organization and accomplish the great deeds that we accomplished this year in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I thank you, and God bless each and every one of you. God bless our troops and may God bless our great United States of America.

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

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY TO THE VFW

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

In her acceptance speech, she introduced her 2007-2008 theme, "Tradition of Caring," and emphasized that the traditions of caring for and about veterans and their families are most important, not only to her, but to the Ladies Auxiliary organization as a whole.

She has demonstrated exceptional strength and commitment while leading the Ladies Auxiliary to a deeper commitment to veterans and their families.

I am very pleased to have had the opportunity to work with Virginia during the past year. It has been an experience both of us will always remember.

Please welcome from the Evergreen State of Washington, the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Virginia Carman. (Applause)

REMARKS – NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY TO THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

NATIONAL LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT CARMAN: Thank you, and thank you, Commander-in-Chief Lisicki. National VFW, Ladies Auxiliary Officers, Comrades, Sisters and special guests:

What a pleasure it is to be here with you tonight to celebrate our outstanding year of achievements, during this 94th year of partnership with our long tradition of caring. As partners, the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary, we have upheld our commitment to assisting veterans and their families throughout the year.

In our Family Support Program alone, the Ladies Auxiliary and the VFW have donated more than $6 million. (Applause) I applaud each and every one of you tonight and thank you for doing what comes so naturally to all of us. Let us celebrate our tradition tonight as they guide us into our future.

I want to thank all of our special guests for being here tonight to help us celebrate our service to America's veterans, their families and to our country. Thank you all for a most memorable six years as a national officer. Tonight, I hope you will enjoy the festivities. Thank you very much. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF HALL OF FAME AWARD RECIPIENT ANN-MARGRET

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Tonight, we have a unique situation in that we will be presenting not one, but two Hall of Fame awards. And when I introduce the recipients of the award, you will understand why tonight is indeed a very special occasion.

Before I introduce our first honoree of the evening, please watch a short video that is sure to bring back some wonderful memories.

(Whereupon, the Ann-Margret video was shown at this time.)

The Army made Ann-Margret an Honorary Ranger. Sailors aboard USS Yorktown greeted her with, "Hi, Annie" spelled on the carrier's deck. Few embodied the spirit of troop support more than singer, dancer, actress and entertainer than Ann-Margret, and if you served in Vietnam, no doubt you were treated to one of her entertaining and delightful USO shows.

A USO regular in Vietnam by the time she was 25, the USO has honored her with the Bob Hope Spirit of Hope Award for her long-time participation in entertaining U.S. service members on their tours.

She still has great affection for Vietnam veterans and refers to them as "My Gentlemen." In 2005, she helped welcome them home with an encore performance at Nellis Air Force Base. One of the world's most glamorous and versatile super stars, Ann-Margret has been twice nominated for an Academy Award, won five Golden Globe Awards, and received four Emmy nominations.

In 1999, she received one of her Golden Globe nominations for her role as the legendary Pamela Harriman in the Lifetime film, "Life of the Party."

She has made over 43 films, including "Carnal Knowledge," "Viva Las Vegas," "Bye, Bye Birdie," "Grumpy Old Men" and its sequel, "Grumpier Old Men."

She is also the National Chairperson for the Myasthenia Gravis Division of the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

Ann, as Bob Hope would say, "Thanks for the memories."

Ladies and gentlemen, it now gives me great pleasure tonight to present the VFW 2008 Hall of Fame Award to Ann-Margret.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Hall of Fame Award, Gold Medal and Citation, awarded to Ann-Margret.

"In heartfelt recognition of her fervent love of country and indomitable American spirit she expressed so dynamically and poignantly while entertaining U.S. service members during the Vietnam era. Her generous efforts to sustain and improve the morale of United States service members through her live performances is a reflection of her dedication and patriotism, as well as her enthusiastic and undying support for our military thus earning her the utmost respect and sincere admiration 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 18th day of August, 2008. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by George Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – HALL OF FAME RECIPIENT
ANN-MARGRET

HALL OF FAME RECIPIENT ANN-MARGRET: Oh, boy. This is so exciting. I certainly hope I can read my writing. Hello, everybody. Oh, gosh. I feel so blessed and so very honored to be here tonight with all of you, and certainly so honored to receive this award. This is a special award.

I did my first USO tour when I was a freshman at Northwestern University, and it was called "Joy Ride", and we went to Iceland and Germany during the Christmas vacation, and then I went to Vietnam in 1966 and 1968. I will never ever forget those trips and all of the young men and women – we were all young at that time – the heroes and heroines that I met.

I forgot to tell you in 1966 there were just four of us who went over. It was Johnny Rivers and his base player and drummer and me, and then in 1968 I went over with Bob Hope. There must have been 80 of us then. I remember all the places that I went to. Oh, my gosh, I will list just a few of them: DaNang, Chuli, Dong Nambo. Oh, my gosh, there were many.

Bubai, I remember that very well. It was an 8:00 o'clock show, and they had just finished making the stage, and there must have been about 50 of you gentlemen that had this incredible experience. All of them were there. Yes, the Kittyhawk. That was one, and I got to have the admiral's room, and it was pretty small but beautiful. Yes, when I looked out in the audience and I saw all those young men from small towns, Dixie boys, just boys doing a man's job.

Now, I want to tell you that my daughter happens to be a doctor, a psychologist and professor who works at the Veterans Hospital, and this is back in Wisconsin. She has worked with veterans one-on-one for probably the last five years, and with PTSD – oh, I am so excited – with the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

She has these words, these long words, and I just nod and I smile, and I don't understand all of them. We have a son, who works as a surgeon. He works in the ER, and he comes home and he has these big words, and I smile like I understand those words. She loves you guys just as much as I do.

We are aware of all your sacrifices and your courage, and your untold stories. You are the strength of this nation, the heart of this nation and the soul of this nation, and we are eternally grateful.

I thank the good Lord that you are here, that you are back here on American soil out of harm's way and in the United States of America. (Applause)

I want you all to know that you have my deepest respect, my admiration and, of course, my loyalty. God bless you all. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF HALL OF FAME AWARD RECIPIENT
MICKEY ROONEY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: During the 1940s, Andy Hardy was

America's favorite son. He made America laugh, he made America cry. But most of all, he brought America happiness during one of America's most distressing periods.

In or out of character, America adored Mickey Rooney. And when Andy went to war, Mickey Rooney did as well. Private First Class Rooney, who earned a Bronze Star, served 21 months in the Army, entertaining troops for Armed Forces Network.

All in all, Mickey is a man with over 200 films under his belt. He earned an Honorary Oscar for Lifetime Achievement, a special Juvenile Oscar, five Oscar nominations, one Emmy Award, five Emmy nominations and two Golden Globes.

Mickey Rooney also has been dubbed the fifth greatest actor of all time by the Academy of Film Arts & Sciences, certainly an illustrious achievement when considered that is just above such well-known names as Henry Fonda and John Wayne.

But behind the silver screen, Mickey Rooney was entertaining troops, volunteering his time for more than 60 years for the USO, bolstering the morale of America's men and women in uniform, who, in his own words: "Needed a human touch to war's essential inhumanity."

Ever the energetic entertainer, America continues to love and respect Mickey Rooney for all he has done, and continues to do, for America.

Ladies and gentlemen, it now gives me great pleasure to introduce to you VFW Hall of Fame awardee Mickey Rooney. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Hall of Fame Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Mickey Rooney.

"In proud recognition and sincere appreciation of his indomitable American spirit and unwavering love of country he has so ardently expressed by entertaining United States service members for more than 60 years. His selfless effort to bolster the morale of troops through his live performance is a manifestation of his boundless enthusiasm and desire to demonstrate support for our military, thus earning him the utmost respect and genuine gratitude 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 18th day of August, 2008. Approved by the National Council of administration." This has been signed by George J. Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – HALL OF FAME RECIPIENT MICKEY ROONEY

HALL OF FAME RECIPIENT ROONEY: This is so great.

Ladies and gentlemen, honored guests, distinguished guests: In behalf of the love of my life, we want to thank you, every one of you, for inviting us here to be a part of this glorious ceremony. I would like to get something straight, if I may.

There was a lot of talk about the USO, rightly so. But that isn't what I did. I was in the Army. (Applause) I joined the Army, I was at Pearl Harbor, and I left two days before the attack. When I got back, I heard we were at war. I enlisted. (Applause)

The studio tried to keep me out. They said, "We will give you something that will make your blood pressure be too high and they won't take you." I told my mother, I said, "Mom, I won't do anything like that." She said, "You

would be no son of mine if you did." (Applause)

This great director went to Washington, and he had to buy something. I went to Fort Riley, Kansas, and I was in the Cavalry. The Adjutant General of Fort Riley at the time was George S. Patton. I tell you this because when I went overseas on the Queen Mary with the idea that it had been bought by the Army, we were in a show called "Jeep Shows." Three men and a Jeep, to go to the front line installations, no matter how dangerous it was.

We had 150 men that were enlisted into this particular group of men of "Jeep Shows." As I said, we went overseas on the Queen Mary and landed in Havre. We went to a place in Dimple and we were assigned to two men we were going to work with. I was fortunate enough to work with the men, one from San Francisco, Marion Paloney, and he played the accordion, and Bob Priester from California.

We sang, and we sang in our song over and over a beautiful song, a million times. We never got tired. The thing is that we entertained everyone, we were attached to armor for a few days, didn't know where we were going to eat or where we were going to sleep, or how our hygiene was going to be taken care of. We had no place.

I will never forget that we had pork for about two weeks. We were not so lucky. We had trichinosis and we were sent to the hospital. A lot of us that I knew from Hollywood like Marlene Dietrich, she said, "You don't look too bad." I said, "I wish I felt like you think I look." (laughter)

Anyway, after that, everything continued. The 82nd Airborne in Vietnam, God bless them, and out of our travels and everything else, we did the shows at 3:00 o'clock in the morning in Chu Lai with three men, the same for all the other shows. It was sad because jump time for most of these men would be five or six, but they had a chance to see and get in a couple of laughs.

I used to do imitations of Clark Gable and Jimmy Stewart, and it used to make us laugh. I told jokes and a couple of songs that were written for me: "I Like New York in June, How About You?" All of the Gershwin songs. They seemed to like it, they loved it. They were happy.

After the show, we would talk about their families, where they were from and who they knew, what their hopes were after they got out of the Army. I will never forget that I was talking to a little fellow at a school, transposed to be a hospital, schools that had been pulled out and they had the bodies of the wounded with the tag on them saying, "Now, I can't wait for this land."

I would go down and visit. He was young; God knows, I was 20, 21. He had blue marks all over his face, powder burns. I stroked him and I said, "Gee, son, you are going to be fine. They have great doctors in the Army and they are going to take care of you." He said, "You know what they are going to do to me?" I said, "No." He said, "They are going to cut off my leg." I said, "Oh." I was trying to think of something.

I said, "Do you want to be like a big star in Hollywood? Herbert Marshall was in the First World War and he lost his right leg, and they patched him up so he had a leg to wear with a prosthesis. It didn't stop him." He said, "Really?" I said, "Yes. Nothing can ever stop you if you trust your God. Nothing, everything will be perfect." I said, "Some day, son, you will understand."

Well, that is just one of the stories that they had. The fact is that later on in life, I got a letter from him. He said, "Mickey, perhaps you don't remember me, but maybe you do. This letter, you probably don't know who it is from, but you came to me and told me I was going to be all right. I was afraid I was going to lose my leg, and you told me about Herbert Marshall."

I remembered.

He said, "I want you to know that you were right. Anybody can do something with what God gave me. I have married and I have three children. I am in business helping the veterans." He said, "I have never been happier in my life." You can imagine how I felt.

After the war was over, I still stayed around, and we weren't going home right away. During that war, I was so very proud, I was doing a show one day with the same general, Five Star General George Patton, who recommended me for the Bronze Star. Celebrity, forget that; soldier and love of his country, I am that man. (Applause) Please, I am no hero. Heroes are still there. You are the heroes.

I want to introduce the hero of my life, the one that I wouldn't trade places with anybody, my wife, Jan Rooney. Stand up. (Applause)

Oh, listen, we have had our arguments, yes. But that is only normal. Everybody thinks everybody's life is perfect. No one ever asks themselves. America can never be taken for granted; the smallest thing is so important. Our children, our families, our uncles, aunts and nephews, and our grandchildren, are we guiding them today for tomorrow?

The people who are in the big election coming up, I am often asked, "Who are you going to vote for, Mickey Rooney?" I say, "Obama is great, McCain is wonderful. I am not a political person."

I just hope to God that everything I have that you will vote for the best interest of our great country, the United States of America.

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

PRESENTATION OF THE VFW DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Tonight, we are here to honor a fellow combat veteran who served his nation for 40 years in uniform, Marine Corps General Peter Pace, the recipient of this year's Dwight D. Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award.

The Eisenhower Award has been presented annually since 1970 to one individual for his or her contributions to the cause of American security, unity and world peace.

It recognizes extraordinary contributions and achievements to secure the nation from foreign threats, to advance the interests of the nation abroad, and to inspire the American public to support these efforts as we journey towards the goal of world peace.

The Eisenhower Award is named after our 34th President, who along with seven other United States presidents proudly called themselves members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

General Pace is a 1967 Naval Academy graduate. He earned an MBA from George Washington University, and is also a graduate from the National War College.

He is the recipient of four Defense Distinguished Service Medals, the Bronze Star with Combat "V" Device, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with "V" Device, the Combat Action Ribbon, and numerous other awards and decorations.

He was a Platoon Commander and Assistant Operations Officer in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969 with the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines. He then returned to Southeast Asia in 1972 as a Security Element Operations Offi-

cer and Executive Officer with the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing in Nam Phong, Thailand.

He has been stationed with Joint Forces in Korea and Japan. He was the Deputy Commander of Marine Forces in Somalia from December, 1992, to February, 1993, and returned in October of that year as the Deputy Commander of Joint Task Force – Somalia.

He commanded United States Marine Forces – Atlantic from 1997 to 2000, the U.S. Southern Command from 2000 to 2001, and became the Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs from October, 2001, to August, 2005. He then became the 16th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff until his military retirement in October, 2007.

Our nation was at war when 2nd Lieutenant Pace entered active service, and our nation was at war when General Pace retired. And after four decades of danger, challenges, stress and excitement, he remained true to the Marine Corps motto of "Semper Fidelis."

He now serves on the Board of Directors of several corporate entities that are involved in management consulting, private equity, and information technology security. On June 19, 2008, President Bush awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom for exceptional meritorious contributions to the security or national interests of the United States.

General Pace is also an ardent personal supporter of the USO. And tonight, the Veterans of Foreign Wars is presenting him with our top award to recognize his extraordinary contributions and achievements to secure a nation from foreign threats, to advance the interests of the nation abroad, and to inspire fellow Americans.

Comrades and Sisters, ladies and gentlemen, may I present to you the recipient of the 2008 VFW Dwight D. Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a Life Member of VFW Post 1429 in Teaneck, New Jersey, General Peter Pace. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "The Dwight D. Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award, Gold Medal and Citation presented to General Peter Pace.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation of his innumerable contributions to our nation through many years of distinguished military service.

"His remarkable achievements as Commander of U.S. Marine Forces, Commander of U.S. Southern Command and Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are well known. His intrepid and courageous leadership has led to the preservation of the peace and security for the United States, thus earning him the highest respect and gratitude 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 18th day of August, 2008. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by George J. Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. This also comes with a $15,000 honorarium. (Applause)

RESPONSE – GENERAL PETER PACE

GENERAL PACE: And there is no pressure here, with Ann-Margret on my left and Mickey Rooney on my right, two incredible patriots? It is a distinct honor to share the microphone with them.

Mickey Rooney literally was an actor. When I was growing up as a child, every time he had a new movie come out I was there with my 25 cents at the theater to go watch it.

Ann-Margret, in 1968, when you were in Vietnam, so was I. I did not have the privilege of seeing you, but I knew you were there. Thank you for bringing such huge happiness to the veterans.

Forty years in uniform, what an incredible turn. I am proud and really honored to receive this award tonight. I would like to accept this on behalf of three very distinct groups of individuals. First, to the American families who encouraged their most precious possessions, their sons and their daughters, to volunteer to serve and defend our nation.

Mickey Rooney hit it on the head when he talked about his mom. So many moms and dads, mentors and families, who despite their fear of what might happen to their son or daughter encouraged us to serve our country. I truly believe that most of the young men and women want to find a way to serve their country. It is the families and the mentors who they turn to for guidance and support, who make all the difference.

So, the very first group I want to thank and accept this award in behalf of are all the American families. (Applause)

Second are the families of the men and women who serve our nation day in and day out in uniform. You know those of us who have the privilege of wearing the cloth of our country do so with great pride, and we know when we are in danger and we know when we are not.

Oh, by the way, as a United States Marine, that is where I would like to be, in the company of Marines. Our families don't know when we are in trouble and, therefore, they sit home and worry every single day that that moment we are in trouble.

Before we go, they support our preparation to go. While we are gone, they hold our families together and pray for us and suffer in a way I won't imagine. When we come home and we receive awards, they stand in the background and pretend somehow they have had nothing to do with it. Our wives, our husbands, our children serve this nation as well as anyone who has ever had the privilege of wearing the uniform. I accept this award on their behalf.

The last, and most important to me, is to accept this award on behalf of all the incredible young men and women who serve in our armed forces today. That is 2.4 million wonderful, wonderful, Active, Guard and Reserve. If you are a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, you will understand what I am about to say. Each of us has earned this award.

I accept this award also in behalf of these Marines who died following my order: Lance Corporal William Travis, Corporal Mike White, Staff Sergeant Freddie Williams, Corporal John Miller, and the list goes on.

A young man who followed an order of Second Lieutenant Pace, in so doing died for their country. As it turns out 18 August, 2008, is exactly 40 years since four heroes sacrificed themselves in a small village near the Liberty Bridge outside of Da Nang.

One of them, Staff Sergeant Freddie Williams, stepped across in front of Second Lieutenant Peter Pace just as a sniper bullet was headed towards my chest, and in so doing took the round in his side instead of me taking it in my chest. I did not know why or how I could go through 13 months of combat and not get a scratch. But I promised myself that I would serve my country as long as I was needed, and I would know when I was no longer needed.

But the promise I made to the names I just mentioned and to the others I did not, when somehow I would try to find a way to serve this country in a way that would be respectful of their sacrifice.

As we sit here tonight, there are about a quarter of a million of our fellow citizens who have earned the opportunity to join the Veterans of Foreign Wars. They are incredible human beings, and this organization and everyone in it should be immensely proud of what you have done and your service to your country.

When I was a Second Lieutenant in combat, I thought to myself wouldn't it be great if somehow my service to the country would mean that my son, if I was fortunate to have one, or my daughter, if I was fortunate to have one, that they would not have to fight for this country.

As I have gotten older, I understand what I really meant to think and to say, because thanks to you all in this room and the millions of Americans who have gone before you, it is not about fighting to end war. Unfortunately, but realistically, it is about fighting so our children and our grandchildren will also have something worth fighting for. (Applause)

I hope what I say will be understood not to be a political statement, but what I believe to be a statement of fact. There is a dialogue in this country right now about should we or should we not be fighting a war? The problem with that dialogue is it fails to take into account that the enemy has declared war on us. (Applause)

So, the discussion should take place, but if it would take place with the understanding that we are not talking about whether or not we are going to be in a war, we are talking about whether will we take a stand. (Applause)

I am eternally grateful that all of you in this room, and so many others, some 23 million plus veterans in our country, chose to serve your country loyally as you have, and we collectively should stand in awe of the young men and women who serve our country today. I accept this on their behalf. Thank you very much.

I have one more thing I want to tell you. When I found out I was going to get this award, I had no idea that there was an honorarium involved. I am deeply appreciative. On 16 September, I will be in Chicago, Illinois. It will be a banquet in that great city held by the Marine Corps Law Enforcement Foundation.

That organization has so far collected $34 million. Every penny of that $34 million has gone to the sons and daughters of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen that have been killed in active duty. This honorarium will be given to them.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for attending the banquet this evening. You have graced this wonderful night.

Now I will call upon National Chaplain Thomas Darling for the Benediction.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: Let us pray. May the Lord always remember us. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine more upon your face, and may the rain fall softly upon your field until we meet again. And may God continue to hold you in the palm of his hand. Amen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: That concludes the Distinguished Guests Banquet.

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION
TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2008

(The Second Business Session of the 109th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States was called to order in the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Florida, at 8:00 o'clock a.m., by Commander-in-Chief Lisicki.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: National Sergeant-at-Arms, please prepare the room for the Opening Ceremonies.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. Comrades and Sisters, please rise for the Opening Prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States.

(Whereupon, the Opening Prayer was given by National Chaplain Thomas Darling, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Opening Ceremonies for this Business Session have been completed and your orders have been obeyed.

REPORT OF CONVENTION CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Now, we wil have the report of the Credentials Committee, David Butters, Chairman.

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 – Delaware): As of the close of business yesterday, August 18, 2008, the delegate strength of this convention is as follows: Total Delegates, 10,387; total Commanders, 53; total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 32; total National Officers, 35. That is for a grand total of 10,506.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE JAMES PEAKE, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: It is now my honor to introduce the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Dr. James B. Peake. He is a 1966 graduate of West Point, who served in Vietnam as an Infantry Officer with the 101st Airborne Division. He earned the Combat Infantryman Badge, and received two Bronze Star medals with "V" Device and the Silver Star for gallantry in combat. He also received two Purple Hearts for his wounds.

He graduated from Cornell University Medical School in 1972, and began a distinguished Army medical career that would span four decades, culminating as a Lieutenant General and being appointed as the Army Surgeon General in 2000 in charge of 50,000 medical personnel and 187 Army medical facilities worldwide.

Upon his military retirement in 2004, Dr. Peake served as the Executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer of Project Hope, the world-renowned International Health Foundation, and he then became a member of the Board of Directors of QTC, one of the largest private providers of occupational health and disability examination services in the nation.

His wealth of medical knowledge and executive leadership experience resulted in his nomination by President Bush last October to be the new VA

Secretary, which the Senate unanimously confirmed on December 14th.

Today, as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Dr. Peake is charged with leading the federal government's second largest department, with almost 250,000 employees and 1,400 facilities in the finest integrated health-care system in the world.

Whether you call him Mr. Secretary or General or Doctor, we believe his most valuable asset is the personal experience he brings to the job. He has been both the patient and the healer, which is a great combination to have in one man who is charged with being this nation's number one veterans' advocate.

Comrades, please welcome a fellow combat veteran, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Peake. (Applause)

REMARKS – SECRETARY JAMES PEAKE

SECRETARY PEAKE: Good morning. It is great to be with you and great to be with you last night. As George said, I have been on the job about eight months now, and I will tell you if I could have the slides, I am going to show some pictures because I believe in images. I think it tells the story, if you will put those slides on in the back.

You know, it is a unique time to be your Secretary of Veterans Affairs, because we are a nation at war. If anybody understands that, it is this group.

The next slide is a time of dangerous and ambiguous environment, and if anybody understands it, it is this group. If anybody understands the next slide, the importance of the legacy of our service and our sacrifice to this nation, it is this group.

I appreciate so much having a chance to be here with the VFW, because you help to keep that life in the minds of Americans, but you do more than just keep it alive. You actually provide service in so many different ways: 13 million hours of volunteer service, community service, scholarships for youth, youth programs, safety programs, a home for children, Veterans Service officers that support our veterans.

You advocate in front of our nation's leaders on the cause of veterans. There is no better example than the people that you have attracted here already and the people that are coming to have a dialogue with you.

I am going to talk about some of the issues as I see them and get into some of that aspect of what I see as issues and priorities of a nation at war. This issue of having two great systems, I really believe that we do. The military health system and the VA health system really are not competitors, but they are complementary, and what we really want to make sure is that our patients, our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines can go back and forth smoothly.

I want to talk about some of the things that would help us in being able to do that. One of them is understanding the quality journey that your VA has been on a number of years. Many of you in this audience have firsthand experience with the level of that quality. All you have to do is to read the literature.

If you go to the British medical journal Lancet, they had a big article in there: if you want to go see one of the finest systems in the world, go see the veterans' system in the United States of America. That is pretty high praise. This idea of the 1970 article that was the Life magazine cover could not be further from the truth anymore. We need to help tell that story so people

understand that.

We have 1,400 points of care, we have 270,000 people out there working. There are times when something will go wrong; we don't do it quite right. But we are more transparent that anybody. We are absolutely aggressive in defining the issues and trying to fix them.

Another issue that comes up is the level of money in the 2009 budget. The President's budget is for $93.7 billion. Now, both sides of the Congress, the House and Senate, have indicated they are going to push that up by several billion dollars each. So, when you start looking at what that means for the VA, it talks about nearly a doubling of our budget since 2001.

If you look at both the discretionary funding line and where our healthcare and entitlements are, they both have grown substantially and health care will have more than doubled. You know, it is more than a matter of money. It really is the quality of the people.

As your secretary, I have had a chance to travel in these eight months and every place I go I find absolutely "calling" people who care about taking care about taking care of the veterans. It is a calling. Now, 31 percent of those are veterans ourselves. When you find someone that is not, they talk about their dad, their mom, their granddad that was a veteran.

This quote that I showed here is one that typifies what I do in e-mails sometimes. This is someone that I knew from my prior life. They say what an honor to take care of these people, and it talks about seeing a Ranger from World War II, and it talks about the occupation they are in and to take care of so many, and they said this is the best job ever.

We continued to maintain our core competency. The spinal cord injury is one that we have the best in the world and have had for some time. We need to continue to look where health care is going and how to do those kind of things better. Amputation care is another example of that.

I saw an active duty sergeant, who came back to Walter Reed for a second operation, or one of multiple operations. He had been down in our Miami VA Amputee Center where he was getting his care. I said, "What kind of care did you get there?" He said they could do everything at Miami that they can do at Walter Reed.

He said the other thing that was pretty cool is that some of those "old guys," that would be me and you all, were getting some of these new legs, too. He said it was making a difference for them. So, what we are doing is raising the bar as we take care of this new generations of veterans across the whole VA system.

We are going to spend more than $1.3 billion in this area of prosthetics, which includes hearing aids and so forth. It is not a question of not having the resources. I want you to know that we are applying those resources.

Through monitors that are kind of programmed for your VA, if you take a good look at that picture, you can see he has got a prosthesis. He lost that arm in a land mine in Vietnam. We have people that understand our veterans, that care about our veterans and know how to take care of our veterans and are committed to that definition.

Rehab is another great example of moving forward. We have 55 new continuum care clinics opening. We are moving from strictly inpatient-based to outpatient to distributed care so we can take care of those blinded and low mission and visually disabled veterans.

The outreach is absolutely tremendous, because it gives them care where they need it, when they need it, by the quality of people because we

are expanding our outpatient services for our blind veterans.

Another group that I am particularly interested and concerned about is our women veterans. You know, they make up 14 percent of our force now. About 11 or 12 percent of the folks overseas in OIF and OEF are women. When they come back, I want to make sure we have aggressively reached out and provided them the atmosphere of care that is important to them so we can deal with the issues of military sexual trauma, provide them the quality, mental health, primary care, gynecological care, and in many cases in a separate portal where they can come in and be very comfortable in the environment that we provide.

We want to continue to leverage our award-winning electronic patient records. But we want to extend it to you, where with this system you have full access to your medical records so you can track your medicines, so you can track your appointments, so you can track your vital signs, your weight, the things that are important to you.

Where we want to go with it is to be able to extend that to when you go outside the VA, and many people do, to go outside the VA so that your provider out there can see all the information that we have about you, so it doesn't have to repeat tests unnecessarily and ultimately, so they can add to that record and we can have the full picture of your health care.

Rural health is an area that I think is important. Thirty-eight percent of our veterans live in what is considered a rural environment. We have 1.7 percent that live in a highly rural environment. I have seen some highly rural environments. I have been to Alaska where we have no roads, that we had eight National Guardsmen. Billings and Helena, Montana, you realize that somebody drives seven hours to come down to a routine appointment. So, we want to leverage a lot of things to improve access to care for our rural veterans.

That includes things like home tele-health. We have 34,000 people where we are reaching into their homes, gathering their health information, blood pressure, their blood glucose, their weight, the things that are important to be able to trend and know how they are doing.

But more importantly, connect them with a nurse on the other end of the line that has a relationship with them. We are investing in mobile outreach. We are buying 50 new vans for our vet centers so they can move out into the AO's and make vet center care more accessible to our veterans.

We have a pilot project now that we just announced. We have four mental and primary care clinics that are going to be mobile, that we are going to serve 34 of our more rural counties and try to understand that.

I have established a Rural Health Advisory Committee, and the first meeting is going to be next month, in September. We are leveraging telehealth in our community based out-patient centers, so you can have your specialty care and specialty provider without having to necessarily make the trip to one of our medical centers.

We have some issues that we need to continue to work on, where we work on what I call a no man's land. That is in between those two great systems that I talked about. One is the issue of moving from one system to the other in terms of claims and benefits.

Let me give you an example of one of the things that we are doing with the pilot program. That is in the National Capital region focusing on those in the MED, BED process in Bethesda, Andrews, so that we can gather all the information about that service member while they are still part of the

military, while they are still going through the boards.

The military will make the decision if they are fit or unfit for duty. We have nothing to do with that. But we do the rating of the unfitting condition and all the other conditions that decreases ambiguity so our service members know what they are going to get from a VA benefit perspective and then we can quickly pay them as soon as that DD-214 hits the street.

We are doing that with the BED program, the Benefits Delivery at Discharge program, at more than 150 sites across the nation for those that are not in the MED process but just separating from the service if they feel they have a VA compensable disability. Our disability is the 1945 system. It is about the 1945 disabilities family environment. It has got 1945 processes.

The Dole-Shalala Commission talked about the Disability Commission talked about it, and we need to work with the other VOs and Congress to reshape that. Even with reshaping, we have got to change our processes. It is largely a paper process.

Many of you have worked in our regional offices. Many of you have visited them and you see the piles and piles and piles of paper. In this audience, I know everybody knows about USA. When you send a piece of paper in, if you send a piece of paper in, it is turned into an electronic product on somebody's electronic work cue by the end of the day.

You don't have to send anything in because you can just do it online. I just recently said we are going to allow electronic signatures so you can provide it without sending in a paper copy. We need to go paperless. It is not like this is a new idea. It is right there in our VA magazine. It was 1999 when that magazine article was written. We have to move ahead with that.

Other ways in which we are trying to bridge that gap between our two systems, we are going to honor Steve Blum here later on today, I understand, rightfully so. We are working with the National Guard where these possible yellow ribbon events are happening really now across the United States in our vet centers, in our BBA, our Benefits program, our VHA program, are joining in.

What is great about that, you are not only reaching the veterans but you are reaching their families. It is oftentimes the families that are the first to notice that he could use a little help, there is something not quite right. Let's get you that help.

I applaud the National Guard. Our Reserves are very busy. You all know that and they are doing great work. I believe in that motto also. They say serving those same kinds of multiple tours as our active component folks. So, what I want to do, since the NDE signed in January, we can see our service members up to five years after they are discharged from the military without going through any of the adjudication kind of procedures.

I have established a call center that is outreach, making out calls to some 500,000 veterans who have not yet come to the VA. That is just to let them know that we are here for you. We target specific ones; about 17,000. You know, we know something about you that you could use some care management. Would you like that?

We are in the process of doing that. We are finding lots of people that say, "Boy, thank you for calling. Yes, I could use some help, or I could use some information about my benefits or about my health care." We are also reaching to the Demob. We have a formal memorandum of agreement. What we are trying to do is to aggressively encourage our separating servicemen and women at the Demob site, the Reservists in a lot of cases, to go ahead

and actively enroll them right then and there with their DD-214, and the information about what VAMC they want to go to. So, we are actively trying to engage them.

Why? There are a lot of reasons to do that. First, we want to establish that relationship. I think that is going to help us in this issue of the whole panacea of health issues, to take care of the issue of suicide. I will put that on the table. We have looked carefully and there is a slight elevation that seems consistent with veterans, even in the middle age men particularly, of suicide against the national average.

The 2006 data that we just got doesn't show any big huge upturn in that, but it is a consistent elevation. But I will tell you one suicide in a veteran is one too many. I used this slide when I was Surgeon General, talking about the quality of our young men and women, the soldier who in many cases used as an example took his own life.

You know, that bothers me personally. I dig in and say what are we doing? What can we do better? I will tell you we are doing a lot. We have been proactive in trying to expand our ability to intervene and to take care of even that one soldier that might commit suicide. Our suicide hotline is superb. We have had some 25,000 veterans call, really more calls than that just for information, but about 25,000 veterans have called.

More than 700 active duty people have called that hotline and gotten help. We have had about 1,400, more than 1,400 suicide rescues where somebody had a clear intent and chose not to commit suicide because of our intervention. It is just not the hotline.

It is extend to our suicide coordinators in each of our medical centers, and I have just doubled the number of coordinators. We believe that if you intensively maintain the relationship, you have intensive case managers, these people that seem to be at a higher risk and identified as a higher risk, you can do something about it.

We have expanded overall our mental health. As you can see from the numbers, 4,000 new hires in the last two and a half years. That is more than 17,000 people focusing on mental health throughout your VA.

The blue ribbon panel we called in, outside experts, to take a look at us, help us understand. There is something we are missing here. They are very complimentary, 14 recommendations, plus another eight of suggestions that we are all taking into account and acting on.

We are moving forward with doing what you know should be done to be able to help this issue. We are expanding our vet centers. I have become a real fan of the vet centers since I have come into this job. I have visited many of them and sat down with their counselors, and sat down with the men and women using their services. It is magnificent.

It is a place that is not bureaucratic. The soldiers feel very comfortable there. We are going to continue to expand our advertising, if you will, to make sure that people understand that they are there. But we have increased them, 32 new ones in 2008, and I have approved 39 new ones in 2009.

We are pushing mental health into our primary care, so that with one portal you decrease this issue of stigma so people are comfortable coming in. Oh, by the way, having the mental health professionals in their interacting with the primary care folks makes that team stronger when it comes to dealing with mental health. Again, making sure that we inject that mental piece component into our female and women's care centers as well.

Primary care, mental health for everybody, and an environment where

they are comfortable without stigma. I have lifted the ban on advertising, because I want to use whatever means are necessary to reach out and let our veterans know that we are there for them and what is available to them.

We have a pilot project in Washington, D.C., some of you may have seen them, these big placards in the buses and metro stations. We are making sure to see what the outcome is so that we can potentially roll that out around the country. I want to make sure we stay on the forefront of PTSD research.

We have the PTSD Center of Excellence that runs six different centers really across the nation. We have to be the world's leader in this, and understand all of the nuances that go with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, both older folks with Post-Traumatic Stress, our folks as well as our newer returning OIF and OEF men and women that have relative stress, PTSD.

We are starting to sort out a bit of the difference and how to address those issues, and we have got to keep on top of that. I have given General Lori Sutton, who is running the PTSI Center of Excellence that is going to be built at the new Walter Reed Medical Center in Bethesda, I have given her a VA Deputy to make sure we are linked in this quest for excellence.

TBI is an issue that is obviously important to all of us. TBI can be in many forms. We have had about 500 or so seriously traumatic brain injured service members active and veterans coming through our polytrauma centers, our four poly centers, and the five to open in San Antonio, Texas, next. Those are in some ways sort of obvious. They clearly need some specific care.

I think we can get our arms around them. We are really pushing to get them all well-cased managed with the expertise to understand the length of the journey they are going to be traveling, and travel that journey with them. But we also are concerned about the milder TBI. Are we picking that up?

George, I was in Iraq two weeks ago and went to Level 1 and Level 2 and I saw them screening there. But we are screening also in the VA. We have screened nearly 200,000, just a rough screen to see if they were exposed to a blast that could potentially have – it is very sensitive but not real specific.

Some 37,000 of those 200,000 screened positive. Of those, we have 34,000 that said yes, I am going through a secondary screen. We are in the process of doing that. We have screened close to 22,000 of those, so we still have a ways to go to push that screen.

But I am getting data on that every single week. It looks like a much smaller number. We are trying to get into the details. Is it a visual loss that isn't detected by just formal symptoms? Is it memory kinds of things? We will learn a lot more about that and put the processes in place to be able to provide the care and support that this smaller group of people may actually need.

I do want to talk about our research. I will tell you that we have an uncompromised, uncompromising responsibility to our veterans who participate in our research studies. We have an uncompromising responsibility to make sure that our research is focused on the needs of our veterans.

Again, if there is an issue that we find that is not right, then we will aggressively fix it, and I am taking a good hard look across all of our research programs to make sure that we are absolutely cognizant of the special responsibility that we have to take care of our veterans.

I will tell you, in the depths of it, I am really proud of the research that is being done, the compassion and caring and absolute integrity of our pro-

cesses, and where it is not that way, we will fix it.

I want to tell you about ALS. I have made ALS service-connected. That is Lou Gehrig's disease. I know there is some controversy about it, and it seemed like the right thing to do. We have an increased incidence of people who have served. We don't have a clear understanding of what the causal factors may be, but I don't think given the small numbers of folks and the rare instances of that we are able to answer that question definitively, and so I will err on the side of our veterans.

Voting: I have been a voting registration officer half my life in the military. So, maybe I have not communicated this real well. Let me tell you my view, it is part of our responsibility as citizens. I want to proactively encourage, educate and assist our veterans to be able to vote.

Now, you say what was Peake thinking? That is what it says here on the slide. What I was thinking is I don't necessarily want a circuit to do that. I don't want our veterans who are coming for help there to get a mike shoved in their face and be accosted on the front steps of our hospitals to be able to sign something.

But we will aggressively, as I say, encourage and educate and assist throughout our facilities our veterans to be able to vote. We are going to talk about this group. Some people say that maybe we have got too much focus on the OIF or OEF veterans. You know, I understand there is a lot of focus on our OIF and OEF veterans.

We are a nation at war. They are serving our country actively today. They have some unique needs. I will tell you that the VA has not forgotten our total scope of responsibility. When I look at my generation, most of our generation, I guess is the Vietnam generation. I mean, there are folks now that are coming that have worked their butts off all their life and coming to the end of that work career and realizing that maybe things were not quite right, that maybe there is something that the VA can do for them.

Maybe there is a benefit that should accrue to them. Maybe there is diabetes related to their service, or whatever. We need to be there and make sure that we are doing the right job of providing them the care for their 40-year PTSD, in some cases of what they need today and what they need now at this stage of their life.

On the far side of that screen you see the World War II generation, the Korean War generation, the greatest generation, and you see that they need geriatric care, they need home health care, they need hospice care in some cases, sometimes our national cemeteries.

They were soldiers and sailors once and young, too. But the group on the right are soldiers and sailors and airmen today, ready for the next stage of their life, ready to reintegrate with their families, ready to be part of that next greatest generation.

So, it is a matter of providing each with what they need, when they need it, to be able to allow them to be the best they can be for their life. Is that going to overwhelm us as we focus a bit on our OIF and OEF? I would say no. The war generation, 16 million manned military demobilizing.

If you look at OIF and OEF, there have been about 1.7 million who have served in OIF or OEF. Some of those with the multiple problems we have talked about the 1.7 million, about 800,000, or a little more than that, close to 850,000, have actually separated from the military at this point.

We take care of 5.5 million unique patients a year within our VA system. We have got to do some of the changing and adjusting to be able to take care

of this new generation like I talked about. But it is not going to overwhelm us. We have the resources, thanks to Congress and the administration, to be able to do that.

We ought to be talking about what should the VA look like as we reshape our VA over the next 30 years? How should we look in the future? What will this next generation need as they move down the line to take our place in this hallway here in 30 years?

I think, as you look at the VA over the horizon, you need to look where health care is going. We want care where it is needed, when you need it, from whom you need it. We want to go to a veterans' centrix environment so that this is circled around the veteran. You know what else around the veteran is the family. We need to do a little more about reaching out and touching the family unit, especially those with special needs.

Health care can do so much more in an ambulatory environment. This issue of home health and being able to leverage technology to do that better is the direction that we need to be going. We need to be able to partner with the absolute best. In rural America, there may be times when we need to buy that care and we need to be able to make sure that it is with the highest quality, and then as I talked about, electronically linking it so we have that continuity picture.

We are expanding our community-based outpatient clinics. Some of them will be super health care centers rather than just a community-based outpatient center. I was in Columbus last Friday, and walking through that new facility where we are going to have four operating rooms, 13 dental laboratories, a CT scan, an MRI.

Yesterday, I was in Charlotte, North Carolina, where we opened a community-outbased center with a state of the art CT scan so we can have the diagnostics and the specialty care is out where you live as opposed to having to make the long trip to a medical center somewhere.

That is the direction that we need to go, and I would ask you to say how would you want your health care? You probably want that right now. The VA in the future, what I see is one that has a lifelong support relationship with our veterans. I like this slide. You don't know, is it pushing up the hill or is it pulling up the hill? When do you need that help?

I want to make sure that people, our veterans, know that we are there for them. Like these cards say, if you are a wounded warrior in Walter Reed and you are not in your bed when my VA representatives come around, they leave this card. It gives the best message.

"We are here for you and we care. We want you to be all that you can be." Why? Well, there are 30,000 Purple Hearts given out in OIF and OEF. So, it is obviously the right thing to do. You know more than that, in this environment where we have a volunteer force, we have to go back to what George Washington said.

He talked about this issue of 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 country.

Well, I thank you for your service. God bless you, God bless this country. I will see you on the high ground. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Mr. Secretary, our thanks to you and all the men and women that work in the VA for the great work they do for this country. Thank you very much.

INTRODUCTION OF SENATOR MEL MARTINEZ

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Our next speaker today is Senator Mel Martinez. Senator Martinez is a United States Senator from Florida, a Republican, a Cuban-American, and the former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President George W. Bush.

Born in Cuba, he arrived in the U.S. at age 15, not knowing a word of English. Mel learned the language, earned his undergraduate and law degrees from Florida State University, and went on to practice law for 25 years.

With more than 20 Florida-based military installations, Senator Martinez knows the importance of developing and maintaining our armed forces serving both domestically and overseas. As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator Martinez is a strong advocate for modernization and making certain the men and women of our military have the resources they need to achieve their missions and to meet their goals.

Senator Martinez also sits on the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and the Senate's Special Committee on Aging. A special note is that Senator Martinez is the first Cuban-American elected to the United States Senate.

Please welcome Senator Mel Martinez. (Applause)

GREETINGS – SENATOR MEL MARTINEZ

SENATOR MARTINEZ: Thank you very much. Well, good morning to all of you and thank you very much, George, for a very kind introduction. It is a pleasure to have you here in Florida.

I want to also mention a few great Floridians that have been working hard to make this convention a success. Our Ladies Auxiliary National President, Virginia Carman, and Past Commander-in-Chief and Convention Committee Chairman Jack Carney, as well as the Immediate Past State Commander Jack McDermott and his successor, State Commander Dave Harris, and also Adjutant Quartermaster Benny Bachand.

I am proud to have all of you here and I appreciate the fact that you are in my hometown of Orlando. I want to welcome you to Orlando and welcome you to the State of Florida. I do hope that you are enjoying our wonderful weather. It is actually as I thought about it other than the fact it may curtail your golf, it is going to be just a rainy event fortunately. We are very pleased in that regard.

I was honored to be here yesterday to hear a great veteran speak to you, someone that you know well. I thought his message was compelling, and I want to tell you I am very proud to support John McCain to be our next President of the United States.

The VFW for more than a half century has helped to improve the lives of our veterans. You have been great advocates on behalf of the veterans to make sure they receive the benefits they have earned and that they so richly deserve. Your work is especially important in states like Florida.

We are home to nearly three million veterans and countless others who have found Florida as their final resting place. Our nation's greatness has been built on the sacrifice of generation upon generation of great Americans who have been willing to give of themselves to protect that concept of democracy.

Veterans have done this in faraway places, little-known places, not with the ambition to conquer but with a desire to liberate, to bring freedom and make a better life for others. The members of the VFW are those unique individuals filled with the courage and patriotism that has given of themselves to keep America safe.

No matter the conflict, members of our armed forces have answered the call to duty. They have risen to the challenge and have made those kinds of sacrifices that it takes on behalf of this grateful nation. Please understand that for me as an immigrant to this great nation, my gratitude to those who have served on the cause of freedom know no bounds.

The fact I have lived under oppression and I understand that sweet taste of freedom, and you who have sacrificed to ensure that someone like myself would have the opportunity to come from an oppressed land to live in the land of freedom, in the land of opportunity, and to live the American dream.

I am immensely grateful to all of you for the sacrifices you have made and grateful to those today who answer the call to stand for freedom, those who are today sacrificing for that very concept and that very notion. (Applause)

As I visit with our troops overseas, or wherever they might be today, it is amazing to see their skill, their dedication, their commitment to duty, and the job they are doing in such an excellent and courageous way.

Let me just say that as a result of the difficult struggles we have been in, some of our troops have had to endure and their families have had to endure 15 months of tour of duty, blessed these are coming to an end. I am so grateful not only to the men and women who have served, but those who support them, to those who are at home raising the children, to those who are at home to keep the home front going so they might have the opportunity to serve this nation.

I am delighted that these 15 months are coming to an end. I am also so grateful for those that have endured this time, who have sacrificed and who have moved forward getting it done, and in the same spirit that you have served in the past.

Let me say because our nation owes so much to those who served so notably in the cause of freedom, it is important for our nation to continue to support our veterans when they return home. Funding for veterans has increased at an unprecedented rate in recent years, and has helped to enhance the care soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are receiving.

Today, we have amazing medical care on the field and the ability to transport the wounded warriors to a place of care is unbelievable. Because of that, many today are surviving injuries that in the past they would have perished. It is great that we are saving lives, but at the same time it has put an additional challenge upon our veteran medical services and taking care of these wounded warriors that are coming home with injuries that are in need of very specialized treatment.

These veterans have received increasing support from Congress for care, including nearly $1 billion in 2007 for research of and treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury. These two problems are the new injuries of this war that we have to address, and last year Congress took a good first step to help veterans by passing the Wounded Warrior Act, the first major initiative to address these very sensitive injuries. I was proud to support this legislation and I am delighted it is the law today.

Another issue that is related to a current problem, and we dealt with that within the Wounded Warriors Act, is the medical history. Previously, the medical history of those wounded would often get lost in the bureaucracy and resulted in a lack of critical information at the time that is most needed, when the doctors are making a diagnosis.

This problem was addressed in the Wounded Warriors Act. We mandated in that act that the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs develop a comprehensive policy to better track the medical history of our severely wounded military personnel. Substantial progress has been made in ensuring the medical history of those wounded is transported faster to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

It is to ensure our men and women have a smooth transition in their after service time. For those who have already made the transition from active duty to life as a civilian, access to quality care should never be more than a short car ride away.

Serving as a Florida Senator, one of my top priorities is to see that we get a Veterans hospital in Central Florida. This has been a dream too long denied to the largest urban center without a Veterans hospital, to the largest veterans population center without a Veterans hospital.

I am pleased to say working closely with my dear friend and colleague, who will be speaking next, Bill Nelson, working with Congressman Ric Keller and Tom Feeney, that we have all pulled together and done all we could, and as a result of that, good news is on the way.

The Veterans hospital will be built in Orlando in the not too distant future, and that is good for the veterans. The property has been secured, the location has been set, plans are underway, and it is only a matter of time between a long drive to get the kind of health care that veterans deserve and have been promised is a thing of the past and they will be able to access state of the art, to find hospital health care right here in Orlando.

I believe also that access to quality health care is the right of everyone who has worn our uniform deserves. Veterans should be entitled to the full range of benefits made available by our federal government, which is why I support full concurrent receipt retirement and disability pay for qualifying veterans. (Applause)

Another commitment by Congress is seeing that military men and women receive a good education in return for their service. We see that commitment in the new G.I. Bill that was recently signed into law. The new G.I. Bill offers the very important concept of transferability for family members, which I believe that an all-volunteer force is a key element of not only retention but also living up to the promises that we have made to those who served.

These are just a few smatterings of the issues that are facing us in Washington. We live in complicated and troubled times. I know you have heard from our national leaders and will be hearing from others as well. But just let me say to you that I am immensely proud to have had an opportunity to speak to you at this very important gathering, that I continue to marvel at the sacrifices of those who have served the cause of this nation over time, and I continue to believe that the United States continues to stand as the single best hope for the world.

It only takes to be reminded of what happened and has developed in the nation of Georgia. I was blessed to visit there a couple of years ago. It is a situation that I know reasonably well. Today, I am disappointed to learn

that Russian troops, in spite of their promises, continue to occupy Georgian territory.

Is this an unsettled and unstable world? There is a need for us to continue to have the kind of military presence, the kind of military commitment that will require future sacrifices from yet other generations of Americans.

For those of you who have done your service, again you have my thanks, you have my gratitude. I know you will join with me in praying that God will continue to bless America. Thank you very much. (Applause)

2008 VFW AMERICANISM AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: The VFW Americanism Award is presented to individuals for their outstanding contributions to Americanism principles. It recognizes exemplary achievement in promoting values such as patriotism, commitment to service and love of country which contributes to the betterment of the American society.

With that, we can't think of a more deserving recipient than this year's winner, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Dryden.

As one of the original Tuskegee Airmen, Lieutenant Colonel Dryden's selfless ideals led him to disprove any belief that African-Americans lacked the intelligence, skill, courage and patriotism required to serve as United States Military Airmen, and that type of courage is something that is well-known to all of us.

He obtained a perfect combat record during World War II, and certainly left his legacy in the desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces and in United States history.

Accepting this prestigious award on behalf of Lieutenant Colonel Charles Dryden is his wife, Mary Mall, and son, Eric.

Please welcome them on behalf of a grateful veterans assembly. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Americanism Award Gold Medal and Citation awarded posthumously to Lieutenant Colonel Charles "A-Train" Dryden.

"In sincere recognition and cherished appreciation of his gallant and ultimate selfless acts as one of the first members of the original Tuskegee Airmen, and for his many subsequent years of highly honorable and dedicated service to the United States military.

"His pioneering efforts and courageous legacy contributed greatly to the advancement of integration within the military, as well as the United States' victory in World War II, thus, in keeping with the highest ideals 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 19th day of August, 2008. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by George J. Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. This award comes with a $5,000 honorarium.

RESPONSE – MR. ERIC DRYDEN

MR. ERIC DRYDEN: Good morning. My name is Eric Dryden. It is my pleasure to stand before you this morning in my father's place and be able to

wear this medal and have this fantastic honor bestowed upon us. On behalf of my father, Lieutenant Charles Dryden and my mother, Mary Mall, when we lost our father just almost two months ago, the mother has been such a rock and I want to recognize her for being such an incredible, fantastic person. (Applause)

My father, Chuck, as he was known, was one of the original Tuskegee Airmen finishing second in the second class of three at Tuskegee. He flew combat missions in World War II in North Africa, the European theater and Korea. My father had the distinction of leading the first combat of five planes of American pilots over Sicily in 1942. 929 pilots graduated from the Tuskegee Institute and had the opportunity of defending our nation over the skies, flying over 15,000 missions.

The Tuskegee Airmen have the distinction of being the only unit in Air Force history to never have lost a bomber to enemy action. The efforts of Tuskegee Airmen led to the desegregation of the armed forces on an order signed by President Truman.

My father had an abiding love of God and this country and fighting racism, from flying combat missions, never lost his faith in America and what we stand for. He would often tell the story of coming back and being stationed in South Carolina, being unable to use the facilities of the PX or go to the movie theater and while enemy POWs were allowed that privilege.

He never told that story without welling up in emotion, but he never lost his faith in how wonderful this country is, how great our people are. My father devoted his life to betterment of others. He published his biography about ten years ago, and as a Tuskegee Airman he lectured throughout the country and spoke to tens of thousands of young people about the opportunities in aviation.

He was a member of the Georgia Aviation Hall of Fame, recipient of numerous awards, but most proud of all his accomplishments was in 2007 when the Tuskegee Airmen were awarded the Congressional Medal for over 60 years of service to this country.

We are so lucky and so blessed, and I am so honored that my father had the opportunity to be there for all those wonderful events and have recognized how important the Tuskegee Airmen were and what they did for America. He leaves me a legacy of faith, determination and service that serves as a model for us all.

I am very proud for this magnificent honor on behalf of my mother and my family. I want to close with what my father would have said, "Thank you all. God bless you all and God bless America."

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

INTRODUCTION OF SENATOR BILL NELSON

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Bill Nelson is a true son of Florida. His family came to Florida in 1829 and his grandparents homesteaded in the early 20th century on land that today is the Kennedy Space Center.

The Senator's public service career began in 1972 with his election to the Florida Legislature. During his three terms, he helped enact the nation's first state law to protect consumers from computer fraud and advocated for responsible growth management laws.

Elected to the U.S. Congress in 1978, he served six terms representing

Orlando and the Space Coast, and became an early advocate for a balanced federal budget.

In January, 1986, Senator Nelson spent six days orbiting earth as a mission specialist aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia. That experience gave him a new perspective on the earth's fragile environment and a greater appreciation of the importance of our nation's space exploration program.

In his role on the Senate's Armed Services Committee, he has worked tirelessly to ensure veterans and their spouses receive the entitlements they justly deserve, including access to quality health care and addressing major military issues such as frequent deployments and basic equipment needs.

Senator Nelson also introduced legislation, backed by the nation's veterans' groups, to curb financial schemes that immorally targeted veterans to deprive them of their future pensions or disability payments. He has been a strong supporter of concurrent receipt and continues to fight for that cause.

Senator Nelson is someone who thinks public service is a noble calling – we heartily agree with that premise – and that's why he has devoted his life to serving his community, his state and his country.

Please welcome the senior Senator from the Sunshine State of Florida, Senator Bill Nelson. (Applause)

GREETINGS – SENATOR BILL NELSON

SENATOR NELSON: Good morning. Fellow veterans, we can always count on the VFW to live up to its creed, to assure that veterans, their sacrifices will not be forgotten by a grateful nation. Thanks for what you do. It is right that we honor the men and women who are willing to fight for their country.

We took an oath and upheld that oath with conviction and courage. Remember what President Kennedy said. "We must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." So, let us live by our words. Let's ensure that our country's veterans have access to health care and the other benefits that they deserve.

Let's see that the VA has sufficient budget to care for the health-care demands of all veterans. Let's give the Veterans Benefits Administration the resources that it needs to reduce any backlog on the claims. Let's fully fund the Disability Compensation program and eliminate the offset in SBP and DIC.

And remember, I have had the privilege of being front and center on this. All I have to remember are the words of President Lincoln: "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan." That is what President Lincoln said.

I just had a nice talk with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs about really continuing to crank up the building of the facilities and the hospitals and the clinics. It has only been about 35 years that we have been trying to get a hospital right here in Orlando, and finally that is coming into fruition.

The Secretary just told me that he had visited the site a couple of days ago. I just came back from Afghanistan. Let's don't forget the sacrifices being borne today all over the world, including Afghanistan and Iraq by the military and their families, and in this new kind of war that we are prosecuting.

You can't just say the men and women in uniform. This is a different kind of war. The protection of our national security interests, as you will see in the existing United States Southern Command, as well as the projection of how

we are now setting up the African Command is to join all the resources of the government under the head of the military as we project and protect our interests in those parts of the world.

The military, joining with the states, the Department of Agriculture, the Peace Corps, and many elements of the government all coming together to represent the interest of the United States. As we project that interest, remember what Churchill said upon being conferred an honorary U.S. citizenship: "We stood together and because of that fact the free world now stands."

So, it is up to us to stand by our soldiers to ensure that they have the care that they need when they come home. I just visited, on the way back from Afghanistan, Landstuhl Hospital in Germany, where it is remarkable how we can now get them off the battlefield within just a few hours.

They are in Landstuhl having the first major surgery after they get the field assistance medical attention, which is often just incredible. You ought to see the tourniquets that they issue to every soldier, airman, sailor and Coast Guardsman so that if they get hit and they are by themselves, it is an automatic tourniquet that they can put on, and the amount of lives this immediate medical attention is giving is really saving a lot of our boys and girls.

It is well for us to remember that this 109th Annual Convention, that it was the VFW that began this country's tradition of caring for those who came home from the war wounded and safe. Now, I appreciate you. (Applause)

I was going to close, because I was going to perform a duty that is one of the greatest privileges that I have as a United States Senator, because I often get mamas or daddies or children or grandchildren that will call us and tell us about their loved one who was so humble that they would never say anything about their heroism in wars past, and whether or not they got that medal that they were supposed to get.

So I have arranged in advance. We have found a veteran in Florida who is entitled to the Silver Star. Now, the problem is I can't find him this morning, but I want to tell you about him. It is going to be my pleasure, since it is not going to be right here on this podium, once I find him to award this Silver Star to Harold Bruce McIver. Red tape held up the medal until our Senate staff was finally able to shake things loose. So, let me just read from the citation from Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England.

"In the Republic of Vietnam on 31 March, 1969, Seaman Harold B. McIver's unit came under rocket attack from the riverbank. One of the rockets struck his craft, detonating and sending shrapnel throughout the weld deck and wounding severely McIver in the face and hands, and the spreading of shrapnel ignited gasoline on the boat causing a major part of the boat to catch fire.

"Even though he was severely wounded, Seaman McIver extinguished the flames and then came to the aid of the gravely wounded corpsman. He realized that the corpsman couldn't breathe. He performed an emergency tracheotomy on him. He then helped carry the man to an evacuation helicopter and went back to his machine gun to return fire on the enemy."

It has been said that, "When the will defies fear, when duty throws the gauntlet down to faith, when an honor scorns to compromise the death, that is heroism."

Certainly that could be said of Harold McIver. It is going to be my pleasure to find another one of those humble veterans who are due the recognition of their country and present him that Silver Star. So, ladies and gentle-

men, thank you for the great privilege of public service that you have given me for a lifetime, and let us pray for the safety of those who serve, and let us stay strong in our commitment to our men and women in uniform and to the children and the families they leave behind.

God bless you and God bless our country. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki and Senator Barack Obama. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF SENATOR BARACK OBAMA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Our next guest served for eight years in his state Senate before becoming a United States Senator from the Prairie State of Illinois in 2004.

He is a graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Law School, and today sits on three powerful Senate committees: Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security, and Foreign Relations.

Comrades and Sisters, may I present to you the Democratic Party candidate to be the next President of the United States, Senator Barack Obama. (Applause)

REMARKS – SENATOR BARACK OBAMA

SENATOR OBAMA: Thank you. Thank you so much. I will begin by thanking Commander-in-Chief Lisicki not only for his leadership of this organization but for the passion and energy that he brings to the task of advocating for veterans each and every day.

I was just talking to him backstage, and he was too modest to talk about the incredible victory that was recently won where our soldiers were being charged fees for airline bags, and the way in which the VFW stepped forward and the Commander stepped forward to obtain a victory for them. That is the example of the extraordinary work that this organization consistently does.

Let me also acknowledge the leadership of Virginia Carman, the President of the VFW Ladies Auxiliary. I want to congratulate Bob Wallace, the Executive Director of the VFW, for the excellent work that he does.

My dear friends in the Sunshine State, although we are not seeing much of it today, Bill Nelson, one of our finest senators, and you are very fortunate that you will be hearing from my good friend Jim Webb, who is going to be speaking here later today.

Finally, let me thank all of the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America for inviting me back to this convention. It is a privilege to be among so many who have given so much for our country.

I stand before you today at a defining moment in our history. We are in the midst of two wars. The terrorists who attacked us on 9/11 are still at large. Russia has invaded the sovereign nation of Georgia. Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons. The next Commander-in-Chief is going to have to exercise the best possible judgment in getting us through these difficult times.

Yesterday, Senator McCain came before you. He is a man who has served this nation honorably, and he correctly stated that one of the chief criteria for the American people in this election is going to be who can exercise the best judgment as Commander-in-Chief.

But instead of just offering answers, he turned to a typical laundry list

of political attacks. He said that I have changed my position on Iraq when I have not. He said that I am for a path of "retreat and failure." And he declared, "Beyond all of these claims and positions by Senator Obama lies the ambition to be President," suggesting, as he has so many times, that I put personal ambition before my country.

That is John McCain's prerogative. He can run that kind of campaign, and, frankly, that's how political campaigns have been run in recent years. But I believe the American people are better than that. I believe that this defining moment demands something more of us.

If we think that we can secure our country by just talking tough without acting tough and smart, then we will misunderstand this moment and miss its opportunities. If we think that we can use the same partisan playbook where we just challenge our opponent's patriotism to win an election, then the American people will lose.

The times are too serious for this kind of politics. The calamity left behind by the last eight years is too great. So let me begin by offering my judgment about what we have done, where we are and where we need to go.

Six years ago, I stood up in a time when it was politically difficult to answer going to war in Iraq, and argued that our first priority had to be finishing the fight against Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaida in Afghanistan. Senator McCain was already turning his sites to Iraq just days after 9/11, and he became a leading supporter of an invasion and occupation of a country that had absolutely nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks, and that, as despicable as Saddam Hussein was, posed no eminent threat to the American people.

Two of the biggest beneficiaries of that decision were Al-Qaida's's leadership, which no longer faced the pressure of America's focused attention; and Iran, which has advanced its nuclear program, continued its support for terror, and increased its influence in Iraq and the region.

In the run up to the invasion of Iraq, I warned that war would fan the flames of extremism in the Middle East, create new centers of terrorism, and tie us down in a costly and open-ended occupation. Senator McCain predicted that we would be greeted as liberators, and that the Iraqi's would bear the cost of rebuilding through their bountiful oil revenues. For the good of our country, I wish he had been right, and I had been wrong. But that is not what history shows.

Senator McCain now argues that despite these costly strategic errors, his judgment has been vindicated due to the results of the surge. Let me once again praise General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. They are outstanding Americans.

In Iraq, gains have been made in lowering the level of violence thanks to the outstanding efforts of our military, the increasing capability of Iraq's security forces, the ceasefire of Shiite militias, and the decision taken by Sunni Tribes to take the fight to Al-Qaida. Those are the facts, and all Americans welcomed them.

But understand what the essential argument was about. Before the surge, I argued that the long-term solution in Iraq is political; the Iraqi government must reconcile its differences and take responsibility for its future. That holds true today. We have lost over a thousand American lives and spent hundreds of billions of dollars since the surge began, but Iraq's leaders still haven't made hard compromises or substantial investments in rebuilding their country.

Our military is badly over-stretched, a fact that has surely been noted

in capitals around the world. And while we pay a heavy price in Iraq, and Americans pay record prices at the pump, Iraq's government is sitting on a $79 billion dollar budget surplus from windfall oil profits.

Let's be clear: Our troops have completed every mission they have been given. They have created the space for political reconciliation. Now it must be filled by an Iraqi government that reconciles its differences and spends its oil profits to meet the needs of its people. Iraqi inaction threatens the progress we have made and creates an opening for Iran and the "special groups" it supports.

It is time to press the Iraqis to take responsibility for their future. The best way to do that is a responsible redeployment of our combat brigades, carried out in close consultation with commanders on the ground. We can safely deploy at a pace that removes our combat brigades in 16 months. That would be well into 2010, seven years after the war began.

After this redeployment, we will keep a residual force to target remnants of Al-Qaida; to protect our service members and diplomats; and to train Iraqi's Security Forces if the Iraqis make political progress.

Iraq's democratically-elected Prime Minister has embraced this time frame. Now it is time to succeed in Iraq by turning Iraq over to its sovereign government. We should not keep sending our troops to fight tour after tour of duty while our military is over-stretched.

We should not keep spending $10 billion a month in Iraq while Americans struggle in a sluggish economy. Ending the war will allow us to invest in America, to strengthen our military, and to finish the fight against Al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan and the border region of Pakistan.

This is the central front in the war on terrorism. This is where the Taliban is gaining strength and launching new attacks, including one that just took the life of ten French soldiers. This is where Osama bin Laden and the same terrorists who killed nearly 3,000 Americans on our own soil are hiding and plotting seven years after 9/11.

This is a war that we have to win. And as Commander-in-Chief, I will have no greater priority than taking out these terrorists who threaten America, and finishing the job against the Taliban.

For years, I have called for more resources and more troops to finish the fight in Afghanistan. With his overwhelming focus on Iraq, Senator McCain argued that we could just "muddle through" in Afghanistan, and only came around to supporting my call for more troops last month.

Now, we need a policy of "more from more", more from America and our NATO allies, and more from the Afghan government. That is why I have called for at least two additional U.S. combat brigades and an additional $1 billion in non-military assistance for Afghanistan, with a demand for more action from the Afghan government to take on corruption and counter narcotics, and to improve the lives of the Afghan people.

We must also recognize that we cannot succeed in Afghanistan or secure America as long as there is a terrorist safe-haven in Northwest Pakistan. A year ago, I said that we must take action against bin Laden and his lieutenants if we have them in our sights and Pakistan cannot or will not act.

Senator McCain criticized me and claimed that I was "for bombing our ally." So, for all of his talk about following Osama bin Laden to the "Gates of Hell", Senator McCain refused to join my call to take out bin Laden across the Afghan border. Instead, he spent years backing a dictator in Pakistan who failed to serve the interests of his own people.

I argued for years that we need to move from a "Musharraf policy" to a "Pakistan policy." We must move beyond an alliance built upon mere convenience or a relationship with one man.

Now, with President Musharraf's resignation, we have the opportunity to do just that. That is why I have co-sponsored a bill to triple non-military aid to the Pakistani people, while ensuring that the military assistance we do provide is used to take the fight to the Taliban and Al-Qaida in the tribal region of Pakistan.

Today, our attention is also on the Republic of Georgia, and Senator McCain and I both strongly support the people of Georgia and the Americans delivering humanitarian aid. There is no possible justification for Russia's actions. Russian troops have yet to begin the withdrawal required by the cease-fire signed by their president, and we are hearing report of Russian atrocities: burning wheat fields, brutal killing, and the destruction of Georgia's infrastructure and military assets.

This crisis underscores the need for engaged U.S. leadership in the world. We failed to head off this conflict and lost leverage in our ability to contain it because our leaders have been distracted, our resources over-stretched, and our alliance frayed. American leadership means getting engaged earlier to shape events so that we are not merely responding to them. That is why I am committed to renewing our leadership and rebuilding our alliance as President of the United States.

For months, I have called for active international engagement to resolve the disputes over South Ossetia Abkhazia. I made it crystal clear before, at the beginning of, and during this conflict that Georgia's territorial integrity must be respected, and that Georgia should be integrated into transatlantic institutions.

I have condemned Russian aggression, and today I reiterate my demand that Russia abide by the cease-fire. Russia must know that its actions will have consequences. They will imperil the Civil Nuclear Agreement, and Russia's standing in the international community, including the NATO-Russia Council, and Russia's desire to participate in organizations like the WTO and the OECD.

Finally, we must help Georgia rebuild what has been destroyed. That is why I am proud to join my friend, Senator Joe Biden, in calling for an additional $1 billion in reconstruction assistance for the people of Georgia.

These are the judgments I have made and the policies that we have to debate, because we do have differences in this election. But one of the things that we have to change in this country is the idea that people can't disagree without challenging each other's character and patriotism.

I have never suggested that Senator McCain picks his position on national security based on politics or personal ambition. I have not suggested it because I believe that he genuinely wants to serve America's national interest. Now it is time for him to acknowledge that I want to do the same.

Let me be clear: I will let no one question my love of this country. I love America, so do you, and so does John McCain. When I look out at this audience, I see people of different political views. You are Democrats and Republicans and Independents. But you all served together, and fought together, and bled together under the same proud flag. You did not serve a red America or a blue America, you served the United States of America.

So, let's have a serious debate and let's debate our disagreements on the merits of policy, not personal attacks. And no matter how heated it gets

or what kind of campaign he chooses to run, I will honor Senator McCain's service, just like I honor the service of every veteran in this room and every American who has worn the uniform of the United States.

One of those Americans was my grandfather, Stanley Dunham. My father left when I was two, so my grandfather was the man who helped raise me. He grew up in El Dorado, Kansas, a town too small to warrant bold type on a road map. He worked on oil rigs and drifted from town to town during the Depression.

Then he met my grandmother and enlisted after Pearl Harbor. He would go on to march across Europe in Patton's Army, while my great-uncle fought with the 89th Infantry Division to liberate Buchenwald. My grandmother worked on a bomber assembly line, and my mother was born at Fort Leavenworth.

After my grandfather left the Army, he went to college on the G.I. Bill, bought his home with help from the Federal Housing Authority, and he and my grandmother moved West in a restless pursuit of their dreams. They were among the men and women of our Greatest Generation. They came from ordinary places, and went on to do extraordinary things. They survived a Depression and faced down Fascism. And when the guns fell silent, America stood by them, because they had a government that didn't just ask them to win a war, it helped them to live their dreams in peace, and to become the backbone of the largest middle class that the world has ever known.

In the five years after World War II, the G.I. Bill helped 15 million veterans get an education. Two million went to college. Millions more learned a trade in factories or on farms. Four million veterans received help in buying a home, leading to the biggest home construction boom in our history.

And these veterans didn't just receive a hand from Washington, they did their part to lift up America, just as they had done their duty in defending it. They became teachers and doctors, cops and firefighters who were the foundation of our communities.

They became the innovators and small business owners who helped drive the American economy. They became the scientists and engineers who helped us win the space race against the Soviets. They won a Cold War, and left a legacy to their children and grandchildren who reached new horizons of opportunity.

I am a part of that legacy. Without it, I would not be standing on this stage today. And as President, I will do everything that I can to keep the promise to advance the American dream for all our veterans and to enlist them in the cause of building a stronger America.

Our young men and women in uniform have proven that they are the equal of the Greatest Generation on the battlefield. Now, we must ensure that our brave troops serving abroad today become the backbone of our middle class at home tomorrow.

Those who fight to defend America abroad must have the chance to live their dreams at home, through education and their ability to make a good living; through affordable health care; and through a retirement that is dignified and secure. That is the promise that we must keep with all who serve.

It starts with those who choose to remain in uniform as well as their families. My wife, Michelle, has met with military families in North Carolina, Kentucky and Virginia over the last several months. Every time she passes on their stories, stories of lives filled with patriotism and purpose, but also stories of spouses struggling to pay the bills, kids dealing with an absent

parent, and the unique burden of multiple deployment. The message that Michelle has heard is what you-all know and have lived: when a loved one is deployed, the whole family goes to war.

The VFW has done an extraordinary job of standing by our military families, helping out with everything from a phone card for a soldier who is overseas, to an extra hand around the house. As President, I will stand with you. We need a Military Familes Advisory Board to identify new ways to ease the burden.

We need more official support for the volunteer networks that help military spouses get by. And we need to make sure that military pay does not lag behind the private sector, so that those who serve can raise their families and live the life they have earned.

For those who return to civilian life, I will support their American dream in this 21st Century just as we supported generations of veterans in the 20th. That starts with education. Everyone who serves this country should have the same opportunity that my grandfather had under the G.I. Bill.

That's why, unlike my opponent, I was a strong and early supporter of Jim Webb's G.I. Bill for the 21st Century, a bill that Senator McCain called too generous. At a time when the skyrocketing cost of tuition is pricing thousands of Americans out of a college education, this bill provides every veteran with a real chance to afford a world-class college education. And that is what I will continue to stand up for as President.

We must also stand up for affordable health care for every single veteran. That's why I have pledged to build a 21st Century VA. We need to cut through the red tape. Every service-member should get electronic copies of medical and service records upon discharge. We need to close shortfalls.

It is time to fully fund VA health care, and to add more VA centers. We need to get rid of means-testing. Every veteran should be allowed into the VA system.

My opponent takes a different view. He wants to ration care so the VA only serves combat injuries, while everyone else gets an insurance card. While the VA needs some real reform to better serve those who have worn the uniform, privatization is just not the answer. We cannot risk our veterans' health care by turning the VA into just another health insurer. We need to make sure the VA is strong enough to treat every veteran who depends on it. That is what I will do as President.

And we must expand and enhance our ability to identify and treat PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury at all levels: from enlistment, to employment, to civilian life. No one should suffer in silence, or slip through the cracks in the system. That is why I have passed measures to increase screening for these unseen wounds, and helped lead a bipartisan effort to stop the unfair practice of kicking out our troops who suffer from them. This is something I have fought for in the Senate, and it is something that I will make a priority as President.

Economic security for our veterans also depends on revamping an overburdened benefits system. I congratulate the VFW for what you have done to help veterans navigate a broken VA bureaucracy. Now it is time for the government to do a better job. We need more workers, and a 21st Century electronic system that is fully linked up to military records and the VA's health network. It is time to ensure that those who have served get the benefits that they have earned.

Just as we give veterans the support they deserve, we must also engage

them and all Americans in a new cause: renewing America. I am running for President because I believe that there is no challenge too great for the American people to meet if they are called upon to come together.

In America, each of us is free to seek our dreams, but we must also serve a common purpose, a higher purpose. No one embodies that commitment like a veteran.

Just think of the skills that our troops have developed through their service. They have not simply waged war in Afghanistan and Iraq. They have rebuilt infrastructure, supported new agriculture, trained police forces, and developed health-care systems. For those leaving military service, it is time to apply those skills to our great national challenges here at home.

That means expanding programs like Troops-to-Teachers that put veterans at the front of the classroom. That means tapping the talent of engineers who have served as we make substantial investment to rebuild our infrastructure and create millions of new jobs. That means dramatically expanding national service programs to give Americans of all ages, skills and stations the chance to give back to their communities and their country.

I will also enlist veterans in forging a new American energy economy. That is why I have proposed a Green Veterans Initiative to give our veterans the training they need to succeed in the Green jobs of the future, so that they put themselves on a pathway to a successful career, while ensuring that our national security is never held hostage to hostile nations.

That is how we can help our veterans live their dreams while helping our country meet the challenges of the 21st Century. And this is what we have learned from so many generations of veterans, including those of you here today, that your contribution to the American story does not end when the uniform comes off.

We need those who serve in our military to live their dreams and to continue serving the cause of America when the guns fall silent. That is what the VFW stands for, and if I have the honor of being your President, that is what my administration will work for every single day. Because I believe that we have a sacred trust with those who serve in our military. That trust is simple: America will be there for you just as you have been there for America. It is a trust that begins at enlistment and it never ends.

I thought of that trust last week when I visited the Pearl Harbor Memorial. I saw where the bombs fell on the USS Arizona, and where a war began that would reshape the world order while reshaping the lives of all who served in it, from our great Generals and Admirals, to the enlisted men like my grandfather.

Then I visited his grave at the Punchbowl, the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

I still remember the day that we laid my grandfather to rest. In a cemetery lined with the graves of Americans who have sacrificed for our country, we heard the solemn notes of Taps and the crack of guns fired in salute; we watched as a folded flag was handed to my grandmother and my grandfather was laid to rest. It was a nation's final act of service and gratitude to Stanley Dunham, an American that stood by my grandfather when he took off the uniform, and never left his side.

That is what we owe our troops and our veterans. Because in every note of Taps and in every folded flag, we hear and see an unwavering belief to the idea of America. The idea that no matter where you come from, or what you look like, or who your parents are, this is a place where anything is possible;

where anyone can make it; where we look out for each other, and take care of each other; where we rise and fall as one nation, as one people.

It's an idea that's worth fighting for, an idea for which so many Americans have given that last full measure of devotion. Now it falls to us to advance that idea just as so many generations have before.

Thank you very much. May God bless you and God bless the United States of America. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF 2008 ARMED FORCES AWARD LIEUTENANT GENERAL H. STEVEN BLUM

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: It is now my privilege to introduce Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum, the recipient of this year's VFW Armed Forces Award.

Lieutenant General Blum embodies all that is a brilliant military leader. That extends nearly 40 years, beginning with his 1971 commissioning ceremony.

He has commanded at every level to include a Special Forces "A" Detachment, a Light Infantry Battalion, an Infantry Brigade, and a Division Support Command. He also served as the Commanding General for Multi-National Division (North) Stabilization Force 10 on Operation Joint Forge Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Today, General Blum serves as the Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

As Chief, he is the senior uniformed National Guard officer responsible for all policies, programs and plans affecting more than half a million Army and Air National Guard personnel.

Appointed by the President, he serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Army, and the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Air Force on all National Guard issues.

As National Guard Bureau Chief, he serves as the Army's and Air Force's official channel of communication with the Governors and the State Adjutants General.

Prior to his current assignment, General Blum served as Chief of Staff, United States Northern Command.

He is a 1968 graduate of the University of Baltimore, where he earned a Bachelor's Degree in History. He received his Master of Science Degree in Social Science from Morgan State College in Baltimore in 1973. He also is a 1989 graduate of the Army War College.

His decorations include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Army Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, with two Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters; Meritorious Service Medal, with two Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters; Army Commendation Medal, with one Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Achievement Medal, with one Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster; Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal with one Silver Oak Leaf Cluster, and Global War on Terrorism Medal.

Recently, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates recommended Lieutenant General Blum for a promotion that would make him the first Four-Star General in National Guard history.

The elevation of the National Guard Chief to Four Stars recognizes the enhanced importance of the Guard to America's overall national defense.

In recent years, facilitated by General Blum's strong leadership, the National Guard has transformed from an often-neglected strategic reserve to a

force that is an indispensable component of the operational military.

The elevation of this position also recognizes the vital role the Chief will have as a bridge between the state and federal components of our government and the active and reserve components of our military.

Here to receive the 2008 VFW Armed Forces Award is Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Armed Forces Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum.

"In special recognition and appreciation of his diverse and exemplary military career spanning nearly four decades, beginning with his commission from Officer Candidate School as Second Lieutenant, to achieving the imminent and esteemed position of Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

"General Blum has embodied all that is in a brilliant military leader, admirally serving his nation in many challenging assignments around the globe with utmost integrity and distinguished honor, always upholding the core values of the United States military, thus in keeping with the highest 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 19th day of August, 2008. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by George J. Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE – LIEUTENANT GENERAL STEVEN BLUM

LIEUTENANT GENERAL BLUM: Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, thank you very much for this distinct honor and privilege to be here and to receive this award, and I graciously accept it on behalf of the 460,000 citizen soldiers and airmen that are protecting every zip code of our nation every day, and serving in numbers between 50,000 and 70,000 every day overseas. So, there is plenty of new members for the VFW coming out of the Army and Air International Guard today.

We have sent 380,000 young men and women to war in the last seven years, and there is no end in sight. So, your membership rolls should swell. I want to be very serious and tell you two words: Thank you. Thank you for what you do for our veterans, thank you for what you do to make sure that our elected leaders understand the need to take care of veterans, their families when they come home.

You-all know what it is like when that is not done well. You know how important it is to do it exactly right, particularly if we are going to have an all-volunteer force that is going to be called on to deplete employments over and over.

While we are not serving overseas, you know we are fighting fires, hurricanes, forest fires, floods, winter storms, protecting critical infrastructure, and doing terrorism work here in the United States as well as building your communities. We are partners with the VFW and we want to remain your strong partners.

We are glad to have you in the foxhole with us, because you are the best foxhole buddy for our citizen soldiers and airmen. Thank you very, very much for this distinct honor. It is a privilege to come down here, and only the VFW could pull off a convention in the middle of a tropical storm. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT TO SENATOR JIM WEBB

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: It is now my honor and privilege to present the VFW Gold Medal and Citation to Senator Jim Webb from the Commonwealth of Virginia. He is a 1968 graduate of the Naval Academy and a Rifle Platoon and Company Commander with the 5th Marines in the An Hoa Basin west of DaNang. He would leave Vietnam with our nation's second-highest medal for bravery, the Navy Cross, along with the Silver Star, two Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts.

He earned his law degree from Georgetown University and went on to serve as counsel for the House Veterans Affairs Committee, as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, and in 1987 would become the first Naval Academy graduate to become the Secretary of the Navy.

He is a best-selling novelist, has been a Hollywood screenwriter and producer, and received an Emmy Award for his coverage of U.S. Marines in Beirut.

He even traveled to Afghanistan as an embedded journalist with U.S. forces in 2004.

Senator Webb may be the Junior Senator from Virginia, but his experience and qualifications have him sitting on four powerful Senate Committees: Armed Services, Foreign Relations, Veterans Affairs, and the Joint Economic Committee.

But we are not here to honor him for his vast personal achievements. We are honoring him today for what he did that will have an impact of unfathomable dimensions for our military, indeed our society for many generations.

He made a vow to create a new comprehensive and fair G.I. Education Bill for the 21st Century, and he kept that promise overcoming many obstacles that would have made most senior leaders simply quit.

Senator, I know you are going to try to share the G.I. Bill credit with many others, and justifiably so, but we know who built that ship and we know who steered that ship for almost 19 months.

The VFW had been pushing for a new G.I. Bill for ten years. We had called, written, testified and met with every possible congressional member and staffer. We were greeted with sympathetic ears, but we didn't need sympathy and understanding, we needed a champion in the corner of America's newest greatest generation, someone who could reason and negotiate across party lines like a gentleman, yet push through the obstacles with bulldog tenacity. Senator, that someone turned out to be you.

When you took office on January 4th, 2007, and made a new G.I. Bill your first item of business, the VFW felt our champion had arrived. And that great victory was finally proclaimed this past June when the President signed it into law.

Senator, the old G.I. Bill paid for the education of many of your friends and colleagues. I hope the new G.I. Bill will allow your son, Jimmy, to follow in his father's footsteps.

Comrades and sisters, I present to you a fellow combat veteran, the 2001 recipient of the VFW News Media Award and a Life Member of VFW Post 9274 in Falls Church, Virginia, the proud father of a United States Marine, Senator Jim Webb. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded

to Jim Webb, United States Senator, Virginia.

"In esteemed recognition and sincere appreciation of his exceptional accomplishment to create a new 21st Century G.I. Bill for America's newest, Greatest Generation of Post 9/11 Veterans.

"His unwavering commitment and foresight to expand educational and training opportunities will have a tremendous impact on the successful transition of returning servicemen and women, just as its World War II predecessor did six decades ago. For this stellar achievement, he has earned the respect, admiration and eternal gratitude 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 19th day of August, 2008."

Signed by George J. Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – SENATOR JIM WEBB

SENATOR WEBB: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief Lisicki, for those kind words and Auxiliary President Virginia Carman who happens to be named after my home state. I have a daughter named Georgia who was born in Virginia.

This is the second time that the Veterans of Foreign Wars have given me an award like this for service, and as with the last time I want to make sure that we all understand what a joint effort it was to bring this truly historic piece of legislation through the Congress and into law.

When I remember the people on my staff who worked so hard, all the veterans groups that stepped forward and helped us during this process. Also, I start by saying that I have had a long relationship, both personal and professional, with the Veterans of Foreign Wars. My father was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, my brother, who was a Marine pilot was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. As the Commander noted, my son served an extended tour in Iraq as a Marine Lance Corporal Infantry. He is still on active duty as a Sergeant. My son-in-law served two tours in Iraq and still on active duty as a Marine Infantry Sergeant.

All of us know and value what everyone in this room at one point or another in their lives have gone through for the good of this country. We have great relationships with the present leadership of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, all the people who are sitting up here beside me today, and the Executive Director Bob Wallace is terrific as we approached these issues and others.

Eric Hellman is the assistant. I go back a long way. I was the first Vietnam veteran to serve a full Committee as counsel in the Congress in 1977 to '81. When I say that, I am thinking of some of the other VFW greats from World War II who were so strong on Capitol Hill back in the '70s, people like Cooper Holt, Smokey Stover, who used to both terrorize the veterans groups when they were up there on behalf of the veterans who served.

I have been doing this for 30 years, a little more than 30 years. We were able back then to do pioneer studies on Post-Traumatic Stress, on Agent Orange, on prisoner of war studies, and so many others. This legislation, which we collectively brought through the Congress, I think is one of the most important programs that the United States Congress has passed in the

last 30 years.

It begins with a simple concept, and actually began before I ever thought I would run for office. That is if we say that the service of the people who have been out doing the nation's work since 9/11 was the equivalent of the Greatest Generation, we should give them the same opportunity for the future that those members of the Greatest Generation had.

As you all know, when we came back from World War II, they got their tuition paid for, they got their books paid for, a monthly stipend. It was a simple concept put on the table, but there was a lot of push-back, a lot of skepticism about whether this program should move forward.

So, people said we were trying to do too much, that the scope of this bill was too complicated and that we wouldn't be able to do it on a non-Committee staff, on a personal staff. A lot of people were saying it cost too much. They weren't saying the war cost too much, they weren't saying that the benefits that went to people from World War II cost too much.

Some people were saying that a program where you give people tuition, different levels on different schools was too complicated to administer. I like to remind people who said that that we did it after World War II before the age of computers, and with a stubby pencil on the back of a memo pad they were able to figure it out after World War II. I think we can do this in the age of the computers.

Some people said this is going to hurt career retention. I spent five years in the Pentagon, one as a Marine and four as a defense executive. I wasn't hearing that from the active military leaders. What I was hearing is what I believed, and that is based on an increased recruitment you are going to bring a lot more people into the United States military with a benefit like this.

Some people said that this is a benefit that should be directed mainly at the career force. They want to transfer ability. This was an idea where the people could transfer their educational benefit to their dependents. I don't have any objection to that. In fact, it was already in the law. It was under the G.I. Montgomery Bill.

It is in the law, but has not been used that much. Once people started talking to us, we were able to put it in this bill. But the bottom line of this benefit, and others like it, also goes to the bottom line of why we have a Veterans of Foreign Wars. That is this: Who are these other people who stepped forward to serve our country and how should they be rewarded?

There is a great misperception out that the all-volunteer military is an all-career military. It is not any more than it has ever been in the past. Seventy percent of the people who enlist in the United States Marine Corps leave the Marine Corps at or before the end of their first enlistment.

Seventy-five percent of the people who enlist in the Army leave the Army at or before the end of their first enlistment. These are the people who have not been properly taken care of. These are the people who are going to benefit from this benefit and other programs. These are the people in many cases that formed the bedrock of groups like the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

If I learned one thing in combat as a Marine, it is that your obligation to the people who serve under you is a lifetime obligation. I believe that and I know this organization believes that. It is a generous program, it is supposed to be a generous program. It is a deserved program and, folks, it is only one way to get this generous benefit, and that is to perform honorable military service during a time of war.

So, people want this benefit, they can put it back on like the other peo-

ple who have done so in order to earn it. The true test for all of us is going to be 20 years from now when we look out and see the lives that were changed and the careers that were born because we took care of those who served. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: First of all, I guess I have some real good news for you. We have just been notified by the White House that the President of the United States will be here tomorrow. The parties are on. They will be on for tomorrow night, the conference parties.

INTRODUCTION OF REAR ADMIRAL DONNA CRISP, JPAC COMMANDER

I would now like to introduce Rear Admiral Donna Crisp, the Commander of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, which is headquartered at Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii.

The Admiral is a native of Bay Shore, New York, but grew up in Redlands, California. She is a graduate of Cal State, Long Beach, and was commissioned in 1974 after completing Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island.

Over her past 34 years of service, she has served in a variety of assignments ranging from security group to manpower, personnel and public affairs. Admiral Crisp has been the Commander of the Naval Consolidated Brig at Miramar, and she commanded the Personnel Support Activity in Norfolk, which supports one million sailors, retirees and family members in the Mid-Atlantic Region.

Prior to assuming her present command in January, Admiral Crisp was the Director for Manpower and Personnel for the Joint Staff at the Pentagon.

Admiral, I would like you to know that JPAC has no better friend than the VFW. We were there demanding the DoD reinstate your funding after it was reduced for other military projects.

We were there in Hanoi to challenge the Vietnamese to allow U.S. researchers deeper access into their archival records, and we were there in Moscow to urge the Russians to re-open their central military archives.

We are the only veterans' organization to return to Vietnam every year since 1991 with hopes of opening more doors through non-political channels to help the many American families who continue to wait for their loved ones to return home.

From glaciers and jungles to oceans and deserts, more than 400 military and Defense Department civilian members of JPAC so selflessly operate under extremely arduous conditions in some of the most austere and hazardous locations on earth.

The unit has suffered personal loss while conducting their operations, but their mission continues unabated, and that is to obtain the fullest possible accounting of our nation's 88,000 missing Americans.

At our 106th National Convention in Salt Lake City, we presented JPAC with the VFW Gold Medal and Citation because this outstanding military unit is keeping the soldier's promise to never leave a buddy behind.

Please welcome the Commander of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, Rear Admiral Donna Crisp. (Applause)

REAR ADMIRAL CRISP: Thank you. Good morning. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki and the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary, Virginia Carman, and our good friend Bob Wallace. I thank all of you here today for all the support that you give the men and women of JPAC, for the support that you give to all of the service members in uniform and your families, and especially the support that you give to the families who have had members left behind as missing in action and prisoners of war.

JPAC is a great humanitarian mission. It is very unique in the Department of Defense. I believe we are probably one of the few in the world that goes out to research, investigate, recover and identify the heroes, both civilian and military, of our great nation.

Seventy-eight percent of our work is done in the Pacific, and I am lucky enough to meet your members forward in Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, while you are out there supporting us. We sure appreciate it. But the number of missing in the United States is staggering. It is well over 84,000.

Today, from the Vietnam War, we have 1,755. From the Korean War, 8,055. World War II, 74,374, and the Cold War, 127. We are also home to the world's largest skeletal identification lab. It is a fantastic lab of motivated pathologists. You know what, we are in the field.

JPAC has 362 people on board, two-thirds military, one-third civilian. We do 70 operations a year, and we are deployed over 113 days a year, and all the men and women you see in this slide here and the slides that you will see, these are men and women who have done three and four tours in combat.

They select and volunteer to come to JPAC for only one reason, because they are committed to bring our heroes home. Well, this year has been pretty exciting for JPAC. We have been in 16 countries, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, South Korea, Japan, Pagan Island, Canada, Belgium, Poland, Hungary, Germany, France and India.

Let's take a closer look at what we do and the complex process of finding our heroes and bringing them home. We start with research. Research is critical for what we do. We look at maps, we look at books, we look at battle reports, and we look at all of your memoirs.

So, if those of you who have not written your memoirs, I recommend you do it this month because one of the important things we look for are those memories. If you have not been interviewed, please make sure you take the time to do that because it helps us find locations of our lost heroes.

Then we research. In research, we start with witnesses, we look at soil, we go and look for pieces of airplanes, all defined locations. Then we excavate. You know, there are all kinds of fancy equipment, and I could brief you on all of that, but there is no better way than just digging in the dirt.

That's what we do. We do it underwater, we do it on cliffs, we do it when it is hot and humid, hotter than it is here today, and we do it when it is bone-chilling cold. I wish you could be in my office when the men and women come back from an excavation where they have found a bone, a pair of eyeglasses.

They will just be beaming and say, "Admiral, we found a bloodshed under the rock." So, they are so excited to be able to be part of a bigger process of returning our people home. But the final journey is the identifications. Sometimes we can identify someone in 48 hours. Sometimes it takes years.

I really wish that it was like bones. NCI is where we could identify somebody in 45 minutes, but it takes a lot of hard work. The scientists on this slide up here are busy trying to work the identifications. We do about 70 a year. When I left the office, we had 60 American heroes on their way home for their families.

Just like you, we don't sit still. We are always leaning forward with new ideas on how to do our business better. One of them is called Phase II Testing. You might say what in the world is that? It is an old way of doing archeological digs where you have a field plane four times the size of this auditorium, and you with youngsters are trying to figure out where would you start to dig.

Thirty-two tests is what you go through. I am not sure whether you have seen a golf club where they put all those plugs in the ground. It is like that. You go in and plug the ground, and you look for pieces of metal, different types of soil. The bottom line is it saves us money, it makes us more effective.

DNA advanced medicine. I am here to say that in the last few years our nation has just gone forward so much in DNA testing, and that's thanks to people at JPAC and also the Armed Forces DNA Lab. In 2006, if you take a look at your hand, you would have to have a bone specimen that was five to seven grams. That is the size of your fist.

Now, since 2006, you can get a sample of bone the size of the tip of your fingernail and still get 90 percent identifications. Why is that so exciting is because for all of our Vietnam losses the soil is very acidic and we only find a small piece of bone.

But that is good enough now, and because of science we can identify all those men. This is our laboratory. I know a lot of you have been out there. I have had many of you come by and take a look at the lab. This is our lab. I am very proud of it. They got reaccredited with international standards, the finest laboratory in the world.

Humanitarian mission covers all angles, and we are making sure that everything we do we study to get better. One of the things we really did need, and I know all of you have been very supportive of getting military construction. We need a little more space. So, we have moved forward to add an expansion so we can increase our identifications.

This is where you can help. I need an army, and I can think of no better army than the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary. What do we need in JPAC? We have well over a thousand people that we have found that we can't identify them because we do not have a DNA family reference sample.

So, I am asking you today if anyone in your family was lost from World War II forward, if you know of someone who lost a member of their family, please have them call the Service Casualty Office. It is really simple, it is not like it was. You know when I first started during the Vietnam War, they had to pull blood, they have it real simple now.

They mail you a little kit and you take a Q-tip and put in your cheek, you are done, and you put it in the mail. This is extremely important. I need all of you to work with your states to find these families and have them to send reference samples. If you do that, we will have veterans forever serving a tradition of caring until they are home. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF ELIZABETH O'HERRIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA AND PAUL RIECKHOFF, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER, IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS OF AMERICA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Our next guests represent two of our nation's newest veterans' organizations, Elizabeth O'Herrin, the Executive Director of Student Veterans of America, and Paul Rieckhoff, the Founder and Executive Director of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

Elizabeth served in the Wisconsin Air National Guard from 2001 to 2008, and has deployed to Iraq three times as a Munitions Systems Technician responsible for maintaining explosives and aircraft weapons systems.

She is a December, 2007, graduate of the University of Wisconsin, where she was the Student Veterans' Organization President and the Liaison to the Administration on Veterans' Issues. She also served as a Special Assistant on Veterans' Issues to the Lieutenant Governor.

Elizabeth is a co-founder of the National Student Veterans of America, which was formed just seven months ago, and today has chapters on 75 campuses in almost every state. She is a VFW member-at-large in the Department of Wisconsin.

Paul enlisted in the Army Reserves in 1998, but soon switched to the New York National Guard and graduated from Officer Candidate School in 2001. He is a graduate of Amherst College.

Paul was in his apartment in Manhattan when the first plane hit the World Trade Center on September 11. He joined scores of volunteers to help rescue others that morning, and when his unit was called up, he returned to Ground Zero that evening to secure the site and perform rescue and recovery operations.

Paul volunteered for active duty and soon deployed to Iraq with the 3rd Infantry Division in 2003 as a Rifle Platoon Leader who led dismounted and mounted patrols along the east bank of the Tigress River in Baghdad.

His battalion was the first Reserve component authorized to receive the Combat Infantryman Badge since the Korean War. More importantly, all 38 men in his platoon returned home.

He founded IAVA in June, 2007. It is the nation's first and largest organization of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. Paul is a Life member-at-Large in New York.

Elizabeth and Paul are here because it was their two organizations who stood solidly beside the VFW to ensure the new 21st Century G.I. Bill was signed into law.

Their memberships joined ours in plain, hard, unheralded work, calling, writing, testifying and meeting with every member of Congress to get it done. No other veterans' organization can make that comprehensive claim; none of them.

These members of America's newest, Greatest Generation, along with their OIF and OEF brethren here in our audience, represent an all-volunteer military where the words patriotism, courage, commitment and sacrifice are well understood.

I am proud to have you and your organizations represented here on this stage. You did your duty, and now you are helping to ensure that our nation takes care of those who have borne the battle.

Comrades and sisters, may I respectfully present the Executive Director

of the Student Veterans of America and the Founder and Executive Director of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Elizabeth O'Herrin and Paul Rieckhoff.

REMARKS – MS. ELIZABETH O'HERRIN

ELIZABETH O'HERRIN: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Good morning. My name is Elizabeth O'Herrin, and as the Commander-in-Chief said, I am the Executive and one of the co-founders of Student Veterans of America. We are a coalition of local student organizations on campuses across the country, veterans clubs.

We are basically dedicated to providing resources and pure support to veterans that are pursuing higher education. Thanks to the hard work of the VFW and champion Senator Jim Webb from Virginia, these veterans will have access to affordable education with the recent passing of the G.I. Bill.

With the new G.I. Bill, we will no longer be going in debt to obtain higher education. You should be very proud of the recent efforts of the VFW. Some military members don't necessarily always have higher education on their radar. Higher education is not known for everyone. But sometimes all it takes is for someone to tell them it is possible and for someone to believe in them.

I know a Marine, after being hit by a rocket propeller grenade, leaving one eye on the floor of a tank, and retaining only eight percent of sight in the other, someone told him that he could still start a new career at age 40. This Marine is now in classes at the San Diego State University, with the dream of being a high school teacher.

I know a man that graduated with 1.7 GPA, serving honorably in the Air Force, someone told him he could go to the University of Michigan if he put his mind to it, and he is doing great. That airman is now wrapping up his undergraduate degree at Ann Arbor.

I know a soldier after deploying to Iraq with his two sisters, spending 18 months on the ground in Iraq with his hand-to-hand with Iraqi police officers, she was told she could pursue beauty culture school when she came back. She is now taking chemistry courses at the University of Wisconsin cultivating grapes.

These veterans from different backgrounds and different branches, these are the stories of today's veterans. They are motivated, they are resilient and they are determined. While these particular stories may be extraordinary, they are not altogether uncommon.

I get phone calls on a regular basis saying I want to reach out to the young veterans, I want to talk to these new veterans. I can't find them. Where are they? The answer is a good number of them are in school. Over 520,000 veterans of all ages are currently getting their education benefits.

That does not mean it is easy. Just having the benefits, doesn't make going to classes easy. After my first deployment, three days after I got back from building bombs, I found myself sitting in class in the University of Wisconsin, sitting next to 18-year-olds snapping their gum and talking about the latest frat parties.

I found myself reeling from the transition. We veterans are proud people, we hold our heads high. We don't ask for handouts. We are not made of glass. After service, we ask a simple thing, access to a brighter future, opportunity to provide for our families, and a chance of a higher quality of life.

Today's veterans are independent-minded, technology-driven folks. We have been referred to as the "me" generation more than one time. We serve by instant communication and we expect instant gratification. We are able to communicate with our families from the Middle East instantly, serving at Internet cafes on bases all over the Middle East and other places. I don't know why they call them Internet café. I have never seen a cup of coffee there ever.

We are a service-minded generation. As many of the veterans at this convention talk about the reasons they joined the VFW, they joined for camaraderie, the camaraderie that can only be felt when working together for a common cause. I have heard many student veterans on campuses across America say they joined local veterans' organizations on campus because they felt alienated from the rest of the student population.

Walk up to a protestor, seeing chalk outlines of skulls drawn on the sidewalk, young college freshmen asking us if we ever killed anybody. This may sound a little familiar to some of you. More importantly, these veterans are helping. They want to ensure the students on campus will be a positive one with a little less hoops to transfer to when you are trying to transfer credits or obtain educational benefits.

As we look around today, many of you would be eligible for the new G.I. Bill. You helped throughout until the President signed it into law. You watched out for the generation that is younger, that is behind you, that is up and coming.

Barring any major engagements, we may see the veterans population in this country drop. There may be some concerns about the numbers. Our collective needs of veterans may not be met. Thanks to the efforts of organizations like the VFW, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, you can rest assured that these veterans will have the opportunity to reach their maximum potential through education, and we will carry the torch for future generations behind us. Thank you. (Applause)

REMARKS – MR. PAUL RIECKHOFF

COMRADE PAUL RIECKHOFF: Good morning. I like the military crowd. As a Life Member of the VFW from the great state of New York, I am humbled and honored to be here today. I am glad to see that a little rain definitely didn't scare away this group. I was an infantry officer. We have a saying, "If not raining, we are not training."

I am glad to see you-all here today. Talking to this group of heroes is more important than doing anything else. I am here to say thank you. Thank you, VFW, thank you for all you have done and for all you continue to do.

When I came home after a tour as a platoon leader in Iraq, it was you that was there for me and for my soldiers. When I got back, two Vietnam veterans were among the first people to greet me. They shook my hand, they looked me in the eye and they simply said, "Welcome home, brother; welcome home." I will never forget that, never.

My generation is proud of ourselves. Like many of you, when our country called we answered. We were honored to follow in your footsteps. And our generation was and still is proud to wear the same uniforms that many of you once wore. Unfortunately, until this year we did not have the same educational benefits that you have had.

The original G.I. Bill was signed in 1944 and sent millions of veterans to

school to help create jobs, like Justice Rehnquist, Bob Dole, President Herbert Walker Bush, Author Norman Mailor and entertainers Charles Bronson, Johnny Carson and the great Johnny Cash.

Johnny Cash left the Air Force in 1954 where he went to Memphis and Nashville and took a broadcasting course under the G.I. Bill. Many of you went under the G.I. Bill and many of you in this room are living testaments to its importance. The G.I. Bill was arguably the most successful program in the history of the United States. It changed our country and changed the world.

When veterans like me returned home from Iraq and Afghanistan to a G.I. Bill that was a shell of what grandfathers had after World War II. It didn't cover the cost of college. An upfront fee was required and veterans were taking on mountains of debts to go to school. The G.I. Bill was not meeting the needs of heroes and that was unacceptable.

We set out to change that. You set out to change that. The VFW led the way. Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America and others bound together and made a choice. We decided together that a new G.I. Bill could get done in 2008. The Senator has already stated a lot of people told us it was impossible.

A G.I. Bill is nothing more than a pipedream. We heard of every excuse in the year, that it is an election year and nothing gets done in an election year in Congress. We heard that one, it is too partisan and nobody gets along and nothing will get done, like Senator Webb said, because it is too expensive.

Senator Webb said you had money for a war but not for veterans' benefits once they came home. Countless people told us to give up, the G.I. Bill wouldn't happen in 2008. They were wrong. Patriotism overcame partisanship. After almost three years of hard work, on June 30, 2008, President Bush signed the new G.I. Bill into law marking the end of a year-and-a-half-long struggle to ensure that today's veterans get the benefits they earned.

We celebrated. IAVA was proud to call the VFW headquarters in Washington to thank you for your support. This week IAVA's initiative is to help young veterans. You can go to gibill2000.org, and it will tell you of the benefits they will earn. It will tell them in My Space and local communities to help navigate this new benefits they have.

So, now a generation of Americans have a chance to go to college. Over a million men and women have their dreams. They are in Afghanistan, standing in checkpoints in Iraq, thinking about a brighter future. We receive countless e-mails and phone calls from people over there and they are excited about the promising of their new benefit, and we have the people in this room to thank for it.

I want to say to you, first, the leadership of the VFW, specifically Executive Director Bob Wallace, Eric Hilleman, Joe Davis and Justin Long, these guys were relentless. They pounded away, they did their homework and they led the way. They are an exceptional team of leaders. They were actually so happy that the bill passed that Bob Wallace, I don't know if he is up here, even did a dance.

The Bob Wallace "get down on the dance" is quickly becoming the hottest new dance in Washington, D.C. You will have to get him to demonstrate it tomorrow night when celebrating. But Bob and his team were out in front. The leadership in Congress also deserve tremendous credit, specifically Senator Jim Webb.

Veterans have no better friend in the Senate than Senator Jim Webb. The decorated Vietnam veteran understands the sacrifices that our troops are making in Afghanistan and Iraq. He is our field general throughout this fight. Even though he is a Marine, and I am Army, I will follow him anywhere.

He was supported by some of the most dedicated Senators in Washington. Folks from both sides of the aisle came to help. They were men that understood what General George Washington meant when he said, "We assumed the soldier, we did not lay aside the citizen."

They have shown us that service does not end when we take off the uniform, and they all deserve our thanks. We have plenty of work to do ahead of us. With two wars underway and military families are being tested like never before, and they face their biggest challenge in the generation.

Over a half million troops have been deployed more than once. Women make up 15 percent of our force. PTSD and other health injuries will affect hundreds of thousands. The disability system is backlogged at unacceptable levels, and the people at VA are working hard and they deserve our credit.

If it was not for the VFW to stand up and form a line for challenge, the new Congress or President alone cannot do it all. Politicians are not going to solve our problems. We are. As veterans, we again must lead the way just as we did on the battlefields of Normandy, Da Nang, Fallujah and we must lead from the front.

We as veterans must galvanize America. We can wake up this country and show them how to truly honor their heroes, not empty talk or campaign rhetoric but with action. There are plenty of people who say they support the troops. We have to make sure they put their money where their mouth is. That starts with the presidential campaign. Senator McCain and Senator Obama are here this week. That is a great thing.

As veterans, we must make veterans a top priority all the way to election day. We will be watching not what they just say about the war, but what they say about caring for the warriors.

Senator McCain and Senator Obama, both, were advocates for veterans. They must talk about our issues on a regular basis, not just at the VFW Convention and not just on Veterans Day. They must commit to making every day Veterans Day. With over 25 million veterans, many people know that is just a photo op, veterans are what this country is all about.

When the new President takes office next year, America will have a way to turn the page over. We can learn from our mistakes, and we will get the United States back as a nation like we were after World War II, after we were after 9/11, and like we were this year in the fight for the G.I. Bill.

Americans have wide different backgrounds, and can work together to get things done for our veterans and America. It doesn't matter whether you are a Republican or a Democrat, for or against the war, we all have a moral obligation to take care of the people that serve.

We can build on the success of this G.I. Bill and put partisan politics aside. We can all work together against our enemies and for our veterans. Thank you, and thank you for the VFW. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT TO DIANA TEMBLAY, GMNA VICE PRESIDENT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: When General Motors' military Reservists are called to active duty, they can deploy knowing that the nation's

largest auto maker stands behind them.

Not only does General Motors make up the difference between military pay and their regular wages for its workers called back to active duty, they also guarantee Reservists their job will be waiting for them when they return. Just as significantly, GM continues the employees' health-care insurance while they are deployed, helping to minimize what could easily be a major distraction from our military service members' full concentration on their critical missions.

Without a doubt, General Motors represents the best that is America, as they always have, and values the contributions of its military members to both the company and the nation. They are the corporation that personifies America through and through.

All of this would not be possible without the support and help of Diana Tremblay, General Motors North America Vice President of Labor Relations.

Ms. Tremblay has been the go-to person last fall as the lead negotiator for General Motors Corporation in contract talks with the United Auto Workers, and was at the table in the early hours of September 26 when an agreement was forged.

The agreement paves the way for General Motors to turn over retiree health-care benefits to the United Auto Workers under a voluntary employees' benefit association, that UAW President Ron Gettelfinger said would cover retiree health benefits for the next 80 years.

Ms. Tremblay began work at General Motors as a college co-op student at Central Foundry in Defiance, Ohio, in July, 1977. She held manufacturing and engineering positions within GM's Power Train Division and was appointed to Executive-Manufacturing in the Automotive Components Group in 1990.

In 1996, she was appointed Director of Labor Relations for the Corporate Labor Relations' staff in Detroit. In December, 2000, she began an international service personnel assignment as Manufacturing Director, Luton, at Vauxhall Motors, Ltd., in the United Kingdom. And in 2002, she was appointed Plant Manager, Opel, Belgium, in Antwerp.

Ms. Tremblay holds a Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Administration from Kettering University and, as a Sloan Fellow, received a Master's Degree in Business Management from the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She also attended the GM Senior Executive Program in 2002.

In 2007, Diana was named one of the most influential women in metro Detroit by Crain's Detroit Business Magazine.

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to present the Commander-in-Chief's Gold Medal Award to Diana Tremblay. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Gold Medal of Merit and this Citation awarded to Diana Tremblay.

"In sincere praise and genuine appreciation of her steadfast corporate commitment and generous contributions to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its many programs in unselfish support of United States military service members and their families.

"Her benevolent generosity on behalf of General Motors, accompanied by her invaluable responsiveness toward providing critical assistance to the families of deployed men and women of the armed forces and their families, embodies genuine selflessness and has earned her the utmost respect 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 19th day of August, 2008."

Signed by George J. Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – MS. DIANA TREMBLAY

MS. TREMBLAY: Thank you very much. It is a great honor for me to receive the Gold Medal of Merit on behalf of the men and women of General Motors. But the greater honor clearly is to support the VFW in all you do to assist Americans who have worn the uniforms of our armed forces.

Every single one of you should be proud. You have served our nation, and now you serve others who are doing the same. At GM, this is very important. So, we try to help in every way we can. One way is to make the concerns of our veterans a priority.

Here are just a few examples of how we do this. We value and encourage the recommendations of our Veterans Affinity Group, a team responsible for advising about the company's many veterans and employees on active duty. We support the unmet needs that veterans face.

We support the National Home for Children and we make a point to participate in military employment affairs. I don't mind telling anyone that veterans, simply put, make great employees. It is more than just that. For as long as GM has been in business, and that is 100 years, we have stood behind our employees who served the nation.

By the way, just like the VFW, GM is here to stay. (Applause) Today, over 20,000 UAW-GM people are veterans. Approximately, 300 others are Reservists and Guardsmen thanks to you is considered legitimate. And for the employees on active duty, related to homeland security, we continue their current earnings and protect their benefits.

From employees in the Reserve and Guard, we continue benefits and pay the difference between what they make from the service and what they would have made on the job. In short, we are with them when they put on the uniform and when they return to civilian life.

Recently, one of our employees, a man on active duty, told me how comforting it was to know that his family's needs were taken care of while he was serving. We had a rather heartfelt conversation, and I won't go into the details, but as you can imagine it underscored in real family terms that GM was doing the right thing to stand by him and so many others.

But there is more work to do. Just last week, Cal Rapson from the UAW&I enjoyed the USS Theodore Roosevelt, an aircraft carrier, and at present is preparing to leave for combat operations in the fall. We wanted to give the sailors a chance to call their families.

To help them out, we gave them a telephone call code up to three minutes. We passed out our gratitude, including over 2,000 DVDs with the latest movies. For me, the most gratifying part of this experience was visiting with the sailors face-to-face, looking right in their eyes and seeing firsthand their patriotism, valor and resolve.

It is a familiar look. I have seen it over and over in your faces during the last few days that I have been at your convention. It has truly been inspirational for me, and I want you to know that I will continue to help champion your causes in General Motors in our community. Thank you for this great honor, and I will always be grateful. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF'S GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT TO CAL RAPSON, UNITED AUTO WORKERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: It is now my honor to present the Commander-in-Chief's Gold Medal of Merit to Calvin Rapson, Vice-President of the United Auto Workers International Union.

Mr. Rapson began his career with the UAW in 1965 working for the Chevrolet Engine Plant in Flint, Michigan. Through his employment with Chevrolet, he earned a machine repair and machinists journeyman card. After graduating from the UAW-GM Apprenticeship Program, he became active in UAW Local 659.

Through various elected positions Mr. Rapson held with Local 659, he was able to learn every aspect of the Local's day-to-day operations. From grassroots political action, solving health and safety problems and negotiating Local contracts, he has been at the forefront of every endeavor for justice and equity for the members.

In 1982, he was chair of the UAW negotiating team that successfully bargained the UAW-General Motors Master Agreement.

Working with a wide variety of organizations and plants, Cal participated in the global efforts of the UAW to bring fair wages, human rights, and a new approach to international trade to workers worldwide.

Following his appointment as Assistant Director of Region 1-C in 1995, he was named the Director of Region 1-C in 1998.

Having come up through the ranks with most of the workers in this area, Mr. Rapson has a deep and abiding respect for the workers in Region 1-C, and under his leadership the Local Unions raised over $500,000 to benefit the victims of September 11. UAW Region 1-C workers donated their time and labor to build vehicles for the New York City recovery operation, replacing those destroyed in the collapse of the World Trade Towers.

His service to the Flint community reflects his vision of a better life for workers and their families.

He serves on the Board of many community organizations, including HealthPlus of Michigan and the greater Flint Health Coalition. All-in-all, he is fully deserving of our recognition.

Please join me in presenting the Commander-in-Chief's Gold Medal of Merit to Mr. Cal Rapson. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Gold Medal of Merit and this Citation awarded to Calvin Rapson.

"In praise and earnest appreciation of his enduring corporation commitment and steadfast contribution to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its many programs conceived in benevolent support of United States military service members and their families.

"His selfless bestowal on behalf of the United Auto Workers, along with his invaluable responsiveness toward providing crucial assistance to men and women of the armed forces and their families, embodies genuine altruism and honors all members of the United States military, thus earning him the utmost respect 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 19th day of August, 2008."

Signed by George J. Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

Mr. RAPSON: Well, thank you, Commander-in-Chief, and thank you, VFW. I am deeply honored to receive the Gold Medal of Merit on behalf of the Auto Workers Union. I am pleased to join you here today to honor those who have served at home and abroad for freedom in our behalf. The Union would like to express our appreciation for your support, your commitment, dedication and service.

As Diana pointed out, the UAW and General Motors worked together to support veterans in many ways. Many UAW members and retirees are proud veterans. They come from every branch of the armed services. Fortunately, they serve at the UAW Veterans Department and they are very proud of it.

The UAW Veterans Department is committed to seeing that thousands of UAW veterans are given the assistance and support that their military service deserves. We have worked hard to see that all veterans get full access to their health and family benefits that their service entitles them to.

What some of you may not know is that UAW veterans are very active in communities across the country. They collect food and goods for active military serving overseas, they help raise funds for veterans and families at home in need. They the cross at public events, participate in ceremonies honoring veterans, volunteer VA Hospitals and medical care centers, and they are all active in their local VFW chapters.

One of the things we are most proud of is building the step of the Home at the VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan. This duplex housing was built entirely by Union labor and was named after a former UAW veteran Stephen P. Yokum, who was an Air Force veteran.

It houses two families providing veterans a place to get back on their feet in their time of need. The UAW provides financial support to operate the Home and support for other projects like Operation Uplink. We are proud of your work with veterans and we hope that you will take a moment to stop by our exhibit display to view some of our accomplishments. We also brought a lot of GM cars and trucks that UAW and GM is proud to build here in America.

Before I close, I want to take a moment to personally thank the VFW for helping my daughter and father who was a tail gunner in World War II. Yesterday the VFW arranged a very heartfelt moving event out at the cemetery here in Orlando to give me a shadow box with all of his medals. It was just a great event.

He was a young tail gunner 21 years old. His mission was he was on a B-24 Liberator to go over into Romania to knock out the oil field that the Germans were using to fuel their jets and tanks. Unfortunately, it was a very dangerous mission, but they knew it and they were ready to step up.

Unfortunately, in his first mission he got knocked out of the air, but they brought him back home and buried him in St. Louis. It was such a great honor yesterday for me when the VFW arranged that. I can't thank you enough for that.

I would like to tell you that Comrade Janowski, a Marine, passed away a couple of years ago. What a great man he was. You know, I feel so strongly about him, but he was so active with the VFW. Again I just wanted to mention him.

The last thing I want to mention is to thank you again. The UAW is very proud that two former Commanders-in-Chief are retired UAW members, Jim

Goldsmith and Jim Mueller. So, thank you, VFW. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Now, General Motors and UAW will be making a check presentation to the Commander-in-Chief.

MS. DIANA TREMBLAY: On behalf of the men and women of General Motors and United Auto Workers, we are pleased to present this check for $150,000 to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. (Applause) The VFW is very helpful and we would like to do the same thing.

We hope this check helps out with the VFW Unmet Needs Program. We know that basically military pay doesn't always cover basic needs, and the VFW is there to pitch in. We also know that that system is not great. We hope that this check provides some relief to the men and women who have given so much to our nation. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Also, comrades, from General Motors, when they decided to do this, General Motors and UAW got together and wanted to give an award to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, so they had a contest. They went out and drew this award up.

This is all made by them, handmade, their design, their initiative. They didn't have anybody else do it but United Auto Workers did it and General Motors did it. I think when you see it you will be very, very impressed.

MR. CAL RAPSON: We want to make this presentation to Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki. On behalf of UAW and General Motors, I am proud to present you with this award. We are honored to work in sponsorship with the VFW to support our nation's veterans. This award symbolizes that partnership and we look forward to working with you for many years to come.

As "Gunner" said, it was made by GM hourly people working together. We are very proud of it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: As you all know, General Motors has donated a Malibu G6 hybrid automobile to be awarded to a VFW or Ladies Auxiliary member in good standing. Here to draw the lucky winner is Past Buddy Poppy Child Shena Blevins.

PAST BUDDY POPPY CHILD BLEVINS: My name is Shena Blevins, and I am a resident at the VFW National Home. I was the 2002 Buddy Poppy Child, and I get the pleasure of drawing for the new car today. It is Michael Eisenstadt from Minnesota. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF RING TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI BY COMRADE JIM CHANCELLOR

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades, this morning we have a special presentation to the Commander-in-Chief. Please give a warm welcome to Mr. Jim Chancellor from Indiana. (Applause)

PRESENTATION – COMRADE JIM CHANCELLOR

COMRADE CHANCELLOR: Good morning, comrades. Thank you for allowing me a couple of minutes of your time this morning. Several weeks ago, when I began preparation for this day, I talked to our youth. I think our youth is our future. I really wanted to know how they felt about things, how we had gotten where we are and where we are going to go.

My grandson has autism, ten years ago, and he started telling us about our freedom and what this country was built on. Remember, everyone I talk

to know I am a Vietnam veteran and they know that I was in a helicopter in Vietnam and received a Purple Heart when I got shot down.

Initially, they wanted to talk about courage and sacrifice of the veterans, which is what has made this country great. I really wanted to know the good and the bad and how they felt, what direction they thought we were going.

When Scott, with autism, started talking to me, we started talking about the Declaration of Independence. Then we talked about the Pledge of Allegiance, and then we began to talk about God. We talked about in God we trust, and we talked about under one nation under God.

Then Scott asked me, he said, "Grandpa, do you think the President of the United States and the people that lead this country pray to God before they make decisions?" He said, "Every time there is a big decision in my life my mom makes me pray." I said, "I am not sure, but I really do hope so."

The conversation with my young grandson got one-sided. I told him I thought God and prayer was a big part in every decision made. I was sure our forefathers that set forth the destiny of our great nation went to God for guidance. He looked at me and he said, "Grandfather, you are getting mad. Why are you getting mad?" I said, "You are right, Scott."

We live in the greatest country in the world. Freedom is one of the things we believe in. I think we also become a nation that is brave. I believe we are afraid to make decisions at times, we are afraid to offend. We always want to be politically correct.

We are now a nation that is afraid to defend our God for fear we will offend somebody. We are a nation that is afraid of our own children. The guns and drugs and the money in the streets have turned our teenagers into predators. Walk the streets today and watch our senior citizens. They will not even make eye contact with our youth. They are afraid on the streets of America.

You talk to our teachers, they have taken over our schools. There is no discipline. Without some type of discipline, teachers can't teach. So, I ask you today, veterans, who will lead us? Who will take us on in this quagmire? I tell you it will be you and you. It will be us, the veterans.

The country was built on the backs of the veterans. We have fought every fight. We cannot and have never been afraid to make tough decisions. Once again, this nation calls on you to lead. If this great nation is going to continue to be the land of the free, it is going to be because it remains the home of the brave.

I do ask each of you to go home and get involved in your Post and get involved in your local government. Seek someone out who is not afraid to defend our God, our children and our seniors. If we all do this, it will be a loud and clear lesson sent to the nation that we will not seek someone who sits on common ground.

We are looking for someone that will defend the common, that will be against corporate greed and supporting the capitalism views that go undisputed by the leaders in the world. Is there someone out there that can go do that? I hope so.

While listening to our distinguished guests, I want you to try to keep it simple. Try to understand their message, try to fully understand what direction they will take us, and refuse to follow anyone that always seeks the common ground. Let it be known here in Orlando, or wherever it is you call home, that we seek good, solid leadership that will put us on solid ground, not merely common ground.

The ring being presented today is not just a symbolic ring, it is a beauti-

ful piece of tangible pride that is worn all across the world. It was requested by the late great Bob Hope, worn by Sammy Davis, General Westmoreland. It is a simple design and it stands for I know, I understand, and I care.

I know about war because I have been there. I understand what you might be going through, and I truly care. This ring has been compared to Super Bowl rings, even a World Series ring, and I can see the comparison. Both rings, they unite a small elite group that has been through a Super Bowl or a World Series.

They have a shared experience and this ring binds them together. The only difference between those rings and this ring, the American Veterans Collection is this: The ring from the American Veterans Collection, they represent sacrifice and courage, dieing. To wear a ring from this collection, you have to be willing to die for this great country.

It is now my great pleasure to present Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki with the ring from the American Veterans Collection. Commander, you and I share some common ground in Vietnam. He was stationed in the Central Highlands and I was, too. It is possible that we even shared the same helicopter. It gives me great pleasure to make this presentation. Thank you very much. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF VFW NATIONAL HOME REPRESENTATIVES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: One of the stand-out icons of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary is the VFW's National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan. The National Home is a profound example of veterans helping veterans

Even more so, in my opinion, the Home is the ultimate example of implementing God's good graces on the most innocent of our society through his benevolent servants.

This morning, we have with us the Home's wonderful leaders, Executive Director Patrice Green and Board President Roger Taylor, along with our 2008 Buddy Poppy Child, Marie Strefling.

COMRADE ROGER TAYLOR: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief George. Line officers and delegates, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, the staff, the children and the families at your National Home, thank you for inviting us to appear before your delegation.

I am honored to acknowledge several National Home Trustees in the audience. I am from District 4 in Ohio. With us, we have District 3 Trustee and Vice-President, Ron Stensland from Pennsylvania.

District 5 Trustee, John Hamilton from Florida.

District 7 Trustee, Jim Goldsmith from Michigan.

District 10 Trustee, Roy Ator from Texas.

District 11 Trustee, Ray Warren from Kansas.

And representing the Veterans of Foreign Wars on the Board of Trustees, we have Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent, Quartermaster General Larry Maher, and Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki.

When the Veterans of Foreign Wars established the VFW National Home for Children in 1925, we know we keep America strong by supporting our veterans and our military. Since then the Home has been supported and funded by generous and loyal members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary members across the country. We can all be very proud of that.

As a member of the National Home Board of Trustees, I can tell you all that we make our decisions with this important legacy in mind. We guide the programs of the National Home to make sure that we are meeting the needs of today's veterans.

As Veterans of Foreign Wars members, we know the most important thing we can do for the future of our organization and for America's future is reach out to the young men and women serving our country today. We do that when we help their children and families when they need our help. We invite you all to come to the National Home Workshop at 1:00 o'clock tomorrow to learn how we help active military duty families and the work we do on the vocational rehabilitation program.

At our booth we have new materials to help you reach out to active duty military members and veterans in your communities. The professional staff of the National Home helps members who call the National Home Help Line from all over the country in times of trouble.

Because of their experience with veterans' concerns and their expertise in family issues, these dedicated people help more veteran families that ever before. We thank you all for making this possible and for your continued support.

At this time it is my pleasure to introduce to you the Executive Director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Home for Children, Patrice Green. (Applause)

REMARKS – NATIONAL HOME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PATRICE GREEN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREEN: Thank you, Roger. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Lisicki, for your invitation to be here today.

The Commander-in-Chief, the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General of the VFW perform a very important role with the National Home, serving on the Board of Trustees, providing consistency and guidance along with the other Trustees. We thank you all seriously for your important service to the National Home.

George, your visit to the National Home during the Annual Junior Vice Orientation Program that we reinstituted was much appreciated and very important to us. No one knows better than this assembled group that the number one concerns of combat veterans is who will help their families, who will help their children if he or she cannot?

Each soldier asks that question and each soldier is also deeply concerned for the welfare of the families of their comrades who may return from battle injured and ailing in both body and soul, or those who don't return at all. The members of the VFW, combat veterans themselves, knew this firsthand when they established the National Home 83 years ago.

They knew when we support our military and care for our veterans we do keep our country strong. We, at the National Home, pledge to continue the Home's legacy of helping the children and families, and we thank all of you for what you do to strengthen our country by providing these programs and services for a nation's veterans and their families, especially in these times of serious needs.

The National Home embodies what the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary stand for, helping military families and their children. The value that the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary are at the core of all National Home programs and services, patriotism, citizenship and honor for those who have served are

central to all that we do.

To exemplify that, last August the National Home hosted the Vietnam Memorial Day Ball for four days. It was a tremendous honor to host this memorial. In doing so, it had a lasting impression on our residents. We thought we would be able to share this experience with you today. I believe we have a video, and if we don't, that will be all. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the video was shown at this time.)

We just want to thank you all for allowing us to honor you in this way. We have hosted and visited with thousands of members this year at the National Home, but the real work of the home goes on each and every day with the children and families of our nation's veterans and active duty military.

If you are ever able to, please come and visit your National Home and see for yourself the environment of love and care you provided. If you are able to come, we know you will be proud. We thank you for everything that you do. Thank you very much for everything you do.

Now, this morning we have with us a bunch of young people that are eager to be introduced. We have the National Chorus that is going to be playing tonight at the Patriotic Rally, and led by two members of our staff, Brian Arente, and Misty Bokken. We will have them come and state the house they live in and their name.

Brian and Misty, come up, too.

MS. MISTY BOKKEN: Hi. We would just like to say thanks again for inviting the choir to come. Some of the kids are experiencing for the first time flying and our first hurricane. It is really exciting for us. We appreciate you allowing us to be here. My husband and I are house parents at the Home. We are starting our eighteenth year, and we work in the New York House.

MR. BRIAN ARENTE: My name is Brian Arente, a coordinator at the National Home. I have been at the home about eight years. We are very excited to be here. We were not afraid of the hurricane, we are from Michigan where it is snowing up there right now. So a little water and rain down here is actually a lot warmer. It is a pleasure to be here. Thanks, guys, for having us.

(Whereupon, the members of the chorus introduced themselves at this time.)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: I think this is what you are waiting for, too. It is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you our National Buddy Poppy Child for 2008-2009, Marie Strefling. (Applause)

REMARKS – 2008 BUDDY POPPY CHILD MARIE STREFLING

BUDDY POPPY CHILD STREFLING: Hi. My name is Marie Strefling. I have lived at the VFW National Home for Children for four years. I am 11 years old. As you probably know, I did try out for Buddy Poppy this year and hoped I would make it.

I live in the Florida House, which I have lived since I was seven years old. My house parents are the most loving friends someone could have. My mother is there with Justice, Trevor and Jesse. They are a lot of fun to hang around with. My hobby is playing sports, playing cards, especially with my family.

I like ice skating and roller skating. I love to go out to places like restaurants, movies and stores. I love being with my family. They are a lot of fun. I love them all. I am in the seventh grade, and my favorite subject is math. I wanted to be Buddy Poppy to thank all the veterans who have been help-

ing me and giving me the opportunity to live at the VFW National Home for Children.

The National Home is a lot of fun to live at. If you don't have a bike, they will help you get one that suits you. We all love to go shopping for clothes. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. (Applause)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREEN: Now, Commander-in-Chief Lisicki, we have for you a memo for the service you have given at the National Home.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Thank you. This is beautiful.

PRESENTATION OF CHECK TO THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL CENTER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: This morning we have with us a man whose name should be familiar to every Vietnam veteran. In 1979, this combat-wounded Vietnam veteran conceived an idea to honor those who served and sacrificed in our nation's longest war, to build a memorial that would help heal those who served and those who were embroiled in the bitter politics here at home.

His perseverance resulted in the 1982 dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which is now the most visited memorial in our nation's capital.

Children make up a large percentage of the four million visitors to the wall each year. To most of them, regrettably, it is just a quick stop during their visit to the capital and, sadly, lacks significance.

The VFW is very proud to be a part of changing that. We have vowed to support the construction of an underground educational facility near the wall. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center will enhance the experience for all visitors by providing insight into the national significance of the wall and its impact on America's culture.

We will remain committed to this effort and are proud of our role in working to accomplish the completion of this important project. We have pledged $1 million to the project and it is truly an honor to help make this vision become a reality.

I will now present the VFW's first pledge check to benefit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center in the amount of $320,714.30. Comrades, to accept this check, I present to you the founder and president of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, a Life Member of VFW Post 2979 in Washington, D.C., Mr. Jan Scruggs.

RESPONSE – MR. JAN SCRUGGS

COMRADE JAN SCRUGGS: Well, I just want to note that in accepting this check I am remembered of a day, December 22, 1981, when the Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Art Fellwock, gave a check of a similar amount to help us build the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Accepting the check with me was Rocky Bleier, who went on to win the Super Bowl and had a great career.

Like many of the veterans here, Rocky Bleier has been a great role model for the young people of our country, preserving the values of loyalty, duty, respect, service, honor, integrity and encouraging that the veterans stand for every day of their lives.

I am very happy to report that Rocky Bleier is also helping us with the

Education Center at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Lincoln Memorial. It is really between both of them. When we fought to build this Memorial in 1982, we just wanted America to remember service members who were being overlooked, a generation of us who fought in Vietnam.

But the war was unpopular and a lot of people just wanted to forget us. We felt it was needed, the Memorial, to remember our brothers and sisters and to heal as one nation. Twenty-five years has passed since the Memorial was built. School kids today who visit really have no context in which to place the names in that Memorial in historical context.

They are more than just names, as we know. They are names of people that we knew and fought beside. Generations now, we want visitors to the Memorial to know the basis behind the names, to understand the lives unfulfilled. The Center, the Education Center will accomplish that goal being built on the National Mall between the Lincoln Memorial and the Vietnam Memorial.

The Center will show the faces of those engraved on the wall. It will show some of the hundreds of thousands of items that have been left at the Memorial and will give a time line in the world without taking political sides. As visitors will leave, they will see a montage of men and women from all the America's wars, including the current conflict, showing the values of America's service members who have been with us for as long as we have been a nation.

I would like to take a few minutes right now and just kind of show you the renderings of what the architect and exhibit designer have planned for the Center. This is where it will be on the mall. There is the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam Memorial.

Across the body of water, there is the Korean War Veterans Memorial. Straight ahead of the Lincoln Memorial, about a thousand meters, is the World War II Memorial. So, this is a very historic area. This is actually what the Center will look like.

We had to build it underground to actually keep the historic vistas as they were, as to not interfere with the mall and the beauty of the mall. This is the most visited monument in Washington, D.C. This is now 25 years into the Memorial's history. We have had about 85 million visitors.

Of interest to everyone here is about half of the people who visit the Memorial are actually younger than the Memorial itself, the Memorial being 25 years of age. This is a targeted audience for the Center. General Barry McCaffrey, along with General Colin Powell, and others, have worked hard, and we are very proud to tell you that the Center will highlight the values, the values of military service, the values that people need to learn about duty, honor, service, courage. These are important values.

When you enter the Center, you will go through a corridor, and then this is what you will see. This will be actually the photographs of those who are on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which will change every day. This is actually an animated view of what it will look like when you walk in. This is a highly-visual experience which will be very overwhelming.

Here is an example of what we can do, and I believe we will on certain days, for example, June 6, 1944, we can change and go from the Vietnam photographs to photographs of those who gave their lives defending their country in a different conflict.

There are certain historic days in America's history that this will be very, very appropriate, the most recent being 9/11, and certainly this will be a per-

fect place to honor the people who were serving and have given their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. There are some magnificent quotes from the Vietnam War, and some of them are very, very moving. These will be an integral part of the Center.

We started our little tour upstairs. This will be two levels. We are downstairs. This shows the military values, the values you have. On the screen will be a letter from Vietnam in which a Platoon Leader notes that the people serving under him are very honorable and that they indeed are the people who built America and not the rich or well-educated, but hopes to spend his life in their service. I think that resonates so well with the people here and the other speakers today.

We have over 100,000 items that have been left at the Memorial. There is no precedent for this. People leave things there. It is a great benefit to those of us who will be building this Education Center. The things that have been left are quite extraordinary.

You see the Purple Hearts. They are actually Purple Hearts from World Wars I, II, Korea, Vietnam. There will be a beautiful montage of history and the different things that people carry, and the letters that have been left at the Memorial.

This is a company roster, authentic antique, and in particular which will be part of the collection in which various people that have been killed and wounded in that particular battle. The best way to show what we are going to do is to look at the package there.

The package is items sent back to the family. The photograph there in the little montage, the 8th Brigade killed in action along with the baseball glove, and the final picture is the picture of the daughter of the soldier who actually was killed in action.

So, you are seeing there is a great legacy of service and legacy of service really encapsulates what we are doing. There will be places as well where we will show the military history of war without taking sides, and that will be part of the experience.

The Resource Center, now, here is what you have to understand and you have to visualize. As you leave the Center, you will go through a corridor with faces that will flash and will be a very visual experience. Let me show you what those faces will be. So, this is what we are going to build. We are truly hoping that the year 2010 this Memorial Center will be underway, and it all depends on fund-raising. As always, and there is a great history for this, the Veterans of Foreign Wars is always the first to serve and the first to help.

On behalf of the Vietnam Veterans Fund and on behalf of America, I want to thank you and I want to show my appreciation to the leadership of this great organization. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF CAPTAIN EARL MORSE, USAF (RET.) FOUNDER AND OPERATIONS MANAGER, HONOR FLIGHT, INC.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Our next guest is no stranger to the VFW and perhaps one of the most selfless people I have had the pleasure of meeting. Indeed, we consider him family.

Captain Earl Morse is the mastermind behind the Honor Flight Network. For the past four years, he has selflessly dedicated his time and resources to establishing a nationwide network built to ensure that countless World War II veterans are able to see their Memorial free of charge, and with the assis-

tance they may require, truly a once in a lifetime opportunity for so many.

But many of you out there already know this, such as our good comrades in Ohio, Nebraska, California, just to name some of our Departments who have had the professional privilege to work with Earl on such a noble and self-satisfying adventure.

It is my pleasure, actually my honor, to introduce the co-founder and operations manager of Honor Flight, Incorporated, Captain Earl Morse. (Applause)

REMARKS – CAPTAIN EARL MORSE

CAPTAIN EARL MORSE: Thank you so much, Commander. It is indeed an honor and privilege to be here to share this statement with so many incredible heroes and so many incredible programs. I would just like to add our name to the list of a group of people.

In my opinion, I have the greatest job in the world. I get to hang out with World War II veterans all day long. I have heard quite a few times the name Greatest Generation mentioned. A lot of people are also equating today's members that are serving, and those members that are going to be serving in the future as the future Greatest Generation.

I get to hang out with the Real McCoy. I get to hang out with those people for which they set the standard for all of us from military service, what it means to serve and to commit, and to sacrifice, the real World War II veterans in which this nation owes such a debt of gratitude to.

When I get up and talk to a group of people and I am asking for their support, I am asking for funding, I like to give a real quick history lesson. I say, "All right. Here is a quick history lesson about World War II veterans and what they did. They collectively and literally saved the world. By that, what I mean is, to this day Europe is free. To this day, the Pacific is free, and thank God America is free."

This came at such a high cost, such a high cost: service and sacrifice. What is interesting is when you match that accomplishment with the people, the World War II veterans I have had the privilege of meeting, you realize that there is a great work to be done. The World War II veterans, I have served in the Air Force for 21 years.

I was a medic, a flight medic, and then I went on to become a physician's assistant. So for 21 years I cared for America's retirees and active duty personnel. When I joined the VA, that is another eight years of having the honor and privilege of caring for America's veterans.

My personal impression is that of all the veterans I have had the honor of caring for, the World War II veterans are the most humble, most stoic, most appreciative and patriotic people that walked the face of this earth. When I say they are humble, which a World War II veteran does not have the right to go up to any one of us and say excuse me, do you speak German, do you speak Japanese? No, you were never forced to speak any of those languages. You are welcome, and then turn off and walk off. They would never even think about doing something like that. It is not in their generation's mentality.

Appreciative, every single World War II veteran was born and raised during the Great Depression. They know what it is like to go without. You would do anything for a World War II veteran, but they are so grateful, so grateful. Patriotic, you never have to tell the World War II veterans freedom

is not free. They have seen personally the suffocating, horrific cost associated with all of us being free and living free.

If you are ever in a parade and you see the American Flag coming down the street, I bet you the first person that will stand up is going to be a World War II veteran. I bet you the last person that sits down is a World War II veteran. They are incredible people.

Sadly, about a thousand of them are passing away every day. In another five to ten years, this program is going to be kind of a moot point. The World War II veterans will be done. They will be extinct. You match their incredible accomplishments with the incredible people that they are, and then the fact that they had to wait 60 years for a Memorial, you apply that same 60-year time frame to the Vietnam Memorial, it would not have been built until the year 2035.

We have a World War II Memorial now. We have over 7,000 World War II veterans now that are on our list that would love to see the Memorial, and they are not going to get there without your help. The VFW has been a tremendous supporter of our efforts, and I cannot thank you-all enough for what you are doing.

I am relying on that help. But to give you some idea of what it is like, what it means to the veterans, I have a film footage for you. This is a Fox News piece.

Steve, will you go ahead and show that video, please.

(Whereupon, the video is shown at this time.)

I am kind of curious. If you are a World War II veteran and you are capable of standing, would you please do so. If you are not capable of standing, please raise your hand. The plane was landing at Baltimore as a regular-scheduled flight, we were flying in on Air Tran and this young lady was circled by all these veterans on the plane.

We go ahead and get all the other passengers off first. But because she had such a wonderful conversation with them, she stood up and looked at all World War II veterans and said, "I want to thank you for what you have done. My grandfather was in a concentration camp over in Germany that was liberated by U.S. service members. Thank you." And she turned around and stepped off the plane.

That rolls through your head after a while. It is not that she wouldn't have been on the plane if the World War II veterans had not done what they had done. She would not have existed had you not done what you did.

My mom, she is British, she was born in England, October 28, 1941. She is not here. She gets upset when I say that. That is good. She was born during the Battle of Britain. Thank God, U.S. Airmen and also the Royal Air Force repelled that Nazi invasion, or I wouldn't be here.

I wouldn't have my kids, I wouldn't be able to play with my grand kids. We can never repay the World War II veterans for what they have done.

Getting them to the Memorial is a small token of our appreciation. That is the least we can do. One of the greatest joys I have in this program is after they have been to the Memorial, the plane takes off, the sun is setting, I look over all those veterans that were given this once in a lifetime opportunity, and I know that every one of them knows personally and intimately how revered, how cherished and how loved they are by this nation.

Again, we have over 7,000 World War II veterans on the waiting list and every single one of them deserves that opportunity. There is no more deserving group on the face of this earth that deserves to see the Memorial

than the World War II veterans. I am asking for your help. I am pleading for your help, because in another five to ten years they are gone. Thank you very much. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION – MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE SUPREME COMMANDER RALPH CORNO

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: A trip to almost any VA Hospital will reveal the importance of the work of the Military Order of the Cootie. Each year, the Cooties spend thousands of hours bringing comfort to our hospitalized veterans. Their commitment "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 88th Supreme Scratch in Kansas City, in August, 2007.

Please welcome the Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States of America, Ralph Corno, from the Garden State, New Jersey. (Applause)

RESPONSE – SUPREME COMMANDER RALPH CORNO

SUPREME COMMANDER CORNO: Well, I had my morning speech all ready, but now it has to be an afternoon speech. To our Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki, to our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner, and to our Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell, and the rest of the officers, the National Officers, but most of all to the delegates: To the delegates of this convention, which is the National Organization, I bring you greetings from the Supreme Organization.

Before I do that, I sat back here and when the National Home pictures were shown, the film, every time I see that wall, whether in Washington, D.C., or see the wall, it brings back sad memories. I know George and the rest of us that are up here that are Vietnam veterans see that. It brings back the memory of our departed comrades that got injured and came home and were in the hospital. Really, it does get me upset.

I want to bring you the greetings of 20,900-plus members of the Military Order of the Cootie, and over 1.5 million VFW members. Something in the mathematical figure is not right. I bet the 20,000-some member are here because we are the workers and we are the shakers of this organization.

I am going to just give you a highlight of what we, the Supreme organization, which is the members of the Cootie, have done this year. 20,900-plus members in hospital work, which as George said, "Keep 'em Smiling in Beds of White" go to the hospitals. Our credit was $7,484,067.80. That is the VA credit that we have done for the organization.

Not only have we done that, but as Cooties we have a program which is called "Booster". The Booster Program is members of the Military Order of the Cootie that go out and recruit VFW members. We recruited this year over 6,031 new and reinstated members for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. So we are doing our work in the hospitals and we are doing our work for the organization.

Also in Cootie donations, the cash value to the Veterans of Foreign Wars' programs of 2007-2008 is $290,211.66 donated to the Veterans of Foreign Wars' programs. So, for the 20,000-plus members, we are doing a heck of a

good job. I thank you, those who are Cooties.

If you are not a Cootie, I invite you to join the organization. So, instead of having $7 million in hospital work, we could do $10 million to $15 million. Instead of recruiting 6,000 members, we might be able to recruit 10,000, 15,000 for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Remember, if the organization is to increase and multiply, the Cooties need to increase and multiply. It is very hard to go out and solicit VFW members. But it is not really that hard to go out and solicit members of this organization for the Cooties to ask, to give them an application and follow up.

The main thing is like in the VFW membership is to follow up. Don't let that person, that veteran, get out of the door. Get in your Post and visit your Departments. Get these members. This organization was started in the 1920s in New York City.

A bunch of National Officers said that we work so hard, we do all this work for legislation and everything else, we need a fun organization. At twelve midnight that year, in New York City, they established the Military Order of the Cootie to be a fun organization.

When you first open your book and it says what is this organization for, the organization is to have fun. Then after World War II, we started with the hospitals working for the veterans. I guess I have been to Walter Reed and I have seen them, I have talked to them.

Yes, as he said, the World War II veterans saved this country. I can get up there and everybody can get up there, and you people listen to me. Yes, it is the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who are a dedicated group, volunteer group, not like when we got drafted.

We have to take care of them as George did with the money and the airlines, and the G.I. Bill that the VFW got. We have to do the hard work in the hospitals, and we do the fun work.

I want to thank you all, and I want to thank George and "Gunner" for letting me speak today after lunch. God bless you, God bless this country and God bless the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, please rise for the Benediction by Chaplain Darling.

BENEDICTION AND SALUTE TO THE COLORS

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Darling gave the Benediction, followed by the Salute to the Colors.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, be back here at 8:00 o'clock tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 12:20 o'clock p.m.)

THIRD BUSINESS SESSION
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2008

(The Third Business Session of the 109th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States was called to order at 8:00 o'clock a.m., in the Orange County Convention Center, Kansas City, Missouri, with Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Sergeant-at-Arms, prepare the hall for the opening ceremonies.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

Comrades, please rise for the Opening Prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States.

Comrade National Chaplain.

(Whereupon, the Opening Prayer was given by National Chaplain Thomas Darling, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.)

REPORT OF CONVENTION CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We will now have the report of the Convention Credentials Committee by David Butters.

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post No. 475, Delaware): As of the close of business yesterday, August 19th, delegate strength of this convention is as follows: Total delegates, 10,575. Total Department Commanders, 52. Total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 32. Total National Officers, 35. That is for a grand total of 10,694.

PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO MICHAEL GORMALLEY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The VFW is known for its many programs that benefit the community. The entire organization takes pride in our ability to deliver VFW programs wherever and whenever needed.

An integral part of VFW programs are those people who work at National Headquarters who provide support and assistance to the various Departments and Posts.

For over 16 years, Michael J. Gormalley played an important role to ensure delivery of VFW programs through his work as Americanism & Community Activities Director, Citizenship, Education & Community Services Director, Assistant Adjutant General – Programs, and as Senior Director of the VFW Foundation.

Mike's many years of service as an employee of the VFW is testimony to his commitment to his community, his nation and to the organization. Please join me in honoring Michael Gormalley. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: The Citation reads as follows: "Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to Michael J. Gormalley.

"In appreciation for and recognition of over 16 years of dedicated service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the VFW Foundation, fulfilling the positions of Americanism & Community Activities

Director, Citizenship, Education & Community Services Director, Assistant Adjutant General – Programs, and completing his career as the Senior Director of the VFW Foundation.

"His commitment to the organization's mission of patriotism, education and community service is in keeping with the tradition 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 20th day of August, 2008."

Signed by George J. Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – MICHAEL GORMALLEY

COMRADE MICHAEL GORMALLEY: Good morning. It is an honor to receive this award. Through my entire adult life, I have lived by two principles. Number one, neither a title or position measures who I am as a person, but more so it is how I treat people and how I help people that defines who I am.

Second, you make a living by what you do. You make a life by how you live these two basic principles, but I could not have been successful in my 16-plus years at the VFW without some good supporters. One of them is not with us anymore, and that is Past Commander-in-Chief and Past Adjutant General Howard Vander Clute.

Some 18 years ago, Howard talked to me about joining the VFW staff. At that time I was a school principal, but more importantly, I had just finished my year as a Commander of VFW Post 2016 in Amesbury, Massachusetts, and District 14 Commander. I had the opportunity to work with some great VFW and Ladies Auxiliary volunteers in the Department of Massachusetts.

Howard and I both agreed that in order for the VFW to go forward, we needed to tell our story, especially to our young people. That is what I strived to do. We also believed that we needed to listen to our members, and more importantly, respect our members.

To Howard, I say thank you for giving me that opportunity, and I also want him to know that many of us really, really miss him. Yes, contrary to popular belief, he is up there riding his Harley, probably having St. Peter on the back seat and looking down at us smiling at times and at times shaking his head. That is how Howard led our organization.

I also want to recognize the hard-working men and women at our VFW Headquarters, our VFW Washington office, and all our Departments across this great land. At times they are not recognized, but not by this individual. I recognize them every day for what they do for our veterans and our members. To them I say "thank you."

Last but not least, I say thank you to our members of the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary who are on a daily basis helping our members, our veterans, our military, their families, our young people and our communities. To those who seriously believe in the following statement, honor the dead by helping the living, I say thank you for letting me serve with you and I salute you. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF VICTOR BIGGS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE AMERICAN VETERANS DISABLED FOR LIFE MEMORIAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: For the first time in our nation's history, we will build a monument to honor and pay tribute to some of America's most courageous heroes. The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will celebrate those men and women who may be broken in body, but never in spirit.

The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial Foundation was formed to raise the funds necessary to design and construct the memorial. It was established in 1998 through the combined efforts of philanthropist Lois B. Pope, Foundation Chairwoman; Mr. Arthur H. Wilson, National Adjutant of the Disabled American Veterans and Foundation President; and the late Jesse Brown, former Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Foundation's first Executive Director.

Transcending conflicts, service branches and generations, the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will express America's lasting gratitude to the men and women whose lives were forever changed in service to our country and also honor veterans' loved ones and caregivers, individuals whose heroic devotion is a source of strength for those striving to heal.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States donated $100,000 in 2005 to help construct the Memorial, which is expected to open in the year 2010 adjacent to Independence Avenue in view of the United States Capitol.

The Memorial is a long-overdue tribute to those three million living disabled veterans and all those who have passed before who have placed their lives in harm's way, and who spend each day living with a deep and permanent reminder of their willing sacrifice.

Here to talk about the Foundation is Executive Director Victor Biggs.

REMARKS – THE HONORABLE VICTOR BIGGS

MR. VICTOR BIGGS: Good morning, everyone. I am glad to be here today. Commander-in-Chief Lisicki, thank you so much. National Officers, National Council, Convention Committees, VFW Members, Guests and Friends:

Please accept our gratitude and that of Mrs. Pope, our co-founder, for this opportunity to speak to you today in favor of America's first Memorial in our nation's capital to honor America's three million disabled veterans and those who passed on before.

My objective today is to provide you with a brief overview of the project and update of the project, and to ask for your continued support. Very shortly, we will have the DVD of the Memorial, which will give you a virtual tour of the Memorial as to its location, its proximity to our nation's capital, and the progress that we are making thus far.

(Whereupon, the video is played at this time.)

As we pay tribute to Veterans of Foreign Wars who have answered the call or have volunteered to defend our country at any cost, I applaud the VFW and its leadership for pioneering support for the veterans, including disabled, sick and military comrades seeking medical treatment at various VA facilities.

Distinguished philanthropist Lois Pope, who is the Co-Founder and

Chairwoman of the Disabled Veterans for Life Memorial Foundation, and the past recipient of the James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award, would once again like to let you know that the VFW was among the first veterans' service organizations to support this Memorial project. (Applause)

As long as we have a country to defend, we will have veterans to honor. Every man and woman who serves in our armed forces during peacetime and war has given us something for which we can never, ever, ever repay. And all they ask us for is the love and support of a country for which they stood and defended.

The Disabled Veterans for Life Memorial Foundation was passed by Congress by Public Law 106348 to establish a National Memorial in our nation's capital honoring veterans who became disabled while serving in the United States Armed Forces. The Memorial is called the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial.

This Memorial endeavors to ensure that the sacrifices of our brave men and women, America's sons and daughters, are never, ever, forgotten. It is a long overdue tribute to those who have placed their lives in harm's way and spent each day living with a deep and permanent reminder of their sacrifice.

Over the past seven years, our nation has once again been reminded of the critical importance of having a strong and dedicated military force, as well as the many perils inherent in military service. Regrettably, increasing numbers of veterans, America's great men and women, are returning home with catastrophic and life-altering injuries.

The sacrifices of our disabled veterans, both past and present, are immeasurable, yet there is still no memorial in our nation's capital that honors them. In all honesty, we can never repay them for the deaths and the hard work they have done and the sacrifice they have made.

Throughout history, Americans have erected impressive monuments in honor of many important events and people who left a mark on America's history. We still have not created a Memorial that affirms the extraordinary sacrifices made by the three million living disabled veterans and heroes that are living, who will continue to carry the scars daily in and out of their bodies until now.

This Memorial will transcend service and advantages, politics, and generations. The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial is a lasting tribute to the enormous sacrifices made by our brave men and women like yourself, whose lives are forever changed and altered in service to our country.

Today, ladies and gentlemen, we have the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial asking for your continued support to continue our partnership to see this project to completion. So, finally, America's disabled veterans will be given the permanent national honor they so deserve. To date, we have raised $70 million of the $86 million needed.

We are glad to say that includes the gift from the VFW. It also includes a recent generous gift from Ross Perot for $3 million, and many other generous individual supporters who help us along the way. However, although we are making steady progress, by federal law we cannot begin construction until we have raised all the funds necessary for the project.

So more than ever, we need friends like the VFW to help us raise the remaining funds needed to begin construction. So, I am here today to ask for your continued support.

At an earlier time in American history, President George Washington

warned us that the illness with which our country and our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter what the conflict is, no matter whether justified, will be proportional to how we perceive veterans earlier and how they are treated.

Our esteemed chairwoman and co-founder, Lois Pope, says the salute to our nation's three million disabled veterans are to honor their valor, their courage and their sacrifice, and many are here today. Mrs. Pope believes that it is a way of educating American people that war is not just about bombs, bullets and destruction, it is about human beings like the men and women in this room gathered here today, who stand up with the highest values inherent in all of us.

To conclude, you are our nation's finest. You had a job to do, to protect and to defend our freedom, and you did so despite the cost.

Please consider support from your Departments, your Posts, your units, your friends and neighbors.

I ask you to stop by our Booth 263 in the Exhibit Hall to explore this and other opportunities for us to continue our partnership to build this Memorial together.

Commander-in-Chief, thank you again for this opportunity to speak here today and for your support and for the membership's support. May God bless you all. May God bless America, and have a great convention. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT VIRGINIA CARMAN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: I am extremely pleased that here to visit our convention today is a lady that I was proud to serve with during the past year. Virginia 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.

Please welcome a wonderful lady from the great state of Washington, Virginia Carman, President of the Ladies Auxiliary. (Applause)

RESPONSE – LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT VIRGINIA CARMAN

NATIONAL PRESIDENT CARMAN: Thank you. Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you one last time as your National President. I wanted to be here this morning so that I could thank you personally for everything that you have done for our organization, for our veterans, for our troops and for our families.

It is you, the veteran, who is our true hero in this country. It is not our movie stars, not our sports figures, it is not the music rock stars, it is you, the veterans.

I want to thank you for everything that you do. You committed your life to our military and then went on to commit yourselves to our country and do life-long work for our communities. I want to thank you for working together with our Auxiliaries to make our programs successful. It takes both of us working together to be the success that we are.

With your help, the Ladies Auxiliary has raised almost $3 million for our cancer aid research fund this year alone. (Applause) I thank you for your assistance. The Ladies Auxiliary raised almost $450,000 for the Operation

Uplink Program this year to help keep our military families connected.

On a personal note, I want to thank all of you for the wonderful visit that I had to each and every one of your Departments this year. Any time that the VFW was able to join us, it was certainly good to see them, and I enjoyed meeting with each of you.

I want to thank you for giving me a wonderful Commander-in-Chief as George Lisicki to work with this year. He was always mindful of the Ladies Auxiliary, and I knew he would always be there for me whenever I needed him.

At this time I would like to give you this gift from me and thank you for all you have done this year. (Applause)

I am pleased to have brought with me this morning, and I would like to introduce to you my National Chief of Staff from the Department of Washington, Karen Flynn.

NATIONAL CHIEF OF STAFF FLYNN: Thank you. I think we have had an outstanding year this year with our National Commander-in-Chief George and our National President Virginia. Also, I would like to thank every one of the VFW members for signing up Auxiliary members.

Because of you, this year we have 25 new Auxiliaries and two pending. Without you, this would not have been done. I just wanted to say thank you for all your support and everything you have done.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT CARMAN: Also with me this morning is a person who I have given the title to as liaison to the VFW Commander-in-Chief. So, if there is something I don't get a chance to talk to George about, I can tell Gloria and then she can get the opportunity to let him know. I would like to present to you the wife of the National Commander-in-Chief, Gloria Lisicki. (Applause)

Again, thank you-all for the wonderful visits I have had to each of your Departments and I enjoyed being your National President. Thank you very much. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: The Commander-in-Chief will now go to the National President's Office and the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief will preside over the meeting as soon as I read this letter.

General Casey was scheduled to attend our convention. Unfortunately, because of weather he was unable to be with us today. He did, however, send a personal letter that he wants to share with us.

"To those who have served as veterans, I am sorry the storm has kept me from connecting directly with you, the greatest men and women of veterans of wars. Each of you has placed their nation's security and freedom of ours before your own life. You are indeed a national treasure.

"Today I want to salute you and tell you all about your Army. As we approach another anniversary of September 11th, it is useful to reflect on why our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines are deployed in harm's way.

"We are at war against the global extremists network that attacks us and fixed on destroying our way of life. This will not fade away, nor will it give up easily. We are engaged in a long war, and the stakes of our country are high. At this hour, a new generation of American heroes has taken up the fight in defense of our values and ideals. They are deployed to defeat our enemies before they can attack us again at home.

"Your Army is a huge professional and combat-seasoned force that has been stretched by the demands of the current conflict. We will do what it takes to win and preserve this magnificent force.

"You, as veterans, are doing your part. You are lending your critical voice by coming together from all services and so many different backgrounds, and you are part of the National By-Laws on the state of America's military and its role in the 21st Century conflicts. You do so with a level of credibility and wisdom that few can match.

"For the past 35 years, the rights of this nation's armed forces has been filled entirely by volunteers. You know well the importance of sustaining an all-volunteer force, a force that has come to embody America's resolve to defend freedom and protect liberty around the world. Your voice here will help secure the heritage and ensure that we maintain the same quality servicemen and women tomorrow as we have today.

"You also know that today's troops are tomorrow's veterans. The U.S. Army takes this responsibility to you and today's soldiers seriously. To that end, we are working hand-in-hand with the right people, including health care specialists, Veterans Affairs, and others to provide the care, benefits and support you so deserve.

"Together our mission is to get this right so we can move forward. We are on an era of present conflict where success is dependent upon our whole nation working in concert. Your participation in this collaborative process counts immensely, and by using your voice here and in your communities, you not only serve the living but you honor the fallen and safeguard their proud legacy.

"May God bless you. /s/ George W. Casey, Jr., General, United States Army." (Applause)

(Whereupon, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Gardner assumed the chair.)

PRESENTATION OF THE 2008 VFW JAMES E. VAN ZANDT CITIZENSHIP AWARD TO PATTI PATTON-BADER

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: It is now my honor to introduce Patti Patton-Bader, the recipient of this year's VFW James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award.

When Patti's son, Brandon, was deployed to Iraq, she began sending daily care packages to him. Soon she was recruiting friends and family to likewise send packages to more troops, which eventually led her to start the non-profit organization, "Soldiers' Angels," in 2003.

Since then, the group's 100,000 members have sent tens of thousands of care packages and hundreds of thousands of letters to make sure no soldier is forgotten while serving today. "Soldiers' Angels" is the nation's largest all-volunteer military support organization that specializes in sending care packages to deployed soldiers as well as providing various support services for the families of troops overseas.

The great-niece of General George Patton, Patti's commitment to supporting the troops runs deep. Besides being a mother of two sons who serve in the military, she also is considered a mother to over 200,000 soldiers who benefit from her organization's cause.

This past May, Patti Patton-Bader was crowned "America's Favorite Mom" by Donny and Marie Osmond during the NBC Primetime Mother's Day Special, "Teleflora Presents America's Favorite Mom."

She has received an "Above and Beyond" Award from Microsoft in collaboration with the United States service organizations. This award recog-

nizes the contributions of citizens across the country who brighten the lives of our troops throughout the world and are remarkable examples of how every day people can do extraordinary things.

Please welcome the 2008 VFW James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award recipient, Patti Patton-Bader. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: The James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award, Gold Medal and Citation, awarded to Patti Patton-Bader.

"In esteemed recognition and utmost appreciation of her selfless contributions and steadfast efforts in providing support for members of the United States military and their families.

"As founder of Soldiers' Angels, her extreme generosity, benevolent care and ardent concern for America's troops, along with her tenacious dedication, have truly made her an inspiration for countless others, thus, in keeping with the highest ideals 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 20th day of August, 2008." Approved by the National Council of Administration.

Signed by George J. Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause) This award also comes with a $5,000 honorarium. Ms. Bader has asked it be made out to the Soldiers' Angels.

RESPONSE – MRS. PATTI PATTON-BADER

MRS. PATTON-BADER: You know, to receive an award for what I feel is my duty somewhat takes me back, but I accept this award for myself and all the 200,000-plus Soldiers' Angels. I love America. I love being an American citizen. I love indoor plumbing, I love color TV and I love everything that America brings to us, especially the right to vote.

I believe that I get the chance every couple of years to go vote for who I want in office, and if my elected official doesn't get elected that is okay. I have had that happen a couple of years, and I stand 150 percent behind the people that are elected.

When my son went to Iraq at the Commanders-in-Chief command, I was so proud of him and just as proud of my younger son. I am proud of every single man and woman who has the guts and bravery to put on the uniform and stand for our freedom. (Applause)

So, to my great-uncle, the General, to my father, the Retired Lieutenant Colonel who did two tours in Vietnam and one in Korea, to my brother who did a second tour in Iraq, and my two sons who did tours in Iraq, I just feel they are our American heroes. They are idols more than Brad Pitt or any of the movie stars we have. These men and women are what make a difference to each and every one of our lives.

I just wasn't expecting anything like this to happen. When my son said that he was going into the Army, and then I found out he was going to Iraq, I called my father, the Lieutenant Colonel, and I said, "My son is going to war. I am so afraid." He said, "Don't worry, honey. He is short and he will be able to run under the bullets." I didn't quite understand. But I realize now what he was trying to do was to get me in the right frame of mind.

He said, "You make care packages for your son." I started sending them out every single day, and after about 35 or 40 days and I had not heard from my son, I started calling the Red Cross, Fort Sill, the General at Fort Sill, the Chaplain, anybody who would listen.

They finally got me to the family readiness group leader. She said, "I will talk to my husband. He is the First Sergeant and we will find out what is going on." She said, "I know they are carrying guns and it is very dangerous." She called me the next day and she said, "My husband, I asked him about your son, Private First Class Brandon Bader."

And he said, "Who? The luckiest man in Iraq?" The packages were getting through. My son called me the next day and I said, "So you have got enough supplies?" He said, "No, you and a couple of wives are the only people sending care packages." That is when I realized if I had not talked to my father and he had not told me what to do, my son, Brandon, would not have been the luckiest man in Iraq.

I looked at my husband, and I said, "We can't supply the whole Army. Let's put up a Web site." We did. Hundreds of thousands of people have come. The very first person to come and send a care package to the troops through Soldiers' Angels was a veteran, a veteran living in a trailer with his wife dying of cancer, on welfare.

I said, "No, no, just write a letter." He said, "No, my money is going to these brave soldiers. I know what they are going through."

Since then, people from all walks of life have come. We have worked with our wounded heroes. We send backpacks. We sent 10,000 packs to the hospitals. Every one had a donated blanket of hope. We work with the families of our fallen providing a living tree so it can grow and nourish, and they can remember that we will never forget the sacrifice they have been put through and their sons and daughters have done.

Our mission is to provide aid and comfort to the military and its families, and that is what we try to do every single day. I thank each and every one of you in this room who have put on the uniform, and your spouse or your daughter or son, or grandmother who has stood by your side, believed in you and sacrificed much time without you.

Thank you for this award. Thank you to the VFW and the Commander and everybody involved. You have my heart. I would like to leave you with our motto, "May no soldier go unloved; may no soldier walk alone; may no soldier be forgotten until they all come home."

May God bless our troops and may God bless America. Thank you. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Let me say, as we wait for the Governor to be here today, I want to thank each and every one of you for all the hospitality I have enjoyed as I have traveled around as the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief during 2007-2008.

I want to thank the Commander-in-Chief for the great leadership he has provided this organization, and Tommy Tradewell for making this a great year for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. You know, sometimes the days get long and the airplane rides get longer, but when you get to somewhere and you get to meet with the good comrades and sisters in this great organization, it makes it all worthwhile.

I salute you for what you do for our great organization, and thank you for what you do for this organization, for veterans that we serve.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE RICK PERRY, GOVERNOR OF TEXAS

The great Lone Star State of Texas enjoys a rich military history and is

arguably at the forefront in leading our nation to preserving and expanding military installations and their missions.

Governor Rick Perry, a United States Air Force veteran, has made it his mandate to create a Texas of unlimited opportunity and prosperity through initiatives to improve education, the job climate, lower taxes and enforce disciplined state spending.

Hailing from Paint Creek, a small farming community in West Texas, he is the first Texas A&M graduate to occupy the governor's mansion. He was a junior and senior yell leader for the A&M Corps of Cadets before spending four years in the United States Air Force where he flew C-130 Tactical Airlift Aircraft in the United States, Europe and the Middle East.

Governor Perry oversees and appoints members to the Texas Military Preparedness Commission, a commission that provides financial assistance to defense communities to fund projects to enhance the military value of local military facilities.

Please join me in welcoming a true American patriot, a great Texan, the Honorable Governor Rick Perry. (Applause)

GREETINGS – THE HONORABLE RICK PERRY

GOVERNOR PERRY: Glen, thank you. You are looking good this morning. Isn't that what they say when we get to be our age, you are looking good? I want to say thank you for being here, Glen. Thank you to all of you for elevating this guy to the slot that he is going to be having. His years of service to the veterans' community has prepared him quite well for the role.

I want to give you-all a little advice with that piece of knowledge and to hold on to your hats. You have got a Texan taking over. Glen may not have been born in Texas, but he told me he got there just as soon as he could. We are sure proud to claim him.

From time to time, as I have been traveling around, I will hear somebody say that you can always tell a Texas. You just can't tell them very much. But Glen is not one of those kind. He is a fellow who has spent his entire adult life listening to his fellow veterans and to organizations. He has been moving mountains to help veterans across this country.

He not only helped to create the Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations, he served for 15 years as its chairman and helped grow that organization over 600,000 strong. He has done great work for the Texas veterans, and I will assure you he will do the same for the veterans all across this country. Glen, go get them. We are for you and proud of you. (Applause)

I am deeply honored to be here with you today. This is an important day for me. It is an important day for me to stand with so many defenders of liberty who have kept America free. Like you, I have kept an eye on that storm that came in on the southern tip of Florida.

People are asking me, "Are you going over there and speak to the VFW?" I said, "Absolutely." I said, "That is just a little old storm. That doesn't mean anything. We will get through that. We will penetrate that one easy."

That kind of reminds me of some of the flying I did when I was an Aircraft Commander and flew the C-130s in the '70s. A little old storm like that wouldn't slow them down. I told my friends with hurricanes you fly into them and they penetrate into them. This will not slow down the Governor of Texas to get over and talk to the VFW.

I am very proud to be here today. I am proud to stand before you not

only as a veteran, but as a son of a World War II B-17 tail gunner who flew 35 missions in Nazi-held Germany in 1944. A lot of you come from that generation or were part of that generation. Probably like my dad, you didn't talk a lot about your service but made it real clear about the importance of serving your country to your children, to those around you, to those you had influence over.

I still remember the pride in my dad's eye when I told him I was joining the Air Force. I remember it was more than a little Texas pride when he handed me a small book with a little advice in it as I left for pilot training. It said, "If the situation ever presents itself, give them hell." I was proud to follow in his footsteps, proud to serve America for those four and a half years in the United States Air Force.

What my dad taught me was that every generation, every generation has to face the enemies of freedom. Since this country was founded, every generation has risen to that occasion. Young Americans in the dawn of their lives bound by a sacred duty and motivated by uncommon courage have answered freedom's call, shed blood for freedom's cause.

For more than 200 years Americans have been freedom's greatest friend, democracy's greatest guardian, and that status has been maintained by the brave men and women of all our armed forces simply saluted as they stepped off and headed towards the sounds of the guns. We commemorate their sacrifices with holidays like Memorial Day, Veterans Day, the anniversary of D-Day, because great deeds need to be honored, to be remembered.

But our responsibility goes far beyond celebration and remembrance. We must make sure that every veteran returns from the field of battle to live a life of dignity with access to health care, benefits that were promised when they made their own promise to defend our nation.

They need to be able to come home, have the ability to earn a living, to support their families, and in Texas we are taking a few steps in supporting our troops and the veterans they have become. First, we are preparing to launch what is called the Texas Veterans Leadership Program.

It is based after the Reagan administration's successful Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program. In this program trained veterans will work to help their comrades adjust to civilian life. That civilian life with training, job search assistance, programs, encouraging Texas businesses to hire them.

We do this out of a sense of duty to our defenders. But I will admit to you I got a little bit more selfish motive in it. Absolutely, I want to help those veterans, but the State of Texas already is a hot bed of economic development. We have got a favorable tax structure. We have got sensible laws, we have got a strong work force.

While the rest of the country may be going through a little bit of a turndown economically, it is not happening in Texas. We are still growing by about a thousand people a day that move to Texas. We have got near today a six-percent increase in our sales tax revenues. Texas is the number one exporting state in the nation. We have more Fortune 500 countries that call Texas home than any other state.

The reason I share that with you is not just to brag – well, maybe a little bit – but you need to understand that we need that skilled workforce in the State of Texas to take up those jobs that are being created and developed there. I want veterans to move to Texas. I want them to come to Texas to understand, number one, we are proud of you. We are proud of what you have done for our country. We want to say thank you in a powerful way.

One of those ways is obviously to recognize you service is to be there for you on the days that we salute our veterans and memorialize the events that you-all have been a part of. But another powerful way is we create an economy there that you can come and find a good job where you can raise your family in an appropriate way.

In just five short months, our legislature is going to come into Austin, Texas, and we are going to start our biannual legislative session. You heard that right. We only let the legislature come into town every every other year. We only let them stay for 140 days. Washington could use a little bit of that.

Anyway, when that legislature comes in, one of the top priorities that we are going to ask them to deal with is to create a program to authorize in-state tuition to all veterans who are eligible for the G.I. Bill. That means you may not be from Texas, but if you are eligible for that G.I. Bill and you want to go to school in one of the great Texas universities, you will pay in-state tuition. That is another way to say thank you for your service, thank you for defending our freedoms.

Under this plan, veterans who otherwise would be considered out of state, they can save up to $8,100 a year if they take 30 semester hours at a Texas public university. The bottom line is that these young men and women have risked their lives for our country. They have risked their lives for our freedom.

They leave their families behind; they sacrifice the comforts of home so we can sleep and know that we can live in peace. I think the least that we can do is when they return they ought to be able to afford an education in the great state of Texas. The fact that every generation of America is called upon to defend freedom, that is a testimony to the strength of our nation.

The fact that their services require is testimony to the simple truth that live in a fallen world. No matter how nice they play at the negotiating table, or state dinners, how nice they appear to correspond with each other, there is always going to be power-hungry regimes that will kill and destroy without hesitation to achieve their ends.

For that reason we must select national leaders who have stared that evil in the face and understands the stakes, the motivation and the agenda that are played in the international community. The outburst of violence of terror in Georgia last week gives us an opportunity to get just a little preview of how our presidential candidates will handle such a situation if elected.

I will just say that I will sleep a lot easier knowing that the guy at the top has a record of distinguished military service, extensive involvement in foreign affairs and a fragmentism born of direct contact with enemy. (Applause)

In closing, I want to express to you both praise and gratitude for the 23-plus million people that call Texas home. We are free because you were brave. In the hour of danger that was your hour of courage. As you pass the torch of freedom to future generations, we stand with you. We stand with you to affirm that your heroic deeds will never be forgotten. Your service to America will always be remembered.

God bless you and God's speed. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Governor. Take some of the rain back. We need it in Austin.

America's determined effort to conquer the mystery and wonder of space has spawned a new age of technology and science. And like countless generations of explorers who came before, exploration of space has captivated and sparked the imagination of mankind, including Idaho teacher Barbara Radding-Morgan.

Chosen as a back-up candidate for the NASA Teacher in Space Program in 1985, Ms. Morgan trained with Christa McAuliffe and the Challenger crew. After the Challenger broke apart during launch and its crew of seven perished, NASA named her the Teacher in Space Designee.

Ms. Morgan was selected as a full-fledged member of the Astronaut Corps in 1998. Following two years of training and evaluation at Johnson Space Center in Houston, she was assigned technical duties in the Astronaut Office Space Station Operations Branch. She then worked in Mission Control as Prime Communicator with on-orbit crews.

In 2007, more than 20 years after receiving her Teacher in Space Designee, her dream of exploring space came true, and she was assigned a mission on the Endeavour, NASA's twenty-second space station flight.

The mission included three educational events featuring teacher-turned-astronaut Morgan. On several occasions, Morgan and other astronauts answered questions from children from the Discovery Center in Boise, the Challenger Center for Space Science Education in Alexandria, Virgina, and in Saskatchewan, Canada. She has taught in Idaho and Ecuador, and said that exploring the world, and what is above it, comes naturally to her as a teacher.

She graduated with distinction in 1973 with a B.A. in Human Biology, then obtained her teaching credentials from the College of Notre Dame in Belmont, California.

Some of the many awards and honors she has received include: Phi Beta Kappa, NASA Headquarters Special Service Award, NASA Public Service Group Achievement Award, Idaho Fellowship Award, University of Idaho President's Medallion Award, Challenger Center for Space Science Education Challenger Seven Award, Women in Aerospace Education Award, National PTA Honorary Lifetime Member, and USA Today's Citizen of the Year.

Here to receive the VFW 2008 Aviation and Space Award is Barbara Radding-Morgan. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Aviation and Space Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Barbara Radding-Morgan.

"In sincere appreciation and recognition of her unwavering perseverance in becoming the first teacher to fulfill the NASA's Space Program's quest to send an educator into space. As a crew member of the Space Shuttle Endeavour, she contributed greatly to the historic success of the mission.

"Her scientific research aboard the Endeavour has laid the groundwork to the advancement of horticulture for future generations, and her ultimate achievement as a supreme educator of our youth and stellar fulfillment of their quest to learn all about our space exploration, has earned her the utmost appreciation 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 20th day of August, 2008. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

Signed by George Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause) This also comes with a $5,000 honorarium.

RESPONSE – BARBARA RADDING-MORGAN

MS. BARBARA RADDING-MORGAN: Thank you, VFW. Thank you so much for this tremendous honor. I would like to accept it on behalf of my crew-mates and also on behalf of all of our great teachers across the country, past and present, who help us become who we are and do what we do. I did what any good teacher would do, learned.

I especially want to tell you this is an absolutely incredible honor, and by incredible, I mean unbelievable, because it comes from you, and you are my heroes. I mean that from the bottom of my heart. That is why I can't believe that I am able to be here today to receive this honor from you. It really, really means everything to me.

The reason that we live in a great country and do all the great things we get to do, which includes providing public education for everyone and be able to do other incredible things like space exploration, is all because of you, your courage, your sacrifice and your selfless service to your country. Thank you so much. (Applause)

I want to thank you for your generosity, too. I want to tell you I am delighted to be able to pass along with award to the McCall-Donnelly Education and to Boise State University. That money is going to be used for the middle school "Adopt a Veteran Program." This has been going on for 20 years.

It was started by one of our school teachers where the sixth graders in the school adopt a veteran and they are pen pals from the Veterans Home in Boise 100 miles away, all year long. While they are doing their pen pal writing, they are learning a tremendous amount about history, about service, about giving and public commitment.

At the end of the year, when it gets close to Memorial Day, these kids get a field trip to go down to Boise where they get to meet in person their veterans they have been writing to all year long. It is a tremendous program. They also share with the veterans the songs, the dances, some poetry they have written, things about the era where the veterans grew up in.

That is how they learn their history that comes to life for them. It is a real cheerful moment to watch the veterans and the children enjoying the program together, for Boise State University to be able to help veterans further their own education and help with veterans' causes at the university. So, thank you so very much.

I would like to thank you, too, with a short little story, if you don't mind, from our Endeavour mission to the International Space Station.

This particular story happened a little bit towards the end of the mission. We are always working so hard and for so long hours that we very rarely get a chance to look out the window. So, one of my favorite things to do was to be able to close the window cover at night and see what is happening out the window for just a few more minutes and check out the sights below.

One night we were on the dark side of earth and I was looking at the many, many stars I could see, but many of them were also blocked by our solar rays from the International Space Station. They were in shadow since

we were on the dark side of the earth. I was just enjoying the view and thinking about all of it, and then off in a distance I saw a thin blue arc, a beautiful blue.

That arc began to grow and become layer after layer of blue, of so many different blues. There were at least 20 to 30 different blues. I don't think we even have a vocabulary to describe each of those colors. That is what sunrise is like when you are inside on the International Space Station.

As the sun was rising and the blues were higher and higher, all of a sudden that light started reflecting off the solar rays, and they grew more brilliant and brilliant in color, much like the filament in your toaster that grows and grows and gets brighter. It turned to a gold against the very blackness of space.

While I was enjoying that, soon the sun got higher and then the sky became bright blue, and the ocean below us became this incredibly bright blue. I was looking down over the ocean enjoying all of it, and we were truly sailing above the ocean. Those solar rays looked like sails. They were so smooth and quiet, because it was our night time. Everybody was asleep by this point.

You could hear the humming of the motors and the fans and everything on board. We were smooth, as smooth as sailing over the ocean and seemed like a natural thing to continue. I was looking down at the ocean below that looked rough and thinking about the earlier explorers and how challenging it was for them.

Just about that moment, when I was thinking about all of this, I looked back up and right above that horizon where I had seen all of these layers of blue earlier, now hung the crescent moon. It seemed like so easy to yank on the tiller and take a right turn and go straight for the moon. It is very challenging. It is a natural thing for humans to be doing, and we are able to do that because of you and your service to our country.

When my colleagues and friends learned that I was going to get to come to meet you this week, they all said the same thing immediately. They said, "Please tell them I am proud of them." From all of us, we are so proud of you. (Applause)

I am sorry to take more time but I have a presentation for you. This is a montage of photographs from our space flight, and the United States Flag which flew along with our crew patch above the Space Shuttle Endeavour. That is the flag, and this says "Service to Our Nation Makes Everything Possible."

Thank you with enormous gratitude, deep appreciation from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the crew of Endeavour. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF PAST COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades, at this time it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you comrades that have served this organization at the highest level as the Commander-in-Chief and continue to serve today as the Past Commanders-in-Chief. As I call the names, please rise.

1958-'59, John W. Mahan, Post 1116, Montana.

1986-'87, Norman G. Staab, Post 6240, Kansas.

1989-'90, Walter G. Hogan, Post 6498, Wisconsin.

1991-'92, Robert E. Wallace, Post 1851, New Jersey.

1992-'93, John M. Carney, Post 4643, Florida.
1993-'94, George R. Cramer, Post 3873, Illinois.
1994-'95, Allen "Gunner" Kent, Post 9972, Arizona.
1995-'96, Paul A. Spera, Post 144, Massachusetts.
1996-'97, James E. Nier, Post 8919, Texas.
1997-'98, John E. Moon, Post 2873, Ohio.
2000-2001, John F. Gwizdak, Post 5080, Georgia.
2001-2002, James N. Goldsmith, Post 4139, Michigan.
2004-2005, John Furgess, Post 1970, Tennessee.
2006-2007, Gary Kurpius, Post 9365, Alaska.

Comrades, let's give all these dedicated comrades an outstanding round of applause. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BOB FOSTER, VFW POST 2285, NEW YORK, CANINES FOR COMBAT VETERANS PROGRAM

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: In 2004, while serving in the Special Forces in Afghanistan, Sergeant Roland Parquette's vehicle exploded leaving Parquette with severe injuries to his legs.

Now a double amputee, Parquette's quality of life would have been seriously jeopardized had it not been for Rainbow, the first service dog in the country to be placed with a disabled veteran from the Iraq-Afghanistan Wars.

As the first graduate of a new program called Canines for Combat Veterans, Rainbow is trained to act as a "walking cane" for Roland, providing balance and stability. He is one of the first dogs in the country trained to work with someone who uses both a wheelchair and prosthetics to get around, and in the evening, when Roland removes his prosthetics, Rainbow goes into service dog mode picking up dropped articles, retrieving articles off high counters and turning on and off light switches.

The Canines for Combat Veterans Program is sponsored by NEADS, the New England Assistance Dog Services, a small non-profit organization that has been training service dogs for the disabled since 1976.

The dogs are trained to help people who use both a wheelchair and prosthetics to get around and serve as walker/balance dogs when the veterans are ambulatory and walking with their prosthetics.

This "new medicine", as veterans call it, helps the disabled veteran lead a more independent life and enjoy more social interaction.

Here to talk about this new program giving new life to our nation's disabled veterans is Comrade Bob Foster, Commander of VFW Post 2285 in Elmsford, New York, who has been leading fund-raising efforts for the Canines for Combat Veterans Program. (Applause)

REMARKS – COMRADE BOB FOSTER, VFW POST 2285 – New York

COMRADE BOB FOSTER: Good morning. I hate as my first thing to correct the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. I am the second veteran. I never had the privilege of meeting Roland, but last year, as kind of an accident, I was at the Fall Conference in New York State VFW, and I happened to be in the back.

I was listening to a young man describe an argument he had with a 122-millimeter Soviet rocket. He lost that argument. He also lost his leg and he

ended up spending a year in the hospitals, 34 operations, a coma. He had to learn how to walk, learn how to talk.

But Raymond inspired me, and Frank Morgan, my Adjutant said we needed to get involved with this program. Raymond was attached with the 126th Battery in Iraq, 10 Special Forces Group. After that battle that he had with that rocket, he lost more than his leg. He lost the will. It took a while to get that back.

A lot of time and a lot of effort was put in at Walter Reed by the doctors and the medics, and they gave him back his physical life, but there was a lot missing. What it gave him was what was missing, was NEADS. NEADS gave him his service dog and his newest best friend, Dates.

With that, it is my great, great pleasure to introduce Sergeant Raymond Hubbard.

COMRADE RAYMOND HUBBARD: Good morning. Let's get this party started. Dates, what are you doing? Sit. Do you love me? Good partner. I am just a voice for Dates. She is the star. There is no way that I could express what this dog means to me.

I grew up with Black Labs. My first Black Lab I had was two years old and my brother bought it for me for Christmas. I saw that dog and I said, "That is my Bro." I named that dog "Bro" as a buddy and brother. Bro died when he was 13 years old, and in between that time I also had Clunker.

He did not leave a postman or a Federal Express man, or UPS man without at least one bite on his arm or hand. Clunker died when I was 22. There was a time in my life when I didn't have a dog. There was an emptiness there in my life. Once I found out about NEADS and the Canines for Combat Veterans, that emptiness was filled, and it was filled in so many more ways than it was when I had a dog just as a pet.

I would like to tell you about that. We will wait for you to lie down. Let's see how this is going to work. I didn't have time to write this out longhand or print it out, so I just brought the laptop with me. Bear with me for a moment. How is everybody doing? Good.

You know, when I was told about the National Conference it was probably when I was in the Eastern States Conference in Portland, Maine, at the beginning of this year. I said, "Yes, it sounds like a good time." I took my boys with me to the Eastern States Conference and they had a blast.

They met Bob and Frank, Bob Foster and Frank Morganthaller, and they took them for their first Maine lobster. They both ordered two. They are 11 and 12 and they both finished two lobsters. It took quite a while for me to get the courage and strength up to speak in front of a large crowd again.

When I was growing up, I was in forensics, drama, and a number of things that allowed me to be on stage. A lot of teachers that I worked with said that I had great potential. I embarrassed myself and humiliated myself by allowing that potenial to go unused for over 15 years.

Now that I am up here, I am right where I belong. They did tell me I was limited from 10 to 20 minutes. So, bear with me. They knew I was going to have the issues. You guys know that I have a three-legged race team that is in the record books? We have four members. One is a double amputee that we strap on our back. He wanted to be part of the team.

My nephew decided to join the National Guard after I got blown up in Iraq on July 4, 2006. He traveled down to D.C. and asked me, "Uncle Ray, do you still think I should enlist?" I told him, "Michael, if you are going in there for vengeance, I never want you to sign up. If you are going in there

for yourself, I am behind you all the way." My nephew is now my brother in arms with the Milwaukee National Guard Unit and is scheduled for a January 1 deployment.

We talk all the time now. Like I said, he is more my brother than my nephew. He told me that he is at A.T. right now. He said, "Ray, why don't you give up this public speaking, and there are these motivational seminars that you have given, and just go to work at it because that is what you are born to do."

This is not working out. I am shooting from the hip right now. The computer is still trying to find it. Let's go with this one.

Let me start over by saying thank you, thank you most to the people that have been there from day one, my beautiful wife. Please stand up. She is a teacher at a high school, a math teacher, and here she comes. Also, my sons, Riley and Grady. Please stand up, boys. (Applause)

Grady is ten years old. When they first heard I got injured in Iraq, they were in school, and their next grade report came out with both of them with straight A's. "Get better, dad. Don't worry about us. Get home."

I would like to thank the NEADS organization, Sheila O'Brien. Please stand up. She is the Executive Director of NEADS. Also her assistant, Doreen, who is not with us today because they are diligently working on our next fund-raiser, our next trip and our next graduation that has not one but two Canines for Combat partnerships graduating.

The last thing I have for this moment is my fellow comrades, Bob Foster and Frank Morganthaller. They heard me speak. Please stand, Frank. These young men, like I said, by chance heard me speak in October, '07, at the Albany VFW State Conference for New York. That is it. Thank you.

Comrade Commander, Distinguished Guests, let me start off with a tiny display. I am sure you have all seen these when you put in a DVD for the first time. I really don't want to get anyone in trouble today, and if I put my foot in my mouth, it is all right to do it when you have only one, so I will try my best.

I would like to thank all of you that made this possible. I know that you are all here and present to listen to me talk about Canines for Combat Veterans Program. There are a few things I would like to get off my chest. It is not every day that a kid from Wisconsin gets to warm up an audience for the President of the United States. I am going to take it and use it for all it's worth.

As you look around this beautiful, very large convention center, you will notice that my age group is sparsely represented. I am a 29-year-old disabled veteran of our country's most recent conflicts. How many of my age group were here this week? How many even younger vets were here to express their opinions and reap the benefits of this wonderful organization?

This issue should be priority one of the VFW and the VFW Auxiliary mandates. I am not saying that my conversation with all of you has not been cherished, but I would like to speak to somebody that can figure my Ipod out and my video on U-tube. Even though my father, a Vietnam veteran, and my grandfather, both World War II veterans have long been removed from this earthly plain, this last week has brought me closer to them than I have ever been before.

As some of you may know, Mickey Rooney was presented an award for his faithful service during World War II. My grandfather worked in the Postal Service in the Pacific, during that same time frame. I was too young and na-

ïve and ignorant to listen to my grandfather's stories about the war.

They were relatively boring compared to the stories on the front lines. I have heard from my grandmother on more than one occasion that grandpa was able to pad his monthly salary with the money that Mr. Rooney paid him to cover his star chest. I don't know about that one, but I am sure grandpa is smiling down and looking on to Mickey's face.

The VFW, American Legion, the DAV have welcomed me and my brothers to fighting the war on terrorism with bright shiny smiles. They have felt by us knowing our elders system cannot be measured. Then I sit and listen to my elders and they say that open arms and smiles were not all the norm for those soldiers that returned home from Vietnam.

Our country has gone through some calamities in the 232 years, but not a single one of us should ever again be ashamed about our service to our country. You will always be my brother. Am I doing all right? (Applause)

Today's support of our troops' mentality seems a little disconnected to me. The disconnect I speak of is I support the troops, but I don't support the cause. People of the population has taught on the war on terrorism abroad, and we are sent over three, four or even five times on year-long or 18-month tours. That is not doing us justice.

It felt like amputation of civic responsibility. Now, I as a human being living with amputation of a limb, but we as a country cannot live with amputation of our civic duties, this amputation of our head, amputation of our heart and soul.

After Pearl Harbor was grotesquely-invaded by the Japanese, our heartfelt country felt a call to arms. Our women went to work in the factories and on the front while the men went to fight on the front lines. What will it take for this generation, my generation, to yield to that same call?

We have over 3,000 people that died on 9/11. This was such a catastrophic event for our country. It should not have been anything else done for today's youth to call to arms the Greatest Generation. What will it take for us to put out our differences and unite a nationwide front? That is me on my soapbox.

Now, I would like to talk about NEADS. As Bob said before, on July 4, 2006, I was hit by a rocket tank out of Baghdad while on guard duty, and as a result this explosion took my left leg below the knee, crushed my right elbow, tore through my left shoulder, almost amputated, ripped open my abdomen, numerous tissue wounds on my left leg, and 90 percent of my calf on my right leg was gone, and severed my carotid artery causing a stroke.

I have been through months of rehabilitation to relearn the simple tasks that others take for granted, swallowing, standing, turning off lights, and simply balancing. I am fortunate to be a survivor and I am fortunate to be here to talk to you about my survival.

Early in my recovery at Walter Reed, I learned of a program called Canines for Combat Veterans. I picked up the phone, dialed the number, and after a 45-minute interview I had my dog. That empty feeling I had after Clunker died, when I was 22, was finally going to be filled once I met Dates.

I was not able to open a refrigerator door, to run and pick up the ringing telephone, or answer a doorbell, or even flipping on a light or picking up a bottle of medication. Yet these simple tasks are complicated for me. Dates, my assistant, helps me with those simple tasks and is an emphatic champion, one that understands my moods and needs.

She is so sensitive that on the rare occasion where my Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome renders its dirty head, she jumps in my lap and licks my face to get me out of the ugly trance. How many of you now need that assistance? Dates is always a diva. She has her own little quirks that are all Dates'.

She will not put her head out the window while drving on the road, even though in the car with me four or five hours out of the day. She doesn't like her hair getting ruffled. She won't let anyone groom her hair except her personal groomer. She gets excited on the way to the groomer, but she knows she is going to smell pretty and look bouffant-like.

Dates was sent for eye-seeing training. She has a temperament. She didn't want to leave. She wanted someone to be a companion with and follow orders. Dates graduated with 11 canine teams specific for disabilities of other's needs.

I am sharing my story with you to ask for your support in graduating hundreds more. I hope you will remember that not only the veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq, but everyone has related disabilities where a dog can be a companion and comfort.

This is one of the oldest assistance programs providing a variety of special dogs, dogs like Dates, hearing dogs for the deaf and hard of hearing, walking balance dogs, social dogs for children with autism. This is an exceptional organization and you can only help me in the hundreds more with your assistance of people like you and your generous contributions.

It is through your generosity that he is able to provide service dogs. When I was placed with Dates, room, board and my training with Dates was at no cost whatever to me or my family. What a neat setup. (Applause) All I had to do was show up.

The Blue Star Mothers, who will all be in my heart, the Blue Star Mothers from Massachusetts, I thank you. They came over and fed me every night. As they always do, when we spoke of the Patriots football, for two weeks in January, '07, I was the adopted citizen of Westborough, Massachusetts. From now on I will always keep Massachusetts close to my heart. (Applause)

I was living in luxury on the campus. There are approximately five homes on ten acres for dogs and a full-service kennel with veterans on staff. The training consisted of two days of Dates learning who was going to be her primary care giver.

By the third day, while playing before bedtime, we looked into each other's eyes and fell in love. That is why I knew this was my dog. When I brought her home, she was welcomed by my wife and two sons and our black cat. The cat now barks.

When my wife comes home every day, that is Dates' favorite time of the day. My wife gives her her favorite toy. My boys can wrestle with her and if they have treats in their pockets she will jump in them and try to get the treats out of their pocket.

In a moment's notice, she can be right there, and I fall down and I need to get up on my knee, she knows when a call is called for, and when it is time for play. I take her to the nursing homes and hospitals, and each time I do I make sure that I stop at everyone's room to make sure they say hi to Dates.

If you would like to know more about these programs, flip to neads.org and combatvets. If you would like to know more about my story, visit utube. comeforward/hubdizzle. It was coined by me by my Platoon Sergeant while in Iraq. There are petitions going around this convention as we speak, and I hope these petitions will reach the 50 states of our country and make sure

that the VA hears our voice.

I thank you-all for the time and your attention this fine morning. My family would like to thank you for the outstanding week and the hospitality you have shown us. I don't want to leave, this is fun. Please remember yesterday was the past, tomorrow is the future, and today is a gift. That is why it is called the present. God bless you-all and God bless America. Thank you for your time. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF AWARD FROM THE VFW POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: We will now have a presentation to Commander-in-Chief Lisicki from the Chairman of the Political Action Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera of Massachusetts, and the Director of the PAC Committee, Sal Capirchio.

COMRADE SAL CAPIRCHIO: First of all, I would like to thank all the comrades out in the audience and our membership for the support they have given the PAC for the last six years. During that time we have come a long way and we have achieved a lot.

Without further ado, I would like to introduce Past Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera, Chairman of the PAC.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief and Comrades: Let me begin by thanking you, Commander-in-Chief, for myself and all the members of the Political Action Committee for your appointments and for your support of our Committee.

Let me say a special thanks to all of those members of the Committee who may be in the room right now for all the hard work that they have done to help us perform our chores. I want to say a special thank you to an individual who is leaving the PAC Committee this year.

For the last six years, he has been a volunteer operating as the Director of the Political Action Committee, volunteering his time and efforts. He has done one heck of a job, and I want to say a special thanks to Sal Capirchio.

In the October issue of our magazine, you will see the list of names of Congressmen and Senators who we suggest that you support. We are recommending an endorsement of them.

Our PAC Committee met the other day and ratified those endorsements. We ask you to look at them carefully. If you agree with our choices, we ask you to do more than just go up and vote for them. We ask you to get involved in the political process, go up and work for the candidates of your choice. Whether or not they are on that list, work for those candidates that you think are going to be the best for America, the Congressmen and Senators that will take care of America's veterans in the future.

At this time I would like to very proudly, along with Sal Capirchio, on behalf of the Political Action Committee, present the Golden Eagle Award.

"VFW PAC honors George J. Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars, for all your support and all your hard work on behalf of America's veterans." Thank you very much, Chief. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Past Commander-in-Chief Paul, thank you very much for being in charge of this great Committee this year. And to Sal Capirchio, thank you for the six great years of leadership you have given to our organization on a volunteer basis. You have done a wonderful job.

Sal, good luck to you. Thank you for all that you have done for us. Give Sal a hand. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF LEGION OF HONOR BRONZE MEDAL TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Presentation of Legion of Honor Bronze Medal to Commander-in-Chief Lisicki. At this time, we will have a presentation by Past National Chaplain Ted Bowers to Commander-in-Chief Lisicki.

COMRADE TED BOWERS: On January 23, 1943, the USS Dorchester pressed into military service left New York bound for Greenland with 902 servicemen, merchant seaman and civilian workers. By a German U-boat 150 miles from the destination. On February 3rd, at 12:55 a.m., the Dorchester took a fatal torpedo hit.

Panic set in and it killed scores of men and many were seriously wounded. From the pandemonium, four Army Chaplains quickly and quietly spread out among the soldiers seeking to calm the frightened, attend the wounded, and offering prayer for the dying and encouragement to those who would live.

By this time, most men were topside and the Chaplains opened the storage locker and began distributing life jackets. When there were no more life jackets, the four chaplains, Lt. George Fox, a Methodist, Lt. Clark Poling, Reformed, Lt. John P. Washington, a Roman Catholic, and Alexander Goode, Jewish, removed their own life jackets and gave them to the next in line.

As the ship went down, survivors could see the four chaplains arms linked together and braced against the slanting deck to be heard offering prayers. Six hundred seventy-two died, leaving 230 survivors.

Today, the Chapel of Four Chaplains preserves their memory of these brave men which carries the message of cooperation and selfless service to every part of the country, to recognize and encourage volunteerism, brotherhood and sacrifice among Americans of every age and station of life.

The Chapel of Four Chaplains established the Bronze Medallion as an award given by the chapel in recognition of selfless service on the part of any individual who contributes to the good of others at the national and world level, and to a spirit of inter-faith.

I am pleased to present this award to George Lisicki in recognition of his service to all people regardless of race. This award symbolizes for all Americans and for all time the unity of this nation, founded upon the fatherhood of God. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BRADLEY TROWBRIDGE – THE CELEBRATION VETERANS MEMORIAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The VFW's partnership with the Boy Scouts of America includes the sponsoring of more than 1,200 scouting units with 40,000 members across the nation.

Joining with us today is a dynamic member of the Boy Scouts, who is working toward achieving the rank of Eagle Scout and is doing it in a way that will help the nearby community of Celebration, Florida, memorialize and honor veterans.

I know you will be inspired when our next guest speaks to us about his project that will receive the proceeds raised by the silent auction held during

this convention.

Please give a warm VFW welcome to Bradley Trowbridge. (Applause)

RESPONSE – BRADLEY TROWBRIDGE

MR. TROWBRIDGE: Thank you for that introduction there. Wow! So, if I were telling you I wasn't nervous right now, I would be a liar. So I would just like to introduce myself. My name is Bradley Trowbridge. I am a Life Scout and a Rising Eagle of Troop 125 from Celebration, Florida. I have lived in the town of Celebration for eight years.

I would also like to thank you for this wonderful opportunity to talk to you about my Eagle Scout project. First, I would like to start off with a little history about my Eagle's project. The project started in 2006 when my friend decided for his Eagle Scout project he would honor all of the great men and women who have manned our country to have the freedoms and privileges that we have today.

Simon was 14 years old when he started this project. Simon wanted to honor the sacrifices of veterans who fought in the past to keep our country free. In the duration of Simon running the project, he raised $12,500. But in 2007, he moved away to Mississippi, and in a couple of weeks he was diagnosed with leukemia.

Soon after he left, I remember getting a call from my Scout Master telling me that Simon was looking for someone to finish the project. He asked me if I would be willing to take over the task. Now, without hesitation, I took over the responsibility, not only to honor the veterans but also to fulfill the wishes of my terminally-ill friend. (Applause)

The project came to me when Simon personally visited my house and presented all of his progress and rolls. At that time he had received his first chemotherapy. He looked completely different than what he had. He was completely bloated and he looked very pale, and he was pale.

I was daunted, overwhelmed and sad, and I could not refuse an honor bestowed upon me. He took a change for the worse, and he would not make it much longer. Day after day, I came home from school waiting on my couch for a phone call for further information.

On November 14, 2007, at 1:24 a.m., Simon Sharpe passed away. In addition, we are all proud to say that Simon did receive his Eagle Scout rank. My Scout Master and he spoke over the phone and there he exchanged his Eagle Scout vows that may be made at a podium.

Simon was on his death bed. He spoke his vows through the oxygen mask in the hospital. Unfortunately, those were some of his last words because he passed away that same night. He finally received his honor as some of his friends and I placed his ring on his casket at his funeral.

Since then, the design has changed dramatically and as more and more people became aware of what was involved in the project than estimated, it changed from $15,000 to over $70,000. With combined efforts and the outpouring support of Celebration, we have raised $40,000, as well as $30,000 to $40,000 donated in construction materials. (Applause)

After the architect finalized the plans for the Memorial, it was brought before the Celebration Residential Honors Association by me, similar to what Simon did previously after the design changed. Along with the veterans at Celebration Town Hall, Peter Sharpe is dead and the community of Celebration, we held a ground-breaking ceremony and had a wonderful turnout.

After several meeting with the contractors and the pulling of the permit, I am proud to say we expect to begin construction in September. Our goal is to finish the Veterans Memorial and to have a dedication ceremony on November 15, 2008.

In closing, I am here on behalf of all the veterans and Simon Sharpe, and thank you for your money and financial support. This project would not be possible without your generous contributions and efforts to help bring this project to the public eye.

However, fund-raising is far from being over. Our intention is to not only build a grand Memorial, but to maintain the Memorial to the highest standards in the esteem of our veterans. We are also looking for some help with the dedication ceremony.

We looked for several displays that will go above and beyond expectations of the town of Celebration. If you wish to make your donation or help out, you can talk to me or send it to the Veterans War Memorial Fund, in care of 930 Jasper, in Celebration, Florida 34747.

Thank you. We are honored by this opportunity and it means so much to me, for a 16-year-old of the tiny town of Celebration, before the President does his speech. The town of Celebration and myself thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: I want you to know that you will be receiving for your project $7,496 from the silent auction. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF KEN DUCTOR, WOUNDED WARRIOR REGIMENT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: During his 2006 planning guidance, the 34th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James T. Conway, highlighted his vision of taking care of wounded warriors and their families. In April, 2007, that vision was realized by the official establishment of the Wounded Warrior Regiment headquartered in Quantico, Virginia, and with Wounded Warrior Battalions on both the East and West Coasts. The Wounded Warrior Battalions is a unique organization spawned from a combination of the 2005 Marine for Life Ill/Injured Support Section and the 2004 Wounded Warrior Barracks located in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Breaking new ground every day, the WWR continues to challenge previously-established boundaries while firmly adhering to the commitment of taking care of our own.

Please welcome Mr. Ken Ductor, Veterans & Charitable Organization Coordinator for the Wounded Warrior Regiment. (Applause)

REMARKS – MR. KEN DUCTOR – WOUNDED WARRIOR REGIMENT

MR. DUCTOR: National Commander-in-Chief, Past National Commanders, President of the Auxiliary and Past Auxiliary Presidents, Members and Guests:

I am honored to be here today to speak to you about the United States Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment. I want to start off by saying to you we want to thank you for what you have done in the past for our wounded, ill and injured. I want to thank you in advance for what you are going to do in the future.

The goal of the regiment, the Wounded Warrior Regiment, will provide an assistance to the ill and wounded Marines, sailors attached to or in support of Marine units and their families throughout all phases of recovery,

included in the use of veterans services organizations whenever needed or necessary.

The strength of the Wounded Warrior Program and what we feel sets it apart from the other Wounded Warrior Programs is focused on the intangibles.

Success for the Marine Corps is not having the most resources, people with money. It is taking care of our Marines and sailors. That means caring and concerned leadership, focused on the wounded warrior and the family. We do not put them through a process. We develop a personal relationship based on the bond of being a Marine. Our program is set up with a global reach. We have patient advent teams at Landstuhl who meet our wounded service members when they arrive from Afghanistan and Iraq.

We are divided at the Mississippi River. Our Wounded Warrior Battalions east takes those units and organizations east of the Mississippi, and the Wounded Warrior Battalion at Camp Pendleton in California is responsible for the western portion. We also have reached out into the Pacific. We have teams on Okinawa, Guam and Hawaii.

Wounded Warrior Regiment services the total force. I am talking about active duty personnel, reserve personnel, retired personnel, and former Marines, because once you are a Marine, you are always a Marine whether you served for 20 years or more. Those in the audience know what I am talking about. That bond of camaraderie is very, very strong.

We have a Wounded Warrior Operations Center and directed by the Commandant. It is just up the road from Quantico, Virginia, but it is part of our team. They are open 24/7. We have been directed to contact every single wounded and ill and injured Marine every 30 days.

We are trying to make sure that none of these Marines fall through the cracks as happened when I came back from Vietnam. Some of you know what we are talking about. Our patient advocacy teams are assigned to all the Navy Hospitals, including Walter Reed, Brooke Army Medical Center in Fort Sam Houston.

Those patient teams are there to help not only the Marine who is assigned there and who is being treated, but to take care of those families. We also have recovery territory coordinators. They are active Marines that are spread out around the country to handle difficult cases and go to the locations where Marines and their families need assistance.

We also have hometown links, 125 of those. They are Reserve Marines, individual ready Reserves who serve one week in the month and two weeks in the summer, but they break up their time to go and support Marines out in the field. I am talking about home visits, setting up job fairs, whatever they can do to assist our Marines.

We also have a tagger team program that goes out and visits all the polytrauma centers and provides assistance and evaluations. The Navy/Marine Corps Relief Program has Navy/Marine Relief Corps Combat Casualty Assistant Nurses. These are RNs, and those RNs are not there to take care of wounded Marines, they are there to take care of wounded families.

They go to every single location where we have a problem, a family is having difficulty, those Marine nurses will go into the home and work with them. Our families receive invitational travel orders. Many have asked me what happens when a family needs to go to a place? The Marine Corps pays for that.

When they go to Landstuhl, they need to stay in Landstuhl, or whether

they return to Walter Reed or Bethesda, or Brooke Army Medical Center, those families receive travel orders just like those of you who have served in the military and went on travel, they get per diem and lodging.

We have taxi members who provide them transportation. They are picked up at the airport, and they are assisted in every phase possible. I visit Bethesda and Walter Reed on a weekly basis, and I provide briefings to Marines and their families. One of the rationale is to do one simple thing. We want to get some of the families thinking about something else besides the wounded.

Let me tell you one problem we have, though, and some of you can relate to this if you have been at Bethesda or Walter Reed. Our young men and women who are wounded in all services are treated like rock stars. We get Miss America, we get Schwarzenager from Californa, we get the President.

We get Senators, we get Congressmen, the Worldwide Wrestling Federation. We have a number of people that show up. They go in the wards and they meet with these wounded, ill and injured Marines.

One of the problems occurs, though, when they go home, because they are looking around to see where is the President, where is that State Senator. That is one of the real difficulties that we face, because there is a high and low of being wounded, and that is one of the lows, when they run home and there is no one there to greet them.

I do not mean a welcome home celebration, I mean a continuum of greeting and participation and counseling and mentoring. That type of thing is very, very important. That is one of the reasons I am here.

I will tell you a personal story of an Agent Orange spina bifida child. My wife and I spent 25 years, 100 days a year in all of the major hospitals in this country. So, when I go up to Bethesda and I talk to families, I say I know what it is like to eat in a hospital, sleep in a hospital in an uncomfortable chair, and sit with your family member. That is a real degree of difficulty.

The other problem we have is obviously when members come back we have parents out there. Some of you may be parents of these wounded. It takes about two years if you have a severely-wounded child to recognize the fact that you may be a caregiver for the rest of your life. That is a high degree of difficulty.

What I want to do is to develop a VSO program. The VFW is going to lead the charge for us. What I want to do is to be able to develop a zip code, just like when you go home and you are looking for a dentist or a doctor, and you type in your zip code, you have five miles, ten miles, twenty-five miles, and you look for what?

The VSO organization can drive, transportation, mentoring, Auxiliary can go into the home and meet with the families and assist them in their time of need. That's the kind of assistance we are looking for. We are not asking for money for our wounded, ill and injured, we are asking for people-to-people contact, which is the most important thing.

I had the great experience to go to the D.C. Medical Center a while back and welcome home those veterans. While there, I had a young Marine come up to me. I had talked to him for three years on the telephone, but I had never personally met him.

He came up to me and he saw my nametag, and he wanted to thank me for the help and assistance I provided him. He was a severe TBI. He needed help getting to the airplane terminal, and he needed help getting to the proper gates so he could catch his flight.

I know your Veteran National Service Officers here get the same response when people come and thank them for their element of support when they are going through the MEP or working with the VA to get their ratings. That is a wonderful, wonderful feeling when somebody comes and thanks you, makes your whole day and makes your whole year.

The challenge for us is to link up Marines and families with local groups to support them. We know DoD resources are tapering off. Once they leave active duty and they return to their community, we need to get that re-integration process in the community in a very positive sense, a continuum of caring and concern.

The VFW could do that for us. We cannot be everywhere, but you are everywhere in this great country of ours. Call to duty, you are the eyes and ears. If you have a problem or a Marine has a problem, I have got just one phone number for you, and it is operated 24/7. It is our call center: 1-877-478-6299. Thank you for being there for us. You are needed more now than ever as partners.

I would also like to take a moment of silence and remember absent comrades. I thank you for your time. God bless the VFW and God bless America. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF CHECKS FOR OPERATION UPLINK

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Since its inception in 1996, Operation Uplink has provided nearly ten million free phone cards to active-duty service members and hospitalized veterans.

The importance of this overwhelmingly popular program cannot be underestimated because Operation Uplink phone cards are sometimes the only link a deployed service member or a hospitalized veteran has to friends and families.

Thanks to the generous support of our VFW Posts and Departments, as well as our Auxiliaries, Operation Uplink continues to play a vital role in enhancing the morale of our military.

Today, I am proud to recognize VFW Post 2350, Elko, Nevada, and the Department of Texas for their generous $10,000 donations to the Operation Uplink. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: For the Department of Nevada, we have Gasper Salaz, Post No. 2350, Elko, Nevada, Mike Musgrove, Past Commander, Gil Hernandez, Past Commander, and Joe Rigsby, Past Commander.

COMRADE MIKE MUSGROVE (Post 2350 – Nevada): Good morning. I am Mike Musgrove, Post 2350, Elko, Nevada, and with me are Gil Hernandez and Joe Rigsby. We are here to show support for our troops that was started some time ago. Two members of our Post were active in this and they took it one step further and had these shirts made up to distribute for a donation to raise funds for the National Military Services Program.

As a Red Shirt Friday movement now, in Elko, Nevada, Mike and Brandon had a trophy made up as a revolving trophy that goes to the business each month that has the largest percentage of employees wearing red shirts on Friday. Some of the largest corporations in the area have a Red Friday T-shirt as the uniform of the day, Friday of each week.

As a result of the hard work of these two young veterans, it is a pleasure to present a check for $10,000 to the National Military Services Program. We know it is needed to support the program and to support our troops and

our families. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: I want to say we don't accept non-negotiable instruments, but I do have the negotiable instrument.

As everyone knows, when there is money, there is the Quartermaster General who is here.

Now making a presentation for the Department of Texas is Jerry Murphree, Department Commander.

COMRADE JERRY D. MURPHREE (Department of Texas): Good morning. This morning I have two donations to the Military Assistance Program. The first check is for $1,067.45 from the Southern Conference Commanders that we put together this year. That is our first one. The second one is from the Department of Texas, the great Department of Texas, for $10,675. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Thank you, Southern Conference, and thank you, Department of Texas, for this most generous donation for such a great cause.

Now to announce the 2008 National Buddy Poppy Contest winners is Kevin Jones, Director of Administrative Operations.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS OF THE NATIONAL BUDDY POPPY CONTEST

COMRADE KEVIN JONES: Good morning. I first want to thank every single Post that submitted an entry this year. In my eyes, every single one was a winner. However, there were several in each category that were judged and have been awarded accordingly.

In Category 1, Public Promotion of Poppy Campaign, First Places goes to VFW Post 8739, Oregon, Illinois.

Second Place goes to VFW Post and its Ladies Auxiliary, No. 9460, Stratford, Connecticut.

Third Place goes to VFW Post 3150 from Arlington, Virginia.

Honorable Mention for Category No. 1 was VFW Post and its Ladies Auxiliary 3723, Owatonna, Minnesota.

First Place in Category 2, Memorial or Inspirational Displays goes to VFW Post and its Ladies Auxiliary 4759, Starks, Louisiana.

Second Place goes to VFW Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 569, Fulton, New York.

Third Place goes to VFW Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 5859, Joppatowne, Maryland.

Honorable Mention for Category 2 goes to VFW Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 887, Augusta, Maine.

Director's Award goes to Hudson Memorial Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 5791, Hudson, New Hampshire.

Category 3, Artistic or Decorative Use of Poppies, First Place goes to Arthur W. Jones Post No. 7564, West Fargo, North Dakota.

Second Place goes to Acworth-Kennesaw Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 5408, Acworth, Georgia.

Third Place goes to Marshall Schildmeyer Post No. 6095, Latonia, Kentucky.

Honorable Mention goes to Hamilton-Myers Post and Auxiliary No. 6070, Newville, Pennsylvania.

Category No. 4, Memorial or Inspirational Displays (Junior Girls Units/ Sons of the VFW):

First Place goes to Clarence Hoyt Junior Girls Unit No. 9217, Liberty, New York.

Second Place goes to Golden Junior Girls Unit No. 4171, Golden, Colorado.

Third Place goes to George A. Sutton Memorial Junior Girls Unit No. 1831, De Soto, Missouri.

Honorable Mention goes to Johnson Brown Post and Junior Girls Unit No. 1736, Alexandria, Louisiana.

This year's Director's Award goes to VFW Post and Ladies Auxiliary 5791, Hudson, New Hampshire. Thank you all very much. (Applause)

NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL HOME TRUSTEES

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: I will now read the nominations for the National Home Trustees.

The Fifth National Home District, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Latin America/Caribbean, John McDermott, VFW Post 9610, Florida, and Helen Free, Ladies Auxiliary to VFW Post 5408, Georgia.

The Eighth National Home District, Illinois and Indiana, David G. Havely, VFW Post 5864, Indiana.

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades, standing behind me are the elite, our VFW National Sergeants-at-Arms. I want to express my appreciation to a group of comrades we see annually at our National Convention and our Washington Conference. They are the first ones in the hall, and among the last to leave. They work long hours in order to ensure the success of our national meetings.

These comrades are strictly volunteers, so obviously this is mostly a labor of love for them. I am sure that everyone recognizes what an outstanding job they do for the VFW.

It is my privilege to introduce the National Sergeant-at-Arms from Post 2394, in Melrose, Massachusetts, Bryan P. O'Brien.

Bryan has been a member of the Sergeant-at-Arms for seven years. He is a Past All-State Post Commander, Past District Commander and Past County Council Commander. In 1982, Bryan was named the VFW National Young Veteran of the Year.

He has worked for the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority for 24 years and is presently a Senior Controller in Boston.

Keith McDonald has been a Sergeant for 15 years and is a member of Post 2275 in El Cajon, California. He is retired from the United States Navy after 23 and a half years as a Senior Chief Petty Officer. Keith is a Past All-American Post and District Commander.

Gary Barringer has been a Sergeant for 13 years. He is a Life Member of the VFW, Military Order of the Cootie, DAV, AmVets, and the National Guard Association. He is a member of the American Legion and the Vietnam Veterans of America. He retired from the North Carolina National Guard after 35 years of service.

He is a Past Department Commander of North Carolina, and currently the Quartermaster of Post 9134 in Rockwell, North Carolina. Gary is employed with ORCA, USA, as a truck maintenance mechanic and a part-time security enforcement officer.

Joe Schirmers has been a Sergeant for 47 years and is a member of Post 4847 in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. His volunteer work spans decades: Minnesota State Surgeon for 19 years, State Chaplain for ten years, Big Ten Sergeant-at-Arms for 49 years, and District 6 Officer-of-the-Day for 49 years.

He retired from Burlington Northern Railroad with 35 years of service. As a result of more than 48,000 hours of volunteer service at VA hospitals, he has received the VFW National Hospital Award, Volunteer of the Year Award and the Cootie Supreme Award.

Joy Ausman has been a Sergeant for 13 years and is a member of Post 10043 in Lewiston, Idaho, and an Auxiliary member to VFW Post 3979 in Cloquet, Minnesota. She is a Past Post and District Commander. She is employed as a health, safety and environmental manager for the North American operation of Syngenta, a global agri business.

Jim Galen has been a Sergeant for six years and is a member of Post 6802, Richmond, Michigan. He is a Past All-State Commander and Quartermaster. He retired after 30 years service from General Motors.

Lonnie Garza, our newest Sergeant, is a Life Member of Post 7110, New Braunfels, Texas. He earned All-American Post Commander honors in 2001, 2002 and 2003. For three consecutive years, he has also won the Sentry Award for recruiting new members. Lonnie retired from the Army in 1987 with 22 years of service.

Unfortunately, Ed Villiaume, National Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms, is unable to be with us due to illness. We all pray for his quick recovery and look forward to his return.

These are the comrades we so much depend on. Sometimes, we forget to express our gratitude, so at this time I want to publicly say "thank you" to each and every one of you. All of you do a great job for all of us.

I am proud of the professional way in which you always conduct yourselves, and I am honored to have the opportunity to serve with you. On behalf of all the entire organization, thank you for your service. I ask for a round of applause from the audience, please.

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

PRESENTATION OF "CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP" CITATION TO DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: For more than 40 years, the members of the Department of Arizona have worked together as a team to consecutively 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 has gone into reaching this momentous milestone.

Now, in recognition of those efforts, I would like to call on Betty Gripp, the Immediate Past Department Commander of Arizona, to accept this "Consecutive Years of Membership Growth" Citation.

Congratulations to the Department of Arizona.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Certificate of Commendation awarded to Department of Arizona.

"In recognition of the remarkable record of 41 consecutive years of continuous membership gain by a Department of Foreign Wars.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 20th day of August, 2008."

This has been signed by George J. Lisicki, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

PAST STATE COMMANDER BETTY GRIPP: Thank you. I stand here humbly and very proud of Arizona. Arizona, it is all for you. If it wouldn't have been for Arizona, and I include the Ladies Auxiliary, they did campaigning for us. Thank you very much, and God bless you all.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades, at this time we are going to take about a ten-minute break waiting for the President of the United States.

…Recess. …

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: For almost eight years, our next guest has granted us unprecedented access to his administration. Though we may not always agree on the issues, he and his staff have always listened to our concerns and suggestions, and for that, we are very grateful.

One issue we definitely agree on is our nation does not go to war to lose.

The VFW cautioned patience last year when the new Iraqi surge strategy was first announced, because we know that short-term victories in a long-term war are hard to measure.

The naysayers and pundits wanted an immediate pull-out, regardless of the consequences. But we don't put our faith behind the rants of those who have never served or sacrificed for others.

Our yardstick for support has always been based on what the troops want. So, I thank him for allowing me to go to Iraq three weeks ago to meet our brave servicemen and women who are in the fight.

What I learned firsthand is that the surge strategy is helping them to succeed in their mission. Life in Iraq is more secure and the population is coming together as a nation. Our troops want to come home, but not until their job is done.

Our troops have faith that they can succeed in their mission, and so does the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I ask you to turn your attention to the video screens.

(Whereupon, the video is shown at this time.)

Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you the President of the United States of America, George W. Bush.

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

REMARKS – THE HONORABLE GEORGE W. BUSH

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you-all very much. Thank you for the warm welcome. And I am proud to address the Veterans of Foreign Wars. (Applause) I spoke to you when I was a presidential candidate, and this is the fifth time I have spoken to your National Convention as your President. And every time I have been honored to meet with members of the VFW, I come

away from these meetings with my – inspired by your love of country, by your devotion to duty, and for the example you set for those who wear the uniform today.

I also appreciate the fact that you are here in spite of the weather. Tropical Storm Fay set a challenge for this convention, but your members were wise enough to hang around. I do want to thank the citizens, the officials of the State of Florida for working hard to make sure that people were ready to address the storm. We watched this very carefully, and I must say that the people of this state worked hard to make sure that this convention and other lives were saved. We appreciate the work of the local officials. And, of course, we will continue to monitor the storm as it moves through the area.

I do want to thank my friend, George Lisicki, for his leadership as your National Commander. He has done a fine job on behalf of the VFW, I know firsthand; I have had him to the Oval Office. He is not afraid to speak his mind, I listen, and I know you are proud of the job he has done. (Applause) And I want to thank his wife, Gloria, for putting up with him. (Applause)

I do want to thank Bob Wallace, the Executive Director of the VFW. He has worked very hard to represent you, and he has done so in fine fashion.

I am proud to be here with Glen Gardner, incoming National Commander-in-Chief of the VFW, and his wife Jean. I have known Glen for a long time; I admire him. I told him I am fixing to retire, so I am not going to be around to work with him. But no doubt in my mind he will do a fine job on behalf of the VFW.

I want to thank Virginia Carman, National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. (Applause) Dixie Hild is the Incoming National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. (Applause) I want to thank the rest of the leadership for letting me come by to visit with you.

I met an interesting person here today, a woman named Keela Carr. When I go to a city I like to herald people who are volunteering on behalf of the country. Keela has walked from California to Washington, D.C., to thank the veterans for their service to the United States of America. And I proud to have met Keela Carr. And I want to thank you for doing what you are doing, Keela. (Applause)

And I want to thank the members of the Armed Forces that are here today. There is no greater honor than being the Commander-in-Chief of the United States military, and I am proud to be in your presence. (Applause)

America owes the men and women of the VFW a debt that can never really be repaid. You fought for our freedoms, and then when you came home, you volunteered to continue to serve this nation. Together with your Ladies and Men's Auxiliaries, members of this organization donate 13 million hours of community service every year. You mentor your groups. You sponsor blood drives. You send packages to the military units deployed overseas. You provide vital services to your fellow veterans at home. In the VFW, we see the best of the American spirit – and American – America honors your service in and out of uniform. (Applause)

When the history of the last eight years is finally written, it will show how closely and effectively my administration and the VFW have worked together on behalf of Americans' veterans. My budget includes nearly $94 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs, which means we have nearly doubled the funding for veterans since I took office. (Applause)

We have worked together to modernize and expand VA facilities, and got $5.5 billion of taxpayers monies in the budget to do so. The VFW and my

administration have worked hard to expand grants to help homeless veterans in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, because we strongly believe no veteran who served in distant lands should have to live without shelter in the land they fought to defend. (Applause)

We believe that combat injured and severely disabled veterans deserve to receive both their military retired pay and their VA disability compensation. I was the first President in more than 100 years to sign concurrent receipt legislation. (Applause)

We have worked effectively and diligently to provide for those returning home from the front lines today: My administration implemented recommendations from Senator Dole and Senator Shalala to help our wounded warriors build lives of hope and promise and dignity. We are investing hundreds of millions of dollars to develop new treatments for conditions like traumatic brain injuries and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Earlier this year, I was pleased to sign a piece of legislation that the VFW has long championed, a G.I. Bill for the 21st Century. (Applause)

We also owe something to your brothers-in-arms who never returned home. We will always cherish the memories of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. We will never stop searching until we can account for every missing soldier, sailor, airman, Coast Guardsman and Marine. (Applause)

Over the past seven and a half years, I have seen the VFW's devotion to our men and women in uniform. I have been impressed, I have been inspired by your support of the military. You understand that our men and women in uniform deserve our full support because they are defending America in our nation's first war in the 21st Century. That war reached our shores on September 11, 2001, a day that you have not forgotten, and neither have I. On that day, 19 men armed with box cutters brought killing and carnage to our homeland. We are at war against determined enemies, and we must not rest until that war is won. (Applause)

This war cannot be won, however, if we treat terrorism primarily as a matter of law enforcement. Law enforcement is an essential part of our strategy, but our strategy cannot be limited to law enforcement alone. After the first World Trade Center attack in 1993, our law enforcement community succeeded in tracking down several of the killers, prosecuting them and putting them into jail. But eight years later, al Quaeda terrorists came back to finish the job. The lesson is this: In order to do our duty, our solemn duty, which is to protect the homeland from further harm, we must keep the pressure on the enemy, and we must keep the extremists on the run. In order to do so, we must use all assets of national power, including the United States military. (Applause)

So, when this war, with your strong support, we are taking the fight to the enemy. Over the past seven years, America and our allies have captured or killed hundreds of al Quaeda leaders and operatives in more than two dozen countries. We will continue to battle the terrorists overseas so we do not have to face them here at home.

We are on several fronts in this war on terror. A major front is Afghanistan, where we removed a dangerous regime that harbored the terrorists who plotted the September 11th attacks. Because we acted, the Afghan people have been liberated. A nation that was once a training ground for terrorists has become an ally in the war on terror. We built a strong coalition of nations including every member of the NATO alliance to help the Afghan people defend their young democracy. And we will ensure that that country

never becomes a safe haven again for terrorists who seek to launch attacks on America or our allies. (Applause)

Another front in the same war against the extremists is Iraq. We removed a brutal dictator who murdered his own people, who paid the families of suiciders, who invaded his neighbors, who was an enemy of the United States, who repeatedly defied the United Nations. Because we acted, the dictator is gone and 25 million Iraqis are free. Removing Saddam Hussein was right then, and it is right today. (Applause)

In 2006, as you well know, the situation in Iraq was deteriorating. Some back in Washington said the war was lost. They were willing to give up on the mission. They were willing to leave a struggling democracy to its own fate. But failure in Iraq could have spread chaos across the region, emboldened Iran, embedded the terrorists, and given them a new base from which to launch operations against America and allies. I believe this would have been a disaster for America – and so do the men and women of the VFW. (Applause)

Early this year, after consultations with our commanders, and the Commander-in-Chief must always listen to the commanders and not the latest opinion polls, I ordered a surge of forces into Iraq. (Applause) I remember briefing the leaders of the VFW on my decision. Since the surge began, violence in Iraq has dropped; civilian deaths and sectarian killings are down. Slowly but steadily, political and economic progress is taking place. Iraq is a rising democracy. Iraq is an ally against these extremists. And our troops have begun to come home under our policy of return on success. We all look forward to the day when even more of our troops come home and the VFW understands that the only way to bring them home is with victory. (Applause)

To ensure that we have the capabilities to prevail in Iraq and Afghanistan, or wherever the terrorists make their stand, we have transformed the United States military. Our branches of the military are working together better than ever. We have more than doubled funding for our Special Operations Command so our forces can hunt the terrorists no matter where they hide. We have increased the number of unmanned aerial vehicles in our arsenal. We are moving American forces from Cold War garrisons in Europe and Asia so they can deploy rapidly anywhere in the world. We are going to increase the size of our ground forces. We will make our troops more lethal and more agile so they can remain on the offense against the enemy. America's future leaders must remember that the war on terror will be won on the offense – and that's where our military must stay. (Applause)

We are keeping the pressure on the enemy. As we have done so, we have defended this homeland. Nearly seven years have passed without another attack on our soil. This is not for the lack of trying by the terrorists. Our intelligence and law enforcement professionals have worked with our allies to stop the major al Quaeda attacks, including a plot to blow up transatlantic flights from London, and a plan to strike the tallest skyscraper in Los Angeles. We owe these fine professionals our thanks. And we owe them something more, the tools necessary to be able to do their job.

Since 9/11, we have given American defenders what they need. We formed a new Department of Homeland Security. We overhauled the nation's intelligence community. We shifted the FBI's focus from investigating terrorist attack to preventing terrorist attacks. We passed the Patriot Act, which tore down the wall that once prevented law enforcement and intel-

ligence officers from sharing vital information. We created a new National Counter-Terrorism Center. We established a program at the CIA to interrogate key terrorist leaders captured in the war on terror. We worked with Congress to pass legislation that allows our intelligence professionals to quickly and effectively monitor terrorist communications. (Applause)

We have used all these tools to stop new attacks. And I am pleased to report to the American people that these tools will be available for future administrations to protect the American people for years to come. (Applause)

And in this war, we are countering the terrorists' dark and hateful ideology by offering a more hopeful vision, and that's one based on freedom. On September 11th, we saw how the terrorists exploit hopelessness and despair to recruit young men for their evil plots against America. We learned that our nation's security depends on combating the conditions that give rise to terror by aiding the rise of free societies. We are engaged in the great ideological struggle of our time, between the forces of freedom and the forces of tyranny. So we, America and our allies, will support young democracies. We are standing with brave democratic reformers.

Over the past seven years, we have seen liberty on the march, seen citizens in Afghanistan and Iraq establish representative governments after decades of tyranny. We have seen the people of Lebanon take to the streets and demand their independence. We have seen citizens of the former Soviet Republic – republics stand up for their right for free and fair elections.

One of the most inspiring chapters of history was written by the Georgian people during the Rose Revolution of 2003. In the years that followed, the Georgian people have held free elections. They have established a democracy form of government. Georgia has also sent troops to Afghanistan and Iraq to help others realize the blessings of liberty. Georgia has stood for freedom around the world – now the world must stand for freedom in Georgia. (Applause)

For nearly two weeks, the world has watched Georgia's young democracy come under siege. Russian forces invaded the country in a disproportionate response to a long-simmering conflict in Georgia regions of South Ossetia and Abkazia. The world has come together to condemn this assault. Yesterday Secretary Rice met with members of the NATO Alliance to discuss the ongoing situation. Our countries agree that Russia must honor its commitment to withdraw its troops from Georgia and to return to the status quo before the hostiles begin on August 6th.

The Alliance is considering seriously the implications of Russia's actions for the NATO-Russia relationship. The Alliance determined that business as usual cannot continue with Russia. And the Alliance agreed to help Georgia by sending NATO teams to assess the country's needs, and by forming a new NATO-Georgia Commission.

The United States of America will continue to support Georgia's democracy. Our military will continue to provide needed humanitarian aid to the Georgia people. South Ossetia and Abkhazia are part of Georgia. And the United States will work with our allies to ensure Georgia's independence and territorial integrity. (Applause)

The people in this room understand the benefits of liberty, because you fought to defend it and bring it to others. As young men, many of you battled the forces of Nazi Germany and the Empire of Japan on the battlefields of World War II. In those days, it would have been hard for you to imagine that

the enemies you were fighting would become some of America's closest allies.

Six decades later, Germany and Japan are strong democracies. They are two of our closest allies.

In your own lifetimes, you have seen firsthand the power of liberty to transform societies and yield the peace we all want. (Applause) I believe that people in this hall believe that the power of freedom is unstoppable. I believe it because I believe in an almighty that has given every man, woman and child on the face of the Earth freedom. (Applause) And I know freedom yields the peace we want. If America maintains our confidence in our ideals, is willing to take the lead, freedom will once again prevail. And we will be able to look at a generation of Americans coming up and say, "We did our duty; we defended America and laid the foundation of peace for generations to come." (Applause)

We can also be confident in every generation freedom has found brave defenders in the men and women of our Armed Forces. You know, through the years I have received a lot of heartfelt letters from our military families. One of them was from a woman in Texas named Sue Stoner. Sue's husband is a decorated Air Force veteran of Vietnam and the Gulf War. Last year during a trip to Fort Hood, the couple witnessed their six-year-old granddaughter Mikayla do something that every American should do, as well. The little girl bounded over to a wounded stranger in Army fatigues and said, "I just want to say thank you for serving our country." As Mikayla's proud grandmother tells it, the soldier leaned forward on his walker and said, "Sweetheart, I did it for you." (Applause)

Every one of you put on the uniform for the same reason. You risked your life, you sacrificed so Americans like Mikayla could grow up in freedom. We will always honor your service. We will never forget you sacrifice. (Applause)

This is the last time I will address a veterans convention as the Commander-in-Chief. Over the past seven and a half years, I have been honored to get to know many of your members. I have relied on your counsel. I have benefited from your wisdom. I have been extremely grateful for your prayers.

I know you share with me a deep love for America and an awesome pride in those who defend her. When I meet with our troops, they always inspire me with their sense of duty and honor. They are America's finest citizens. (Applause) I am confident that our troops will always be able to found on the fellowship and the support and the love of the men and women of the VFW.

May God bless you and may God bless America.

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

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 109TH NATIONAL CONVENTION BE SUBMITTED TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: I move that the proceedings of the Veterans of the Foreign Wars 109th National Convention be submitted to the Speaker of the House for printing as a House document in accordance with Public Law 620, 90th Congress, approved October 2, 1968, in Title 44 United States Code, Section 1332.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, we have a motion, properly seconded, that the proceedings of Veterans of Foreign Wars 109th National Convention be submitted to the Speaker of the House for printing as a House document. Are you ready? Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. The motion passes.

NOMINATION OF OFFICERS

We will now go into Nominations of Officers for the 2008-2009 term.

The nominations are now open for Commander-in-Chief.

The chair recognizes Past Commander-in-Chief Larry Rivers.

NOMINATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Chief, I thank you very much. My fellow VFW members and veterans, I am honored this morning to have the opportunity to stand before my fellow veterans and members to nominate our next Commander-in-Chief. I have known this fine man for some 30 years, having first met him when we were both District officers and attending class squadron in Dallas, Texas.

I have had the opportunity to follow his career and see firsthand his love of his fellow veterans, his love for his country, and I am proud to make this nomination and do so without reservation.

Glen Gardner, Jr., is a Life Member of the VFW. He served his country in the United States Marine Corps for four years, between 1966 and 1970. Glen earned his VFW eligibility through his service as an aircraft mechanic with the First Marine Aircraft Wing in Vietnam in '68 and '69. For his service to his country, Glen was awarded the Combat Action Ribbon, the Vietnam Service Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense and Service Medal, the Vietnamese Campaign Service Medal and the Cross of Gallantry.

Glen has been a member since 1969 when he joined VFW Post 4993 in Olathe, Kansas. After moving to Texas, he joined VFW Post 3359 in Garland, Texas, and has remained a Life Member, has served Post 3359 as Post Commander twice, and Quartermaster. Glen has also been an All-American District Commander in 1980 and '82.

Glen worked for the VFW Department of Texas for 22 years as the Quartermaster of that great Department. Glen served on numerous VFW National Committees, and was instrumental in the Texas Coalition for Veterans Organization, a group of some 600,000 members, and chaired that coalition for 15 years.

In addition to his VFW membership, he belongs to the Military Order of the Cootie, the American Legion, the Disabled Veterans and the National Association for Home Services.

Glen and his wife reside in Manheim, Texas, and they have four children and seven grandchildren.

My fellow veterans and VFW members, on behalf of our great Southern Conference I am pleased to nominate Glen A. Gardner, a Marine, a proud VFW Life Member, and a great American, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner for the office of Commander-in-Chief of the VFW for the

2008-2009 VFW year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Benny Bachand for the purpose of a second.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Department of Florida): Members and delegates to the 109th National Convention, I am here today to second the nomination of Glen Gardner for Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I don't believe anyone that has been nominated for this high office is better prepared to be Commander-in-Chief than Glen Gardner.

From the time he was Post Commander to today, he has been listening and learning. He has seen the VFW at its best and he has witnessed the struggles of our organization during the past 15 years. Glen has been a voice for change at these conventions and numerous VFW meetings. He has never shied away from doing what was right for veterans and the VFW.

He has always demonstrated a capacity for leadership, and we have seen that grow each of the VFW years. Today, we have a chance to elect a man that has a vision for success. Today is the roll-back to membership assessment. Today, we will restore many VFW programs as they are a vital part of our heritage.

This election is about change, this election is about making a difference. This election is about creating a blueprint for the future. We have an opportunity to elect a Commander-in-Chief that will affect our story and history. We ask you to keep open minds and elect a new generation to speak for the VFW. So, I am pleased and honored to join with my good friend Larry Rivers to second the nomination of Glen Gardner as the Commander-in-Chief for 2008-2009.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, 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? The nominations will remain open until tomorrow morning.

Now, we will have nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. The chair recognizes Past Commander-in-Chief Walter J. Hogan.

NOMINATION OF SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOGAN: Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki, other distinguished guests and comrades attending the 109th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

It is indeed my honor to nominate this comrade who I nominated last year for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. This dedicated comrade seeks the high office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. He joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1969, and earned his eligibility through his service in Vietnam as a Combat Demolition Specialist in 1966 and 1967.

He has prepared himself well for this office by serving through the many chairs of our organization, including Post Commander, District Commander and State Commander of the Department of Wisconsin in 1999-2000.

On the National level, he has also been involved serving as Inspector General and a member of the National Council of Administration, and numerous Committee jobs on the National level. He has served this year with distinction as your Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and he has traveled throughout our country visiting the states, visiting the various conferences and some overseas travel.

With this extensive background, we believe our candidate is qualified to

assume the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and we in Wisconsin know our candidate will serve well on the Gardner team.

In the private sector, he was employed at Briggs Stratton and retired in 1998. After his retirement, he went to work for the Machine Company from 1999 to 2007 as a quality engineer. He holds an Associate Degree in Industrial Safety from WCTI in Wisconsin. He has the support of his wife, Sharon, of 40 years.

My friendship with Tommy spans 25 years, and I can assure you personally that he is dedicated to the Veterans of Foreign Wars and will work with all of the veterans in our organization.

In behalf of the Big Ten Conference, the Department of Wisconsin and myself, I am extremely proud to place in nomination my friend and fellow Post member, Tommy Tradewell, for the high office of National Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the year 2008-2009.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: For purposes of a second, the chair recognizes Gary Harrison, Commander of the Department of Wisconsin.

COMRADE GARY HARRISON (Department of Wisconsin): Good afternoon, comrades. It is indeed an honor and privilege for me to stand before you to second the nomination of Tommy T. Tradewell. Tommy and I have gone way back. He was the Department Commander, I was one of his Assistant Commanders, and we got it done. I know that he will do that in the high office.

Therefore, I am glad to second nomination of Tommy Trade for the high office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief from the great state of Wisconsin. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: 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, the nominations will remain open until tomorrow morning.

The chair opens nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. The chair recognizes Everett Martin, a member of the National Council of Administration.

NOMINATION OF JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMRADE EVERETT MARTIN (Post 1732 – Department of California): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Good afternoon, fellow comrades at this great convention. Comrades, I am Everett Martin from Post 1732, Department of California, and a National Council member from District G.

It is indeed a great pleasure to place in nomination the name of a true veteran's advocate and tested leader who has proven himself year after year as a comrade who will continue to make decisions to ensure the success of all of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and make it his highest priority.

We are proud of his accomplishments and know that he will serve with honor. We know that he will fight for veterans' rights and issues.

Richard has the full endorsement of the Department of California, as well as total support of his family. Commander-in-Chief and comrades, members of the greatest combat veterans' organization in the world, at this time I am honored to nominate Richard Eubank for the high office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the year 2008-2009. Thank you, comrades.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Bob Maxwell

for the purpose of a second, who is also a former member of District G.

COMRADE BOB MAXWELL (Department of California): Comrade, I second the nomination for Richard Eubank. He is probably my best friend in the world, and probably your best friend in the world, too. He is the guy that cares just as much about visiting a Post with 20 members as he is with visiting a Post with 2,000.

He is going to make one of the finest Commanders-in-Chief in the history of this organization. I am very proud of him and I hope you will join with me when I second this nomination for Richard Eubank for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the year 2008-2009. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: 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 Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Hearing none, the nominations will be held open until tomorrow morning.

Nominations are now open for Quartermaster General. The chair recognizes Robert Weiss, Adjutant/Quartermaster of the Department of Michigan.

NOMINATION OF QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

COMRADE ROBERT WEISS (Post 2406 – Michigan): It is my honor and privilege to nominate Lawrence M. Maher for the office of Quartermaster General. Comrade Larry was elected Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in March, 2005. Prior to this, he served as the Assistant Quartermaster General from 1995 to 2005. He has been legal counsel to the VFW National Headquarters since 1979.

Larry graduated magnum cum laude from Rockhurst University in Kansas City, in 1968, with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Industrial Relations, and his juris doctorate frm the University of Missouri.

He served over a year and a half as Assistant Administrator Officer with the Command 7th Fleet, attached aboard the USS Oklahoma in and around Vietnam. During his service, he received the National Navy Achievement Medal, Vietnam Service Medal and Vietnam Campaign Medal. He is a member of the Missouri Bar, the Kansas City Metropolitan Bar, and the American Bar Association. He is a Life Member of Post 7356 in Parkville, Missouri, and he has served the VFW as Chairman of the National By-Laws Study Committee and as National Parliamentarian.

Maher is married with three children, and resides in Weatherby Lake, Missouri. It is my pleasure to place in nomination Larry Maher for Quartermaster General for the 2008-2009 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICIKI: I recognize Terry Bruning, the Adjutant/ Quartermaster from the Department of Indiana.

ADJUTANT-QUARTERMASTER TERRY BRUNING (Department of Indiana): Commander-in-Chief and comrades, it is my pleasure to second the nomination of Larry Maher, Quartermaster General, for the year 2008-2009.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Hearing none, the nominations will not be closed until tomorrow morning.

Nominations are now open for Judge Advocate General. The chair recognizes Joseph Guest.

NOMINATION OF JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL

COMRADE JOSEPH GUEST (Department of California): Commander-in-Chief, fellow delegates to this esteemed convention: It is truly my privilege to place before you the name of an outstanding individual, an outstanding veteran and a VFW member, but also a personal friend of mine.

He has served seven years in the United States Army, two tours of duty in Korea with the 84th Engineering Battalion attached to the 5th Marines. He is not only a Life Member of the VFW but he is also a Life Member of the 1st Marine Division Association.

After returning to the United States and getting out of the Army, he went to law school at Hastings Law School, and graduated in June, 1964, was admitted to the California Bar in January, 1965. He is not only licensed to practice in California, but he is also licensed to practice in the Ninth and Tenth Federal District Courts.

He went to work for Twentieth Century Fox. After 22 years, he retired as a Vice-President and he has been in motion picture and television production. He has his own law practice, specializing in financing. He is also the Vice-Chairman of the Twentieth Century Fox Credit Union.

He has testified before Congress on finance and immigration issues. He is a member of Post 2805, Department of California, where he has served in all aspects of the Post offices. The last four years he has been the Judge Advocate for the Department of California and has done an outstanding job in that position.

It is my honor to place in nomination at this convention the name of Walter Swanson for the high office of Judge Advocate General. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair now recognizes John Lowe, Quartermaster of Post 2111 in California, for the purpose of a second.

COMRADE JOHN LOWE (Department of California): Members and fellow delegates to the 109th National Convention, I am honored to second the nomination of Walter Swanson for the position of Judge Advocate General for the 2008-2009 year.

I have known Walter over the last four or five years because he and I have worked together for the VFW in our Department. As you heard his resume, he has a unique and significant background. I read the bio and all that he has accomplished, and the only thing I could find of any significance is Walter has known me for the last four or five years. I like to throw in a dig here and there. The only thing I found on his resume is he graduated from law school the year I was born.

Again, comrades, I am honored and pleased to second the nomination of Walter Swanson for the position of Judge Advocate General for the 2008-2009 VFW year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Are there any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Are there any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Are there any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Hearing none, the nominations will be open until tomorrow morning.

The chair will entertain nominations for Surgeon General. The chair recognizes Stan Kowalski.

NOMINATION OF SURGEON GENERAL

COMRADE STAN KOWALSKI (Department of Minnesota): It is my pleasure to stand here today recognizing on behalf of the great state of Minnesota a man who has taken the last years to make sure that nobody forgets our POW/MIAs in traveling across the country.

I nominate him to be the Surgeon General of the greatest military organization on the planet of the earth, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes for a second Dick Morrison, National Council member.

COMRADE DICK MORRISON (Department of Minnesota): Comrades, I stand before you today and am honored and pleased to second the nomination for a comrade that has worked tirelessly to serve veterans. I second the nomination of Doc Tuorila.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Now, are there any other nominations for Surgeon General? Any other nominations for Surgeon General? Are there any other nominations for Surgeon General? Hearing none, the nominations will stay open until tomorrow morning.

Nominations are now open for National Chaplain. The chair recognizes Larry M. Wade, Commander of the Department of Pennsylvania.

NOMINATION OF NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

COMRADE LARRY WADE (Department of Pennsylvania): Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Fellow Comrades: It is an honor and privilege for me to make the nomination of Theodore Bowers for National Chaplain. This is a man who has and still is serving God, country and this great organization, the Veterans of Foreign Wars as the Department of Pennsylvania's Chaplain.

He is serving God by spreading his word through his fellow man, and still serving him today. He has served his country by serving in the United States Navy and Marines, by serving the needs of his fellow comrades at a time of war and at a time of peace by the word to the sick and to all others that wanted to hear God's word. I cannot think of a better person to lead our National Organization spiritually than Theodore Bowers.

Without further ado, I would like to nominate Theodore Bowers as the National Chaplain. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: For the purpose of a second, the chair recognizes Frank Mills of Pennsylvania.

COMRADE FRANK MILLS (Department of Pennsylvania): Fellow delegates, Ted Bowers has served his God and country with honor and distinction, and he continues to preach the word to his Post, his Department, and the great Eastern Conference. Reverend Ted is a true patriot and he deserves the honor in leading us in worship as we move forward in the VFW goals and ideals. I proudly second the nomination of Reverend Ted Bowers as National Chaplain for the ensuing year 2008-2009.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Any other nominations for National Chaplain? Any other nominations for National Chaplain? Are there any other nominations for National Chaplain? Hearing none, the nominations will be closed until tomorrow morning.

I now call on the National Chaplain Thomas Darling for the Benediction.

BENEDICTION AND SALUTE TO THE COLORS

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Darling gave the Benediction, followed by the Salute to the Colors.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades, the meeting will reconvene tomorrow morning at 8:00 o'clock for the final nominations and installation of officers. That is 800 tomorrow morning. We are in recess.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 1:15 o'clock p.m.

FOURTH BUSINESS SESSION
THURSDAY, AUGUST 21, 2008

(The Fourth Business Session of the 109th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Florida, was called to order at 8:00 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Sergeant-at-Arms, prepare the hall for the opening ceremonies.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. Comrades, please raise for the Opening Prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States.

(Whereupon, the Opening Prayer was given by National Chaplain Thomas Darling, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Salute to the Colors.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the opening of this Business Session has been completed and your orders have been obeyed.

COMPLETION OF CONVENTION BUSINESS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Is there any more business to come before this convention? Is there any more business to come before this convention?

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

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 – Delaware): At the close of business, August 20th, delegate strength of this Convention is as follows:

Total delegates, 10,652; total Department Commanders, 52; total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 32; total National Officers, 35. That is for a grand total of 10,771.

Commander-in-Chief, this is my final Credentials Report to the Convention, and it has been my pleasure serving you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrade Butters, you are now relieved. I thank you so much for your continued support and dedication and doing such a wonderful job with the credentials as you have in the past.

Comrades and Sisters, before we go into our Election of Officers, let me just say one thank you to each and every one of you. Thank you for making this a great year in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. We have had an outstanding year and all of it is contributed to the great support you gave your Commander-in-Chief this past year.

I thank my Chair Officers, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner, and the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell. Thank you so much, comrades. You have been super supporters of mine. I look forward to your great leadership in the future. I am right here behind you and I am not going far away. If there is anything that any of you need, please feel free to contact me.

To Richard Eubank, the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect, I look forward to working with you, too. Congratulations to you. I know you also will be a great leader in this organization.

At this time I would like to thank the first lady of our organization. She has done an outstanding job representing you as the first lady of the organization. I would like to bring her up here at this time, my wife, Gloria Lisicki.

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

MRS. GLORIA LISICKI: Thank you very much. I would like to thank you-all for this opportunity you gave to my husband and I. There are no words to express what we have done and what we have seen. Not everybody gets this opportunity. I want to thank you very much for seeing what I saw with my husband. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: I want to thank Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent and our outstanding Kansas City staff. My friends, you couldn't ask for better supporters than those who work in our Kansas City office, who have made our job as National Officers a lot easier.

You didn't have to worry about a lot of things prior to traveling because they took care of everything for you. Betty and Phyllis, who told us what time to get up in the morning, what clothes to wear, what time to go to bed at night. They made sure everything was prepared for us when we arrived at our destination.

Quartermaster General Larry Maher and your wonderful staff, we thank you also. You have been a super friend to me and a super supporter, and your wonderful staff I thank them for everything they have done.

To Bob Wallace and the Washington staff, Bob, thank you so much for being a friend for many, many years, and a supporter and to you and your staff, who do all the hard work here on the legislative field, making sure that our National Officers are prepared and we have the opportunity to testify on very important legislation.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, we are going to go into the Election of Officers.

ELECTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

Yesterday the name of Glen Gardner was nominated for Commander-in-Chief. Are there any other nominations for Commander-in-Chief? Any other nominations for Commander-in-Chief? Any other nominations for Commander-in-Chief?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JERRY MURPHREE (Post 3359 - Texas): I make a motion that you instruct the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous vote for Glen M. Gardner, Jr., for National Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the year 2008-2009.

COMRADE ROY LAMB (Department of New Mexico): I second it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: I have a motion to close nominations and instruct the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot for the election of Glen M. Gardner as Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the year 2008-2009. Are there any questions on the motion?

Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; all those opposed. The motion carries.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: I cast one unanimous ballot for the elec-

tion of Glen M. Gardner as Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2008-2009.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Glen M. Gardner has been elected Commander-in-Chief-Elect for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. (Applause)

Comrades, I present to you the Commander-in-Chief-Elect for the 2008-2009 year from the great Department of Texas, Glen M. Gardner, Jr. (Applause)

REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT GARDNER: Thank you very much. You think you are prepared, but you never are. It is a great honor to stand here this morning as the Commander-in-Chief-Elect of this great organization. I want to thank you for the confidence you have placed in me. I look forward to working with each and every one of you as we serve the veterans of this great country and serve the active military and their families. Thank you once again. Thank you, comrades. (Applause)

ELECTION OF SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Yesterday the name of Tommy Tradewell from the Department of Wisconsin was placed in nomination for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Are there any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE GARY ERICKSON (Department of Wisconsin): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Gary Erickson, State Commander of the Department of Wisconsin. I move that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Tommy Tradewell for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE WILFRED JOHNSON (Department of Wisconsin): I am Wilfred Johnson, Vice Commander of the State of Wisconsin. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, you have before you a motion, properly seconded, to close nominations for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief and the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot.

Are there any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it. Tommy Tradewell, from the great Department of Wisconsin, has been elected Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, by the authority and power vested in me, I cast one unanimous white ballot for Tommy T. Tradewell for the high office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the year 2008-2009.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, I present to you the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect from the great state of Wisconsin, Tommy T. Tradewell. (Applause)

REMARKS BY SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT TRADEWELL: Thank you. Good morning, comrades. To our Commander-in-Chief Lisicki, I look forward to working together as I enjoyed my year as part of the Lisicki-Gardner-Tradewell team. To all the offices and delegates, to our Past Chiefs, I would like to thank you for putting your confidence in me and electing me to the high office. It is truly the highest honor in my life, and I appreciate it.

I am looking forward serving with the Gardner-Tradewell-Eubank team. I would like to thank so many people, and the list is too long, so I will make a few thank you's, and especially my wife, Sharon, who has been with me through this. I expect her to be with me for many more years yet. It has only been 41. So we are just getting started. We are newlyweds.

I would like to again thank Wally Hogan, my mentor, and all the other people from Wisconsin that are here today, and those that have helped me through the chairs that supported me, the members of my Post, my District, the State and my conference, the Big Ten and the VFW brothers and sisters that I have met and have gotten to be friends with, the friendships that I will cherish, and I look forward to having many more.

Again, thank you for all that you continue to do for veterans. Thank you for all that you have done for veterans, and I look forward to seeing many more of you in my travels. I am cherishing every day. Thank you. (Applause)

ELECTION OF JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Yesterday, the name of Richard Eubank was placed in nomination for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. 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 Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOSEPH GUEST (Department of California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Joe Guest, Post 2805, Department of California. I move that the nominations be closed and that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for Richard Eubank for the position of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the 2008-2009 administrative year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DAVID NORRIS (Post 52 – California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, David Norris, Past National Chaplain, Post 52, Stockton, California. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The motion on the floor has been properly seconded that the nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Richard Eubank from the Department of California for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor will say "aye"; those opposed. The motion passes.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, by the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous white ballot for Richard Eubank for the high office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for

the year 2008-2009.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, Richard Eubank has been elected Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. (Applause) Comrades, I present to you the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect from the great Department of California, Richard Eubank.

REMARKS BY JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT EUBANK: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief George. Comrades, I can make you one promise that as in the past as we leave this great organization and the things we have to accomplish in our lives that we know will affect a lot of people.

I promise to give every ounce of my effort to Glen Gardner and Tommy Tradewell, and this great organization that we belong to. Remember, every battle we fight is for somebody else, so let's continue to fight.

God bless you and thank you for the faith and trust that you have given me and to my Department of California, and the Western Conference. Thank you for not assassinating me in office.

ELECTION OF QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Yesterday, the name of Larry Maher was placed in nomination for Quartermaster General. Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE THOMAS HARTMAN (Department of Missouri): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Tom Hartman, Department Commander of Missouri. I move that the nominations cease for Quartermaster General and unanimous ballot be cast by the Adjutant General for Lawrence M. Maher for the office of Quartermaster General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DAVID MORGAN (Post 5231 – Missouri): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am David Morgan, Senior Vice from the Department of Missouri, Post 5231. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We have a motion on the floor, properly seconded, to close nominations for Quartermaster General. Are there any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the regular sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, by the authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous white ballot for Lawrence M. Maher for the high office of Quartermaster General for the year 2008-2009.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Larry Maher has been re-elected Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for 2008-2009. (Applause)

REMARKS BY QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT MAHER: First, I want to make the point that my wife, Judy, is in education, so I asked the other Judy in my life,

Judy Richardson, my administrative assistant, to do the cap thing this morning. I am very fortunate to have a great staff in Kansas City. She bosses us all around.

I would like to thank you for the trust that you have placed in me by again electing me Quartermaster General. I promise that I will not let you down. I will also promise that I will strive to keep our organization on a strong financial footing and lay the foundation for a strong financial future.

I want to thank Commander-in-Chief Lisicki for the great job he has done this year. He has had some real challenges, and he has handled them all well. He has had some real successes, too.

George demonstrated that he can make hard decisions, but as importantly, I think George will back up the decisions of subordinates. In my mind, that is a sign of a great leader. That is why it was a pleasure to work for him this past year.

To Glen Gardner, I will look forward working with you. I have worked with you a number of years, sometimes forcefully.

Tom Tradewell and Richard Eubank, and "Gunner" Kent, I look forward to working with you. The delegates put the ball in our court and the Council's court to run the organization in an efficient and effective manner, and working together I think we will continue to do just that.

To the delegates, I again thank you for the opportunity to serve as Quartermaster General. If you have any questions, comments, concerns or complaints, please do not hesitate to contact me and members of my staff. We are here to serve you, the members, and we will do everything we can do to continue to earn the trust that you have placed in us. Thank you. (Applause)

ELECTION OF JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Yesterday, the name of Walter Swanson was placed in nomination for Judge Advocate General. Are there any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Are there any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Are there any other nominations for Judge Advocate General?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JOHN WOLFE (Post 4084 – California): Good morning, Commander-in-Chief. I am John P. Wolfe, Past State Commander, Post 4084, State of California. I move that the nominations be closed and that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for Walter Swanson for the position of Judge Advocate General for the year 2008-2009 administrative year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE EARL FOX (Post 9957 – California): I am Earl Fox, State Chief of Staff, Post 9957, California. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: There is a motion on the floor and properly seconded to close nominations and instruct the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot for Walter Swanson for Judge Advocate General.

Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, by the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous white ballot for

Walter Swanson for the office of Judge Advocate General for the ensuing year of 2008-2009.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Walter Swanson has been elected Judge Advocate General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the 2008-2009 year.

Comrades, I present to you the Judge Advocate General Elect, Walter Swanson.

REMARKS BY JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT SWANSON: Comrades, I thank you, and particularly I also thank the Department of California for their help in shoving and pushing whenever I felt like I needed it, regardless of what they felt, especially the Commander. Thank you for the trust, faith and confidence that you have placed in me as an attorney to work for you and for the officers. As Judge Advocate General, I pledge I will use all of my skills as a lawyer in services for the VFW. Thank you very much. (Applause)

ELECTION OF SURGEON GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Yesterday, the name of Dr. James "Doc" Tuorila was placed in nomination for Surgeon General. Any other nominations for Surgeon General? Any other nominations for Surgeon General? Any other nominations for Surgeon General?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE STAN KOWALSKi (Department of Minnesota): Commander-in-Chief, I am Stan Kowalski, State Commander of Minnesota. I move nominations be closed and the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for James Tuorila for Surgeon General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE RALPH LARSON (Post 3582 - Minnesota): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: There is a motion that has been properly seconded that nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for James "Doc" Tuorila for Surgeon General.

Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, by the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for James "Doc" Tuorila for the high office of Surgeon General for the ensuing year 2008-2009.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: James "Doc" Tuorila has been elected Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2008-2009. (Applause)

Comrades, I present to you the Surgeon General-Elect, James "Doc" Tuorila.

REMARKS BY SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT

SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT TUORILA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Delegates, Distinguished Guests and Family Members: I have dedicated my

entire adult life to serving and helping veterans as a psychologist. I will continue to do that as I serve on your Council of Administration.

I believe in God, I believe in this country, and I believe in the VFW, but most of all I believe in you, the veterans of the United States of America. Thank you very much for this great honor. (Applause)

ELECTION OF NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Yesterday the name of Theodore Bowers was placed in nomination for National Chaplain. Are there any other nominations for National Chaplain? Are there any other nominations for National Chaplain? Any other nominations for National Chaplain?

The chair recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE LARRY WADE (Department of Pennsylvania): I move to close the nominations for National Chaplain and instruct the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot for Theodore Bowers for National Chaplain.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: The chair recognizes Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JOHN BRENNER (Post 2493 – Pennsylvania): I am proud to second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrades, you have before you a motion, properly seconded, to close the nominations for National Chaplain and instruct the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot for Theodore Bowers for National Chaplain for the year 2008-2009.

Any questions on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Commander-in-Chief, by the power and authority vested in me I cast one unanimous white ballot for Theodore Bowers for the high office of National Chaplain for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year 2008-2009.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Theodore Bowers has been elected National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the year 2008-2009.

Comrades, I present to you the National Chaplain-Elect, Theodore Bowers.

REMARKS BY NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT BOWERS: First of all, I want to thank my wife of 47 years who has loved and supported me all those years. I want to thank the great Department of Pennsylvania and their Commander, Larry Wade, and Past Commander John Brenner.

I would like to also thank the Eastern States Conference and their Past National Commanders who guided and advised me. God bless you, our newly-elected officers, our nation and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF CAPS BY THE NEWLY-ELECTED COUNCIL MEMBERS

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: The incoming Commander-in-Chief will present new covers to the newly-elected Council members.

From District 2, representing Vermont and Massachusetts, John Martin,

Post 5737, Massachusetts.

District 4, representing the District of Columbia, Delaware and Europe, Richard Kennedy from Post 9534, Europe.

District 6, representing Virginia and West Virginia, Melvin Reed, Post 573, West Virginia.

District No. 8, representing Georgia and Alabama, John Hancock, Post 3550, Alabama.

District No. 10, representing Oklahoma and Arkansas, A.M. Armstrong, Post 2283, Arkansas.

District No. 12, representing North Dakota and Wyoming, Wayne Paulsen, Post 753, North Dakota.

District No. 14, representing Montana, Washington and Idaho, Ray Lutz, Post 1087, Montana.

District No. 16, Latin America, Caribbean, Pacific, Alaska and Hawaii, Preston Nelson, Post 10046, Alaska.

District 18, representing Connecticut and Rhode Island, Leo Swider, Post 2929.

District No. D, Ohio, Bill Seagraves, Post 9582, Ohio.

District H, A.R. "Russ" Richards, representing Texas, Post 4010.

I would like to thank everybody for electing Council members that I can pronounce their name.

Commander-in-Chief-Elect Gardner will now make the presentation of caps to his appointed officers.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENTS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT GARDNER: It is with a great deal of pleasure that I announce the appointments of the Commander-in-Chief for 2008-2009.

Adjutant General, Allen "Gunner" Kent.

National Chief of Staff, Jimmie Cantrell.

Inspector General, Benny Bachand.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, Bryan O'Brien.

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: We will now proceed with the Installation of Officers. National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will escort James E. Nier, Past Commander-in-Chief, to a position on my right, please.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: I have the honor to present to you Past Commander-in-Chief James Nier as the Installing Officer of the Day.

INSTALLING OFFICER NIER: It is my duty to ascertain the following: Have the officers for the ensuing year been duly elected?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER NIER: Have the books of the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General been examined and approved by the National Council of Administration?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER NIER: Does the Adjutant General have on file proof of eligibility for all officers to be installed during this installation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: He has.

INSTALLING OFFICER NIER: 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 LISICKI: They are.

INSTALLING OFFICER NIER: Have you the Charter in your possession?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: I have.

INSTALLING OFFICER NIER: Past Commander-in-Chief Lisicki, you have now been relieved of your duties as Commander-in-Chief of this organization. It is proper to remind you that in assuming the chair of Past Commander-in-Chief it will be you 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 to my right.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now present the officers-elect to the altar as the Adjutant General reads the list of officers to be installed.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Past Commander-in-Chief.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Commander-in-Chief-Elect, Glen Gardner.

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Thomas Tradewell.
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect, Richard Eubank.
Adjutant General, Allen "Gunner" Kent.
Quartermaster General, Larry M. Maher.
Judge Advocate General, Walter Swanson.
Surgeon General, James "Doc" Tuorila.
National Chaplain, Theodore Bowers.
Chief of Staff, Jimmie Cantrell.
Inspector General, Benny Bachand.
District 1, Philip Farrell.
District 2, John Martin.
District 3, Pat Botbyl.
District 4, Richard Kennedy.
District 5, William Thien.
District 6, Melvin Reid.
District No. 7, Carl Jackson.
District No. 8, John Hancock.
District No. 9, Richard N. Bell.
District No. 10, A.M Armstrong.
District No. 11, Earl D. Banks.
District No. 12, Wayne Paulsen.
District No. 13, James L. Mitchell.
District No. 14, Ray Lutz.
District No. 15, Frank V. Page.
District No. 16, Preston "Nick" Nelson.
District No. 17, Roy Kunzi.
District No. 18, Leo R. Swider.
District No. 19, Donald Verucchi.
District No. 21, Richard Morrison.
District No. 23, Gary Knudson.

District A, Peter Krenitsky.
District B, Terry W. Vance.
District C, Elton "Al" Klein.
District D, Bill Seagraves.
District G, Everett R. Martin.
District H, A.R. "Russ" Richards
District J, Michael J. White.
Past Commander-in-Chief, George Lisicki.

Commander-in-Chief for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Glen M. Gardner-Elect.

INSTALLING OFFICER NIER: Thank you. National Officers-Elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I will now administer to you the Officers' Obligation. You will raise you right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand or the shoulder of a comrade in front of you, 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 NIER: As you were.

Comrade Chaplain.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DARLING: Almighty God, our guide 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 NIER: The audience may be seated. Natinoal Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now escort the officers to their respective stations, and officers when you are escorted please remain standing.

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. You learn well the responsibilities entrusted to you 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 for your election or appointment, we assume that you will acquaint yourselves thoroughly with your duties. You may be seated, all except for the Commander-in-Chief.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief-Elect Glen M. Gardner, Jr., 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 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 Gardner, are you willing and ready to assume you solemn Obligation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT GARDNER: I am.

INSTALLING OFFICER NIER: Will everyone please rise. Raise your right hand and touch the flag with your left and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, Commander-in-Chief-Elect Gardner received the following Obligation: "In the presence of almighty God and the officers and delegates of this order here assembled, I, Glen M. Gardner, Jr., 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.")

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I now place in your possession our Charter and also I present you with this gavel, which is the emblem of your authority. Use it firmly, but with discretion.

I would ask that all National Officers please stretch forth your right hand and repeat after me: "Comrade Commander-in-Chief Glen M. Gardner, Jr., 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. Congratulations, sir. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LAPEL PIN AND GOLD LIFE MEMBERSHIP CARD

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: At this time the Commander-in-Chief will present to Past Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki his Gold Life Membership Card.

Now, Past Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki's wife, Gloria, will pin on him his Commander-in-Chief's pin, his new badge and cover. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you very much, comrades. First, let me thank all of you who were here this morning and attending this final session of our 109th Annual Convention as a show of support to the National Officers installed to serve the 2008-2009 year.

As I look around this room, I am kind of reminded of the preacher who had his first preaching job in a small town in West Texas. A young, ambitious man, ready to do a great job, he worked all week long on his first sermon, 42 minutes, he had everything he thought he needed to say to the congregation.

On Saturday night came the biggest blizzard they had in that small community in many years. As he looked out in the audience before the service was to begin at 11:00 o'clock, there was no one there. Finally, at five minutes to 11:00 this one older gentleman wearing a cowboy hat came walking down the center aisle and sat down on the front row.

The preacher looked out at 11:00, that one gentleman was still the only one there. He goes out, and being new he wanted to make a good impression. He stood up before this one gentleman and gave his full sermon, 42 minutes. When he finished, he went to the back of the room where the door was and the old gentleman came down to go out.

He said, "I really appreciate you coming this morning. I didn't know if anybody would show up, but I appreciate you fighting the blizzard to get here." This older gentleman looked at him and said, "Well, preacher, you know, I am a rancher. I have got 200 head of cattle out here." He said, "When I go out to feed them, if only 10 show up, I don't give them all the hay at one time."

So, I don't intend to give you all the hay at one time today, but I do have to thank some people for giving me the opportunity to stand here as the Commander-in-Chief of the greatest veterans' organization in the world, the Veterans of Foreign Wars. You know, I hope that you enjoyed this great convention in Orlando.

I know it wasn't the Sunshine State that Comrade Carney promised us, but I think we had a great time. I know that all of the members of the great Southern Conference that surround this state appreciate you being here. We look forward to being in Arizona next for our next convention.

You know, first, I have to thank my family, because as you progress not only as a candidate but through these chairs you spend a lot of time away from home. I want to thank my wife, Jean Gardner, who served this organization for 36 years as an employee of the Department of Texas. She retired in 2006.

To our son, John, our granddaughter Hannah, his friend Sherry, I appreciate you coming. We had a little side trip. They left Austin the other day and they got to spend the night in Houston on the way down here because of the storm. To my other granddaughter, Whitney and her husband, Zack, you owe me ten dollars. I appreciate you being here. Your family is also important to all of us.

To "Gunner" Kent and his staff, as George said, without the staff, without Betty, Phyllis and Mary Ann, and all of them that make our job so easy, I am sure sometimes we wouldn't know where we were. I got off the plane one day and my phone rang and it was Jim Nier.

He said, "Where are you?" I said, "Jim, you have been Commander-in-

Chief, and you know as well as I do I am not sure where I am. I just hope there is somebody here with a VFW cap on and a sign that says Glen Gardner on it so I will know where I go next."

To "Gunner" and his staff, we appreciate the work they do for our great organization. I look forward to working with them this year.

To Larry Maher, who does an outstanding job looking after our money. As I took that oath, Larry, I don't know why it is in there about getting the money back. You have never let me handle any money for two years, and I am not sure you will start this year. Thank you, Larry, for you and all of your staff, and Judy, and everybody for the great job they do in making sure that our investments are taken care of and we have a sound financial organization.

To Bob Wallace and his staff in Washington, let me tell you, comrades, when they get to this convention Bob and his staff are responsible for taking care of the special guests. If you have never had to deal with a Secret Service Agent, much less three different groups for two candidates and a President, I can assure you it is not an easy task and not one that anyone would volunteer to do it if they had to do it once. Bob, to you and your staff, thank you for your help and support. Thank you for what you do for us in Washington.

To Past Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius and Past Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki, thank you for giving me the opportunity the last two years to work with you as we have served this great organization. You know, we have some great discussions about some issues. Do we always agree on everything? No.

I think we work out the best compromise for what is best for the veterans that we serve in this great organization whenever we have these discussions. I appreciate the opportunity to have worked with these two fine Past Commanders-in-Chief who did an outstanding job serving as the leaders of our great organization.

To the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell and the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief – that is you, Richard – I look forward working with you this year along with the other officers that have been elected and appointed to serve our great organization during 2008-2009.

I walked out of the hotel this morning, about a quarter to 7:00, and here was Richard standing against the post. I think he had been over there all night waiting to come over for the installation. We brought him over and got him in. He is a retired Marine and he can handle anything.

To Jack Carney and Benny, and all the members of the Committee and the members of the Department of Florida, I want to thank you for the great job you have done in hosting this convention. The weather just made things a little more difficult, but I think everything went well from the food at this Convention Center to the banquet, to the great event last night. I think we owe them a big round of applause for the work they did. (Applause)

To Past Commander-in-Chief Larry Rivers and Adjutant Quartermaster Benny Bachand, I want to thank you for nominating me yesterday to serve in this high office.

To my good friend, Jim Nier, who unfortunately when he was installed as the Commander-in-Chief of this organization was in a hospital bed in Louisville, Kentucky. He has done an outstanding job leading our great organization. He continues to do an outstanding job working for the veterans as Director of the Texas Veterans Commission. I appreciate his support and his friendship over the years.

You know, to stand here and realize that fewer than 110 members of over millions that have belonged to this great organization have had the opportunity to stand here and say they are the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is truly a feeling that I can assure you that are never prepared for. You think you are, but you are not.

It is a great feeling. It is a great honor, and as I look back over the years, and even more pressure, I think, is put on you if you are a Commander-in-Chief for the Department that is provided to this great organization, for the leaders that have come from Texas since our history: Adjutant General Julian Dickinson, which helped form the foundation of this great organization as our Adjutant General.

Two of the greatest Past Commanders-in-Chief we have ever had were Ted Connell and T.C. Selman, who are not with us anymore, but did their work, and Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier, who did a great job and continues to do a great job serving our organization.

You know, from the very beginning, when I joined Post 3359, I started building a foundation to serve this organization. I want to thank all the members and leaders of Post 3359, District 3, the greatest District in the world, and to the Department of Texas who I had the opportunity to serve as the Adjutant Quartermaster for 22 years.

I also want to thank all the comrades and sisters for all of your help and all of your support. Please rise and give them a round of applause, because they are the reason I am here today. (Applause)

To all of the Southern Conference who placed their confidence in me by electing me to this high office as their candidate in November, 2005, I say thank you. Thank you for the work you do for the Veterans of Foreign Wars and thank you for being a great conference, and thank you for providing great leadership to our organization over the years.

I certainly look with anticipation in leading this organization, because I had the opportunity to serve with the Department Commander of Texas, Jerry Murphree, who also is a member of Post 3359, and that makes it even more special to have that opportunity.

You know, over the years there are individuals that help you and make things better for you. I want to say without what was instilled in me by my father, a Marine veteran of Iwo Jima, who loved our country and the need to serve veterans, and what was instilled in me by my mother, who worked for the VA in Muskogee for several years and AMVETS in their service office, who also told me how important veterans were to a country that we live in and the freedom that we enjoy. (Applause)

To Bob Hudson, who was the Commander of 3359 when I transferred, and the night I transferred into 3359 he walked up to me and said, "What are you going to do for the Veterans of Foreign Wars?" I said, "Bob, I am going to do the same thing I have done for the last five years, come down here and enjoy a cold beer once in a while."

He said, "That is not good enough." He said, "You are going to do something to help this Post." Just to get rid of him, I said, "Fine." He said, "We have a meeting Thursday night." I said, "I will be there." I just wanted him to leave me alone.

Monday morning I was at work, and he called me, "Don't forget we have got a meeting Thursday night." I said, "Okay, Bob, I will be there." Tuesday morning he called me. "I will come and get you if you want me to." I then decided at this meeting on Thursday night he is not going to leave me

alone until I do.

Being a salesman, it is not good to have people call you on the phone because you might lose out on a sale and lose money. I made up my mind right then that I better go to the meeting on Thursday night if I was ever going to get rid of him. I did. That began my career in the State organization. And to Bob, I want to say thank you for the work you did.

LaRue Cox, who was my mentor in this great organization, someone who made me and pushed me to be the greatest I could be and to be the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I will never forget that.

Thanks, most of all, to each and every one of you and the other 1.7 million members of this great organization that make us the greatest veterans' organization in the world and give me the opportunity to stand here as all Past Commanders-in-Chief have before me and the ones after me. Honor, Sacrifice and Service, I believe is a true statement that describes the work done by the members of this great organization on all levels.

I want you to also remember, and you will hear me say it many times during this year, we can't hold on to the concept of another era and expect to survive in the future. During this convention, at the Flying Squadron, as I visited your Departments, I have expressed to you and explained to you many of the changes that we are proposing during 2008-2009.

They are changes that I think will, and I know will help us build the foundation for the future of this great organization so that 100 years from today it will be comrades sitting in the room just like this installing a new Commander-in-Chief in the greatest veterans' organization in the world, the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I ask you, as you approach these changes, to approach them with a positive attitude. Always be mindful that to openly and honestly discuss things that we can do differently is not bad, it is good, and if you have ideas and you have suggestions you need to share them with leaders of this organization.

You need to be able to stand up on the convention floor and express your opinion and not be afraid that someone will criticize you or look down on you because you don't agree with everything that is going on or you don't agree with the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Ted Connell always told me that for us to agree to disagree was the greatest asset we could have for this great organization. I ask you to do that as we go forward in 2008-2009.

I want to thank you once again for everything that you do for the VFW, for everything you do for the veterans of this great country, our active military and their families.

God bless you, have a safe trip home, and God bless our troops and God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

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

MOTION TO CLOSE CONVENTION

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

COMRADE KEVIN JONES (Post 4050 – Missouri): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Kevin Jones, Post 4050, North Kansas City, Missouri. 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 109th

National Convention of the Veterans of the Foreign Wars of the United States be closed sine die.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Is there a second to the motion?

COMRADE STEVE VAN BUSKIRK (Post 7397 – Kansas): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: We have a motion made and duly seconded. Is there any discussion? Hearing no discussion, all in favor will signify by the sign of "aye"; all opposed. There being no negative votes, the "ayes" have it and the motion is passed.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, we will have the Closing Ceremonies.

CLOSING CEREMONIES

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Theodore Bowers gave the Closing Prayer.)

(Whereupon, the Honor Guard retired the Colors at this time.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the close of the 109th National Convention has been completed and your orders have been obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you. I now declare the 109th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars duly closed and adjourned sine die.

(Whereupon, the convention was duly adjourned at 9:45 o'clock a.m., sine die.)

APPROVED AMENDMENTS
TO THE NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL PROCEDURE AND RITUAL
109TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS AUGUST 16-21, 2008, ORLANDO, FLORIDA

By-Laws
B-2, B-3, B-5, B-6, B-9, B-12, B-13, B-14, B-15, B-16, B-17, B-18, B-19, B-20, B-21, B-22, B-23, B-24, B-25, B-26, B-27, B-28, B-29, B-30, B-31, B-32, B-33, B-34, B-35, B-36, B-37, B-38, B-39, B-40, B-41, B-42, B-43, B-44, B-45, B-47, B-48, B-49, B-50, B-51, B-52, B-53, B-54, B-55, B-56

Affecting National By-Laws – Sections: 109, 111, 203, 211, 215, 401, 402, 404, 405, 406, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 603, 615, 618.

Manual of Procedures
M-3, M-4, M-5, M-6, M-7, M-8, M-11, M-12, M-17, M-18, M-19, M-20, M-21, M-22, M-23, M-24, M-25, M-26, M-27, M-28, M-29, M-30, M-31, M-32, M-33, M-34, M-35, M-36, M-37, M-38, M-39, M-40, M-41, M-42, M-43, M-44, M-45, M-46, M-47, M-48, M-49, M-50, M-51, M-52, M-55, M-56, M-57, M-58, M-60, M-61

Affecting Manual of Procedure – Sections: 109, 111, 210, 213, 216, 217, 218, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 803.

Ritual
R-1, R-2 Re: Special Prayers, Order of Business (Post).

The National Council of Administration amended MOP Section 418 (M-33).

ARTICLE IV - DISTRICTS

Sec. 418—Officers: Duties and Obligations. Manual of Procedure

(a) **Officers.**
(1) **Commander.**

l. Assure that the District Inspector has properly inspected the books and records of the Posts within the District in accordance with the Department By-Laws or as directed by the State Commander.

(11) **Inspector**: The District Inspector shall ensure that each Post in the District is inspected in accordance with the Department By-Laws or as directed by the State Commander. The requirements of such inspection are:

a. That all books and records be inspected in accordance with a properly executed Inspection Form.

b. The Inspector shall provide a copy of each inspection to the Post Commander, District and Department and set forth therein any constructive

criticism and recommendations.

The Inspector shall perform such other duties as may be incident to the office or may be from time to time required by the laws and usages of the organization or on lawful orders of proper authority.

PROPOSED BY-LAW, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE & RITUAL AMENDMENTS CONSIDERED AT THE 109TH NATIONAL CONVENTION, AUGUST 16-21, 2009, ORLANDO, FLORIDA

M-1 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Connecticut

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 101—Eligibility.

Amend Section 101-- Eligibility, Manual of Procedure, by adding the following at the end of the section:

National Defense Service Medal (30 consecutive days or 60 days non-consecutive duty outside the continental limits of the United States). 27 June 1950 to a date to be determined.

B-1 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Hawaii

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 101 – Eligibility.

Amend Sec. 101 – Eligibility, National By-Laws, first paragraph, by substituting the following:

Any citizen of the United States or any United States National may be a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States who is serving or has served honorably in the Armed Forces of the United States.

M-2 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Connecticut

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 106—Former Members.

Amend Section 106—Former Members, Manual of Procedure, first paragraph, second sentence, by deleting the word “may” and inserting the word “must.”

B-2 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 109--Right of Appeal.

Amend Section 109 – Right of Appeal, National By-Laws, by deleting the first paragraph and substituting in its place the following:

Except with respect to those matters for which other provisions for appeal are made in Article IX, any member, Post, District or Department aggrieved by any acts or decisions may appeal to the next higher authority as prescribed in Section 109 of the Manual of Procedure.

M-3 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 109--Right of Appeal.

Amend Section 109 – Right of Appeal, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Any aggrieved member, Post, District or Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars may submit a written appeal to the next higher authority using the following chain of command:

1. Post and/or Post Commander
2. District Commander
3. Department Commander
4. Commander-in-Chief
5. National Council of Administration

Appeal Criteria:
A written, signed appeal shall:

1. Describe the act or decision from which the appeal is taken and the manner in which the matter at issue has been handled.
2. State all facts known to the member concerning the matter at issue.
3. Specify the provision or provisions of the Charter, By-Laws, Manual of Procedure, Ritual or the laws or usages of Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States which the act or decision violates or contradicts.
4. State the relief requested by the member.

Notification of Appeal:

Written notification of any acts or decision by a Post, District or Department Commander from which an appeal may be taken under this section shall advise the member of his right to appeal.

Computation of time:

With respect to appeals, within a specific number of days it shall mean calendar days. The time shall be calculated beginning with the day upon which the decision at the previous level was either hand delivered or mailed by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, to the last known

address of the member. Any required action by the member must be made in writing and mailed by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, and postmarked no later than the date due. The Commander-in-Chief may, at his sole discretion, grant an extension provided the request is received prior to the expiration of the time frame originally prescribed and that the request is for good and sufficient cause.

Appeals to the Post: The first right of appeal shall be made to the Post.

Appeals to the District Commander: Appeals to the District Commander from the acts or decisions of the Post or Post Commander shall be made within thirty (30) days of the act or decision from which the appeal is taken. All appeals shall be made in writing and shall be mailed by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, to the District Commander at his address of record.

Upon receipt of a proper written appeal, the District Commander shall conduct such inquiry, request such documents and evidence as he deems appropriate, and shall send a copy of the written appeal papers to the Post or County Council (if applicable) whose act or decision is the subject of the appeal. Such Post or County Council (if applicable) may make written response within thirty (30) days. A copy of such response shall be mailed to the member taking the appeal, who shall have ten (10) days from the date of such response to make any further written submission to the District Commander.

The District Commander shall decide the appeal and shall inform the member and Post, County Council (if applicable) or respective Commander in writing that the appeal is denied, or if not denied, the relief granted the member. In the event that no written decision is rendered within thirty (30) days, the appeal shall be considered denied.

The determination of the District Commander shall have full force and effect unless and until reversed by competent authority. Any member aggrieved by the acts or decisions of a District Commander shall have the right to appeal to the Department Commander.

Appeals to the Department Commander: Appeals to the Department Commander from the acts or decisions of the District Commander shall be made within thirty (30) days of the act or decision from which the appeal is taken. All appeals shall be made in writing and shall be mailed by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, to the Department Commander at Department Headquarters.

Upon receipt of a proper written appeal, the Department Commander shall conduct such inquiry, request such documents and evidence as he deems appropriate, and shall send a copy of the written appeal papers to the Post, County Council (if applicable) or District or respective Commander whose act or decision is the subject of the appeal. Such Post, County Council (if applicable), District or respective Commander may make written response within thirty (30) days. A copy of such response shall be mailed to the member taking the appeal, who shall have ten (10) days from the date of such response to make any further written submission to the Department Commander.

The Department Commander shall decide the appeal and shall inform the member and Post, County Council (if applicable) or District or respective

Commander in writing that the appeal is denied, or if not denied, the relief granted the member. In the event that no written decision is rendered within thirty (30) days, the appeal shall be considered denied.

The determination of the Department Commander shall have full force and effect unless and until reversed by competent authority. Any member aggrieved by the acts or decisions of a Department Commander, the Department Council of Administration or the Department Convention shall have the right to appeal to the Commander-in-Chief.

Appeals to the Commander-in-Chief: Appeals to the Commander-in-Chief from the acts or decisions of the Department Commander (including decisions on an appeal made to the Department Commander), the Department Council of Administration or the Department Convention shall be made within thirty (30) days of the act or decision from which the appeal is taken. All appeals shall be made in writing and shall be mailed by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, to the Commander-in-Chief at Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Headquarters.

Upon receipt of a proper written appeal, the Commander-in-Chief shall conduct such inquiry, request such documents and evidence as he deems appropriate, and shall send a copy of the written appeal papers to the Department Commander or Department Council of Administration whose act or decision is the subject of the appeal. With respect to an appeal from the Department Commander's decision on an appeal made to him, the Department Commander shall, within fifteen (15) days, forward copies of the written appeal, any responses and his decision to the Commander-in-Chief. The Department Commander or the Department Council of Administration may make written response to the member's appeal within thirty (30) days. A copy of such response shall be mailed to the member taking the appeal, who shall have ten (10) days from the date of such response to make any further written submission to the Commander-in-Chief.

Thereafter, the Commander-in-Chief shall decide the appeal and shall inform the member and the Department Commander or Department Council of Administration in writing that the appeal is denied, or if not denied, the relief granted the member. In the event that no written decision is rendered within one-hundred twenty (120) days, the appeal shall be considered denied.

The decision of the Commander-in-Chief shall have full force and effect unless and until reversed by the National Council of Administration. Any member aggrieved by the acts or decisions of the Commander-in-Chief may make a final appeal to the National Council of Administration.

Appeals to the National Council of Administration: Appeals to the National Council of Administration shall be made within thirty (30) days of the acts or decisions of the Commander-in-Chief from which appeal is taken. All such appeals shall be in writing and shall be mailed by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, to the National Council of Administration at National Headquarters, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Upon receipt of a proper written appeal, the National Council of Administration shall advise the member of the time and place that the matter will be considered and decided. The National Council shall determine the manner in which the matter will be considered.

The member shall have the right to appear at his own expense, personally

or by counsel, at such time and place as the matter is considered. The National Council of Administration shall decide the appeal and shall inform the member in writing of its decision.

B-3 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 111-- Life Members.

Amend Section 111 – Life Members, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:
(a) Life Members: Any person who is a member in good standing of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States may become a life member by payment of the applicable life membership fee to the Post Quartermaster. Any person otherwise eligible for membership, but not previously a member, may become a life member upon election to membership in accordance with Section 103, payment of any admission fee in accordance with Section 104 and submission of a life membership application and payment of the applicable life membership fee to the Post Quartermaster. A former member otherwise eligible for reinstatement to membership may become a life member upon reinstatement to membership in accordance with Section 106, payment of such reinstating fee as may be assessed by the Post and submission of a life membership application and the payment of the applicable life membership fee to the Post Quartermaster. With respect to Members-at-Large, the application and fee shall be submitted in the manner prescribed in the Manual of Procedure.
(b) Life Membership Fees: Plan E Life Membership fees shall be charged in accordance with the following Plan E fee schedule effective January 1, 2007:

Attained Age	Plan E Life Member Fee
Through 30	*$425*
31-40	*410*
41-50	*375*
51-60	*335*
61-70	*290*
71-80	*225*
81 & over	*170*

The applicable fee from the effective life membership fee schedule will be determined using the applicant's attained age as of December 31st of the current calendar year in which the application is submitted, regardless of actual date of birth.

A life member shall not be subject to further membership dues levies or life membership fees of any kind and are entitled to all membership rights,

unless suspended or terminated in accordance with the National By-Laws. An individual who is found to be ineligible for membership shall forfeit such life membership and will be entitled to a proportionate refund of life membership fees paid. An individual who is discharged from the organization by reason of disciplinary action shall forfeit their life membership and will not be entitled to any refund of fees paid.

(c) Life Membership Committee: The Life Membership Committee shall consist of the Commander-in-Chief, the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General. Such committee shall also be known as the Board of Trustees of the Life Membership Fund. The Quartermaster General shall be treasurer of the Life Membership Committee and shall have custody of the Life Membership Fund. The Life Membership Committee shall administer the Life Membership Fund, investing and reinvesting funds, to the best interest of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(d) Annual Payment: An amount, as determined by the Life Membership Committee after consultation with professionals licensed in actuarial science, shall be paid in September of the current year for the following calendar year to Posts, Departments and National Headquarters on all life members of each respective Plan recorded as of August 31 of the then current calendar year and, in addition, the same amount shall be paid in January of the following year for persons who have become life members during the period September 1 to December 31, provided, that payments to the Post to which the member belongs, Department and National Headquarters shall never total less than:

Plan A, B & C	$10.50
Plan D	$16.50
Plan E	$27.00

In the event that professional actuaries advise that Plan assets are insufficient to support the payout specified above for any such Plan, the Life Membership Committee, with the concurrence of the National Council of Administration, may authorize a lesser payout with respect to such Plan, consistent with the actuaries' recommendations.

Death of a life member following issuance of the checks paying the member's annual payment for the next calendar year to Post, Department and National Headquarters, shall not be a cause for a refund of such payment for that calendar year.

M-4 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 111-- Life Members.

Amend Section 111 – Life Members, Manual of Procedure, by substituting

in its place the following:

Any applicant whose 31st, 41st, 51st, 61st, 71st or 81st birthday will occur after the date of application and on or before December 31 of the current calendar year shall pay only the fee that would be required on his next birthday.

Upon receipt of the applicable fee, the Post Quartermaster shall immediately forward payment together with the life membership application of the individual to the Quartermaster General (or, if required by the Department, through the Department Quartermaster to the Quartermaster General). In the case of Members-at-Large, the payment, along with the life membership application, shall be forwarded to the Quartermaster General. The life membership shall become effective immediately upon the receipt of the full fee by the Quartermaster General. The Quartermaster General shall deposit all sums received for life membership in a special fund called the Life Membership Fund, and shall issue a suitable life membership card.

Death of a life member prior to December 31 of the calendar year an applicant's life membership is processed by the Quartermaster General shall be cause for a refund of the life member fee if requested by the Post Quartermaster or Department Quartermaster. Annual payments paid from the Life Membership Fund to the Post, Department or National Headquarters will be deducted from any such refund.

Members-at-Large: A Member-at-Large in good standing, a prospective Member-at-Large otherwise eligible for membership but not previously a member and a prospective Member-at-Large that was a former member and otherwise eligible for reinstatement may become a Life Member by submitting the application and applicable fee in the manner prescribed by the National Council of Administration.

B-4 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Tennessee

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 203—Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

Amend Section 203-- Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees, fifth paragraph, National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Authorized Attendees. Any member of the Post and those on official business shall be permitted to attend Post meetings.

B-5 APPROVED
Proposed by Department of Tennessee

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 203—Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

Amend Section 203-- Regular, Special and Committee Meetings;

Quorum; Authorized Attendees, sixth paragraph, National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Guests. With the approval of the Post Commander/Committee Chairman, any member or guest may attend a Post/Committee meeting. Such visiting member or guest shall have no voice unless recognized by the Post Commander/Committee Chairman, and shall have no voting privileges.

M-5 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE II– POSTS

Sec. 210--Surrender of Charter.

Amend Section 210 – Surrender of Charter, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

A Post may surrender its charter in accordance with the procedures herein set forth as follows:

1. A motion to consider surrendering a Post charter shall be made and approved at a stated meeting of the Post. If approved, the Post Commander shall immediately provide the Department Commander with a list describing all assets and liabilities of the Post.
2. A Post may then, after at least twenty (20) days written notice to the Department Commander and members of the Post, vote to surrender the charter upon a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and voting at a stated meeting.
3. The Department Commander shall be notified immediately after the meeting, in writing, of the outcome of the vote to surrender the charter of a Post. If approved, the Department Commander shall within thirty (30) days, request that the Commander-in-Chief cancel the charter. Pending such cancellation the Post shall not dispose of any assets.

Disposition of Property. In case of surrender or forfeiture of a charter, all of the property of the Post, including real property, books of record and papers and money belonging to it, shall be immediately recovered by the District and turned over to the Department for disposition as directed by the Department Council of Administration for the purposes set forth in the Congressional Charter.

In case of surrender or forfeiture of a charter, the Department Council of Administration in the case of trust funds or trust property, or both, shall carry out the intent and purpose of such trust to the extent of such funds or property, or both.

B-6 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 211--Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Amend Section 211 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Actions by the Commander-in-Chief—Suspension. The Commander-in-Chief may suspend a Post Charter for a period of up to six (6) months for violations of the National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

Establishment of Trusteeship. Upon the imposition of any suspension under this section, the Department Commander shall establish a trusteeship as prescribed in Section 211 of the Manual of Procedure.

Actions by the Commander-in-Chief—Revocation. The Commander-in-Chief may revoke a Post Charter.

Actions by the Department Commander—Suspension. The Department Commander may suspend a Post Charter for a period of up to three (3) months.

M-6 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 211--Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Amend Section 211 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

1. Actions by the Commander-in-Chief—Suspension.
The Commander-in-Chief may suspend a post charter in accordance with the procedures herein set forth.

a. The Commander-in-Chief shall issue a Special Order directing the Department Commander to suspend a Post Charter.

2. Actions by the Commander-in-Chief—Revocation.
The Commander-in-Chief may revoke a Post Charter in accordance with the procedures herein set forth.

a. The Post Commander shall be notified in writing of the proposed action by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the address of record.

b. Unless the Post Commander notifies the Commander-in-Chief in writing by certified mail, return receipt requested, within fifteen (15) days of receipt of notice that the Post desires a hearing, the revocation of the Charter shall be effected.

c. In the event that the Post requests a hearing, said hearing shall be held within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the notice. A hearing will be scheduled at a time and place and in a manner prescribed by the Commander-in-Chief.

d. The Commander-in-Chief shall decide the matter within thirty (30)

days.

e. If the Post is not already under suspension at the time that the notice of proposed revocation is given, the Post shall thereafter be under suspension.

f. The Commander-in-Chief may at his discretion, and after hearing the matter if so requested, revoke the charter of the Post by issuing a Special Order to that effect.

3. Actions by the Department Commander—Suspension.

The Department Commander may suspend a Post Charter in accordance with the procedures herein set forth.

a. The Department Commander shall issue a Special Order suspending a Post Charter and appointing trustees consisting of three to five members. Pursuant to a written grant of powers and limitations, such trustees shall carry on the business and affairs of the Post during the period of suspension. The acts and actions of the trustees shall be subject to the approval or disapproval of the Department Commander.

b. The Post Commander shall be notified in writing of the action by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the address of record or by personal delivery by a designated representative.

c. The Department Commander shall notify the Commander-in-Chief in writing within two (2) days.

d. While under suspension no meetings shall be held in the name of the Post or organization, except for the sole purpose of the discussion of the cause, effect or removal of the penalty and no funds of the Post shall be expended or obligations incurred during and while the order of suspension is in force and effect except as may be expended or obligated by the trustees appointed under this subsection.

e. Following an initial suspension period as provided in this subsection, the Department Commander shall revoke or extend the suspension for an additional period of time not to exceed ninety (90) days.

4. Actions by the Department Commander—Revocation.

The Department Commander may at any time during the suspension period, recommend revocation of the Post Charter to the Commander-in-Chief.

B-7 REJECTED

Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 213-- Arrearages, Deficiencies and Omissions.

Amend Section 213 – Arrearages, Deficiencies and Omissions, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Any Post in arrears for any financial obligations to District, Department and National for fees, dues, poppy money, supply money, failing to have the office of Quartermaster properly bonded in accordance with Section 703, failing to ensure that the Post is properly insured in accordance with Section 709, failing to submit properly completed quarterly Post Trustees Report of Audit, Post Election Report for the ensuing year, or other obligations, shall be deprived of all representation in County Council meetings (if applicable),

District, Department and National Conventions. Such representation shall be restored promptly upon proper adjustment of such deficiencies.

A properly completed Post Election Report shall be submitted to National Headquarters prior to the convening of the Department Convention.

M-7 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 213--Arrearages.

Amend Section 213 – Arrearages, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 213-- Arrearages, Deficiencies and Omissions.

If a Post has any outstanding financial obligations due National Headquarters that remain unpaid on September 1, the amount due will be deducted from future dues payments until balance due is paid in full.

B-8 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Washington

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 213—Arrearages, Deficiencies and Omissions.

Amend Section 213-- Arrearages, Deficiencies and Omissions, National By-Laws, by substituting the following:

Any Post in arrears for any financial obligation to County Council (if applicable), District, Department or National for fees, dues, poppy money, supply money, failing to have the office of the Quartermaster properly bonded in accordance with Section 703, failing to ensure that the Post is properly insured in accordance with Section 709, failing to submit properly completed quarterly Post Trustees Report of Audit, Post Election Report for the ensuing year, or other obligations, shall be deprived of all representation in County Council (if applicable), District, Department or National Conventions. Such representation shall be restored promptly upon proper adjustment of such deficiencies.

B-9 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 215—Eligibility to Office.

Amend Section 215 – Eligibility to Office, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

All members shall be eligible to hold any office in the Post provided that proof of eligibility has been submitted and verified by the Post Commander and Adjutant prior to the installation. No member shall hold two elective Post offices at the same time but may hold one elective and one or more appointive offices. Elected committee members are not Post Officers and accordingly may concurrently hold an elected Post office as provided for in Section 216 of these By-Laws. Post officers, elected or appointed, may be eligible to hold office in a higher body and such offices may be held concurrently.

Post trustees shall not be eligible to serve on committees or as officers having to do with the receipt and expenditure of Post funds whose records and accounts are audited by the trustees.

Any officer or committee member whose membership is not in good standing by reason of failure to pay current dues by December 31 shall forfeit his eligibility to hold any office in that administrative year.

Any member who has been suspended of certain rights or privileges of membership for a specified period of time shall forfeit his eligibility to hold any office during the period of suspension.

B-10 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Washington

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 215—Eligibility to Office.

Amend Section 215-- Eligibility to Office, National By-Laws, by adding the following sentence at the end of the first paragraph:

No member shall hold two elective Post offices at the same time, but may hold one elective and one or more appointive offices, except that a trustee may simultaneously hold the office of Chaplain, Surgeon or Judge Advocate.

M-8 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 216--Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Section 216 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

The Commander, on the night of election or as soon thereafter as possible, shall appoint the Adjutant, Officer of the Day, Service Officer, Guard and such other officers, chairmen and committees as may be required by Department or Post By-Laws or by vote of the Post membership. The Commander may appoint such other officers, chairmen and committees as he deems appropriate to properly conduct the affairs of the Post. The Commander retains authority to remove officers, committee chairmen and committee members appointed by him at any time.

Post officers, elected and appointed, shall submit proof of eligibility to the Post Adjutant. Post 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 Commander, Adjutant and Quartermaster 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, the office declared vacant and the eligibility qualifications of such officer shall be questioned in accordance with the provisions of Section 108 of the National By-Laws.

B-11 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Florida

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 216—Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Section 216-- Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees, subsections (a) and (b), National By-Laws, by deleting subsections (a) and (b) and substituting the following:

(a) The Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster and Trustees shall be elected. Unless provided for in the Post by-laws, the Judge Advocate, Chaplain and Surgeon will be appointed.

(b) The appointed officers of each Post shall consist of at least a Judge Advocate, Chaplain, Surgeon, Adjutant, Officer of the Day, Service Officer and Guard to be appointed as prescribed in Section 216 of the Manual of Procedure.

M-9 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Florida

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 216—Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Section 216-- Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees, Manual of Procedure, by substituting the following:

The Commander on the night of the election or as soon thereafter as possible, shall appoint the Judge Advocate, Chaplain, Adjutant, Officer of the Day, Service Officer and Guard.

M-10 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Washington

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 216—Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Section 216-- Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees, Manual of Procedure, by the addition of a second paragraph:

Post Officers, elected and appointed, shall submit proof of eligibility to the Post Adjutant. Post 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 Commander, Adjutant and Quartermaster 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 to the officer to hold the office shall be forfeited, the office declared vacant and the eligibility qualifications of such officer shall be questioned in accordance with the provisions of Section 108 of the National By-Laws.

M-11 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 217—Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

Amend Section 217 – Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Order of nominations and elections. The order of nominations and elections shall be Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster, Chaplain, Judge Advocate, Surgeon and Trustee(s).

Nomination. Prior to the opening of nominations, the Post shall decide which form of election shall be used, unless the Post By-Laws specify the manner of election. Post officers shall be nominated in March.
Any nominee shall have the opportunity to decline nomination for the office to which he has been nominated before nominations are closed. A member making the nomination of an absentee for any office shall have presented to the Adjutant, in writing, the consent of the member being nominated prior to the opening of nominations. Nominations shall remain open until the Post is ready to vote, provided, however, that when a poll system and preprinted ballots are used, as hereinafter described, nominations must be closed at the meeting at which nominations are made.

Election. Post officers shall be elected in April. Balloting for Post officers may be conducted by open vote or written secret ballot (handwritten or printed) at a regular Post meeting, or, if required by Post By-Laws or authorized by Post vote prior to the opening of nominations, by a poll system and preprinted

ballot. Absentee ballots and proxy votes are prohibited.

A majority vote of all votes cast, except where otherwise designated, shall be necessary to elect. If there be no election on the first ballot, the name of the comrade receiving the lowest number of votes shall be dropped and so on in successive ballots until an election is made.

Poll System and Preprinted Ballot. The Post shall determine where and during what hours the polls shall be open for members in good standing to cast their vote; and shall determine the procedure for tallying the votes; and the procedure to be followed in the event of a tie. Due notice of any election to be conducted pursuant to poll system and preprinted ballot, including the time and place for voting, shall be provided to members in good standing within reasonable time prior to the date of the election. That notice shall contain the names of the candidates. The preprinted ballot shall have a space or spaces for write-in candidates. The candidate receiving the greater number of votes cast shall be the winner.

Challenging Election Results. If irregularities are claimed with respect to the election to any office, such challenge must be made in a writing containing specific details concerning the irregularities, signed by the challenger, and forwarded to the District Commander, mailed no later than three (3) days after the election.

Installation of Officers. The Post Commander-elect will select the installing officer who holds or has held a rank at least as high as that of Post Commander. Post officers shall be installed in their respective offices prior to the convening of the Department Convention, but shall not assume their duties until the Department Commander is installed. The installation may be conducted publicly at an open meeting.

An officer-elect who may be absent for good and sufficient reason or cause may be installed at any regular or special meeting prior to the Department convention. If not then installed, the office will automatically become vacant.

Term of Office. Officers shall be elected for a term of one (1) year except that three trustees shall initially be elected for terms of one (1), two (2) and three (3) years and thereafter one (1) trustee shall be elected each year for a term of three (3) years.

M-12 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 218--Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Section 218 – Officers: Duties and Obligations, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

(a) **Officers.**
(1) **Commander.** Among the duties of a Post Commander, he shall:

a. Preside at all meetings of the Post, conducting such meetings in accordance with Article X of the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure and other applicable parliamentary rules.
b. Enforce strict observance of the laws and usages of this organization, including Post, County Council (if applicable), District and Department By-Laws and the Congressional Charter, National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual and all lawful orders from proper authorities.
c. Insist that Post business and activities be conducted in such a manner that they do not violate any applicable governmental law, ordinance or regulation nor bring or tend to bring dishonor or embarrassment upon the Post, its members or the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.
d. Decide all questions of law and usage in the Post, subject to appeal pursuant to the By-Laws.
e. Appoint officers, committee chairmen and committees not otherwise provided for. He may remove such appointed officers, committee chairmen and committees at his pleasure. He shall, by virtue of his office, be a member of all committees.
f. Approve all disbursements of funds properly authorized by the Post.
g. Assure that the office of Quartermaster is bonded according to Section 703 of the By-Laws.
h. Assure that all dues and other monies due the National Headquarters and Department are forwarded promptly together with accurate reports and returns pertaining thereto.
i. Assure that all reports are correctly prepared and promptly forwarded, that all the business of the Post is handled with dispatch and that all necessary licenses and permits are obtained for proper operation. Ensure that a properly completed Report of Election of Officers for the ensuing year is submitted to Department and National Headquarters by June 1.
j. Assure that the Post Trustees have examined the books and records of the Post and prepared the Post Trustees Quarterly Report of Audit no later than the end of the month following the last day of each quarterly period. He shall forward a copy to the Department Quartermaster.
k. Assure that he or his representative attend all properly called District Conventions or meetings and County Council meetings (if applicable).
l. Comply with and perform all of the duties required by the laws and usages of this organization, the provisions of these By-Laws, the Manual of Procedure and Ritual and Department, District, County Council (if applicable) or Post By-Laws pertaining to the duties and obligations of a Post Commander and lawful orders from proper authority and perform such other duties as are usually incident to the office. Failure without just cause to perform these duties may result in removal from office.

(2) **Senior Vice Commander.** The Post Senior Vice Commander shall assist the Commander in preserving order, preside in the absence of the Commander, provide such advice or assistance as may be required and perform such other duties as are 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.

(3) **Junior Vice Commander.** The Post Junior Vice Commander shall assist the Commander in preserving order, preside in the absence of the Commander and Senior Vice Commander, provide such advice or assistance as may be required and perform such other duties as are incident to such office or

may from time to time be required of him by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(4) **Commander Pro Tempore.** In the event that neither the Commander, Senior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander is present, the Post shall elect a Commander Pro Tempore to preside at the meeting of the Post.

(5) **Quartermaster.** Among the duties of a Post Quartermaster, he shall:

a. Qualify and secure a bond in a sum at least equal to the amount of the liquid assets for which he may be accountable in accordance with Section 703.

b. Collect all monies due the Post, giving receipt therefore, and have charge of the funds, securities and other property of the Post, all of which shall be placed in his care. He shall be the accountable officer of the Post and the Treasurer of all committees handling funds.

c. Disburse funds as properly authorized by the Post using accepted banking practices. Unless otherwise provided for in Post By-Laws, all disbursements of Post funds shall bear the signature of the Quartermaster or other person(s) authorized by the Quartermaster. Such other authorized person(s) shall be bonded with an indemnity company as surety in a sum at least equal to the amount of the liquid assets for which he may be accountable in accordance with Section 703.

d. Receive annual membership dues (admission fees if applicable) and life membership fees and forward the Department and National dues and life membership fees immediately to National Headquarters as prescribed in Section 104.

e. Provide the Post Trustees with all records, files and statements required or necessary for the preparation of the Post Trustees Quarterly Report of Audit.

f. Maintain a dues reserve fund as prescribed in Section 717 of the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

g. Maintain a relief fund as prescribed in Section 704 of the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

h. The books and records of the Quartermaster shall be maintained in a legible and uniform format. Record keeping by electronic means may be used, provided a back-up and a hard copy is maintained. Books and records shall be available for inspection by authorized officers and Post members at all reasonable times. Reconcile and verify all transactions listed on all bank statements to assure the accuracy of post records. Unless authorized by the Post to remove such books and records from its facilities, all such books and records shall be kept at the Post facilities.

i. He shall provide access and transfer to his successor in office or anyone designated by higher authority, without delay, all books, records, papers, monies, securities and other property of the Post in his possession or under his control.

j. Comply with, and perform all duties required of him by the laws and usages of this organization, applicable By-Laws and order's from lawful authority and perform such other duties as are incident to such office.

k. Report on transactions concerning receipts and expenditures, for any given period, at a regular or special meeting of the Post.

l. File appropriate forms as required by Federal, State and Local Statues.

(6) **Adjutant.** Among the duties of the Post Adjutant, he shall:

a. Be the official corresponding officer for the Post and shall attest to all

official communications and reports with his signature.

b. Under the direction of the Commander, prepare all reports and returns required of him.

c. Maintain the books and records in a legible and uniform format. Record keeping by electronic means may be used, provided a back-up and a hard copy is maintained. Books and records shall be available for inspection by authorized officers and Post members at all reasonable times. Unless authorized by the Post to remove such books and records from its facilities, all such books and records shall be kept at the Post facilities.

d. The Post Adjutant shall maintain the following records:

1. A copy of the original application of every member admitted to the Post.
2. Minutes of each Post meeting after correction and approval.
3. All current orders or circulars issued by the Commander-in-Chief, the National Council of Administration, the Department Commander, the District and/or County Council Commander (if applicable) or the Post Commander.
4. A correspondence file.
5. A file containing a copy of the proof of eligibility submitted by officers pursuant to Section 216.

e. Maintain a current copy of the By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and copies of the By-Laws of the Post, Department, District and County Council (if applicable).

f. Transfer to his successor, without delay, all books, papers, records, monies and other records and property of the Post in his possession or under his control.

g. Comply with and perform all duties required of him by the laws and usages of this organization, applicable By-Laws and orders from lawful authority and perform such other duties as are incident to such office.

(7) **Chaplain.** The Post Chaplain shall perform such duties as are incident to the office or as may from time to time be required of him by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(8) **Judge Advocate.** The Post Judge Advocate shall perform such duties as may be incident to the office or as may from time to time be required of him by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(9) **Surgeon.** The Post Surgeon shall perform such duties as are incident to the office or as may from time to time be required of him by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(10) **Officer of the Day.** The Officer of the Day shall perform such duties as may be incident to the office or may from time to time be required of him by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(11) **Trustees.** Trustees shall not be eligible to serve on committees or as officers whose books, records and accounts are audited by the Trustees. Among the duties of the three (3) elected Post Trustees, they shall:

a. At least monthly, review the Monthly Report of Receipts and Expenditures of the Post Quartermaster.

b. Not later than the end of the month following the last day of each quarterly period, at the direction of the Post Commander, properly audit

the books and records of the Post Quartermaster, Post Adjutant, and any activity, clubroom, holding company or unit sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or on behalf of the Post and submit a Post Trustee's Report of Audit to the Department Quartermaster for referral to the Department Inspector.

c. The Report shall be in accordance with and upon such form as may be prescribed by the Adjutant General. The audit shall be signed by the Post Commander and Trustees, who shall, by their signatures, certify to the accuracy of the information contained therein.

d. Perform such other duties as may be incident to the office or may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(12) **Service Officer.** The Post Service Officer shall assist members of the Post, their widows and orphans and other worthy cases brought to their attention in obtaining rightful entitlements from federal and state governments. The work of a Service Officer shall be performed in accordance with the instructions contained in the VFW Guide for Service Officers under the general supervision of the Department Service Officer. He shall perform such other duties as may be incident to the office and as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

M-13 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Michigan

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 218 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 218 -- Officers: Duties and Obligations, subsection (a) Officers. (1) Commander. (g.), Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Assure that the office of Quartermaster is bonded or insured according to Section 703 of the National By-Laws.

M-14 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Michigan

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 218 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 218 -- Officers: Duties and Obligations, subsection (a) Officers. (5) Quartermaster (a.), Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Qualify and secure a bond or dishonesty insurance in a sum at least equal to the amount of the liquid assets for which he may be accountable in accordance with Section 703 of the National By-Laws.

M-15 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Michigan

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 218 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 218 -- Officers: Duties and Obligations, subsection (a) Officers. (5) Quartermaster (c.), Manual of Procedure, by deleting the last sentence and substituting in its place the following:

Such other authorized person(s) shall be bonded or insured with an indemnity company as surety in a sum at least equal to the amount of the liquid assets for which he may be accountable in accordance with Section 703.

M-16 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Washington

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 218—Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Section 218-- Officers: Duties and Obligations, subsection (a) Officers, Manual of Procedure, by replacing sections (7), (8), (9) and (10) with the following:

(7) **Chaplain.** The Post Chaplain shall be Chairman of the Visiting Committee of the Post. He/she shall, with the assistance of such other members as may be appointed by the Commander, visit the sick and disabled members of the Post and make a report to the Post concerning same. He/she shall perform such other duties as are incident to the office or as may from time to time be required of him/her by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.
(8) **Judge Advocate.** The Post Judge Advocate shall give the Post Commander such legal assistance, incident to his/her office, as he may request, and perform such other duties as are incident to the office or as may from time to time be required of him/her by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.
(9) **Surgeon.** The Post Surgeon shall be Chairman of the Health Committee and, with the assistance of such other members as may be appointed by the Commander, shall promote and put into effect health programs for the benefit of the Post and the community. He/she shall perform such other duties as are incident to the office or as may from time to time be required of him/her by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.
(10) **Officer of the Day.** The Officer of the Day shall:

a. At the beginning of every meeting, cause the official membership dues receipt card or life membership card of every member present to be inspected, and shall instruct those without proper credentials to immediately contact the Quartermaster for verification or update of membership status. The Officer of the Day shall not permit a member whose dues have not been paid through the calendar year to remain at a Post

meeting.
b. He/she shall, with the assistance of the Color Bearers, present and retire the National Flag and Post Colors and properly present and introduce distinguished guests.
c. At the direction of the Post Commander, prepare the ballots, permit only those to cast their ballots who are qualified, and observe that the balloting is done in a secret and proper manner.
d. To the best of his/her ability, carry out the orders of the Commander and the Post and perform such other duties as may be usually incident to the office or as may from time to time be required of him/her by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

B-12 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 401—Formation, Chartering.

Amend Section 401 – Formation, Chartering, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 401—Formation, Institution and Chartering.

The Department Convention or the Department Council of Administration, if provided for in Department By-Laws, shall determine the number of Districts and the geographical boundaries established in the Department. No District shall be established with less than ten (10) Posts and 750 members.

A Charter shall be issued by the Commander-in-Chief to such Districts as the Department Convention determines to establish. The Charter shall be signed by the Commander-in-Chief and countersigned by the Adjutant General.

M-17 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 401—Formation, Chartering.

Amend Section 401 – Formation, Chartering, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 401—Formation, Institution and Chartering.

(See Section 401 By-Laws)

B-13 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 402—Governing Body; Composition.

Amend Section 402 – Governing Body; Composition, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 402—By-Laws.

A District may adopt by-laws governing the District, provided such by-laws do 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 or the By-laws of the Department having jurisdiction. By-laws approved by a District shall be forwarded as provided in the Manual of Procedure prior to becoming effective.

M-18 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 402—Governing Body; Composition.

Amend Section 402 – Governing Body; Composition, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 402—By-Laws.

A District may adopt or amend By-Laws at a District Convention.

Copies of by-laws, including amendments, adopted by a District shall be forwarded to the Commander-in-Chief, through channels. Such proposed by-laws or amendments shall be submitted to the Department Commander who shall review them for compliance with the Department By-Laws and shall forward them, with a recommendation, to the Commander-in-Chief within thirty (30) days, certifying that there is no conflict in the proposed by-laws with the Department By-Laws. No by-laws or amendments adopted by a District 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.

B-14 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 403

Amend Section 403, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 403 –Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

Regular Meeting. Unless otherwise provided for in Department By-Laws, Districts shall hold at least three (3) regular meetings each year for purposes as prescribed in the Manual of Procedure.

Special Meeting. Special meetings will be called in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Manual of Procedure. No business shall be transacted at any special meeting except that for which the meeting was called.

Committee Meeting. Meetings called by District Committee Chairmen, or as authorized by the District By-Laws, for the purpose of conducting the business of that committee.

Convention. 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 nor more than seventy-five (75) days prior to the convening of the Department Convention.

Quorum. The minimum number of delegates required to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a regular meeting, special meeting or District Convention shall be not less than one (1) delegate each from fifty (50) percent of Posts in the District; provided, the Department By-Laws may prescribe a different number of delegates required to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Authorized Attendees. Any member, not a member of the District Convention, may attend the Convention, however, they shall have no voice in business discussions unless requested by the Commander, and shall have no voting privileges. Those on official business shall be recognized by the Commander for the conduct of business.

M-19 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 403

Amend Section 403, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 403 –Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

Regular Meeting. At least one (1) regular meeting shall be held by the District each year for the purpose of promoting schools of instruction for Post officers.

Special Meeting. Special meetings must be called for a date not more than fourteen (14) days after: (a) the District Commander receives the signed, written request; or (b) the majority vote of the members present at a regular meeting; or (c) the date upon which the District Commander determines that a special meeting may be necessary.

The District Adjutant shall give notice, in writing, of the time and place of any special meeting and of the business to be transacted, such notice to be given in such manner as to reasonably reach each Post Commander, District officer and Department Commander at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the time set for the meeting.

The District Commander shall call a special meeting upon the signed written request of a majority of the Posts or upon the vote of a majority of the members present at a regular meeting. The District Commander may call a special meeting of the District whenever in his opinion it may be necessary for the welfare of the District.

No business shall be transacted at any special meeting except that for which the meeting is called.

B-15 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 404--By-Laws.

Amend Section 404 – By-Laws, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 404—Governing Body; Composition.

Each District shall be governed by a District Convention.

The District Convention and District meetings shall consist of:

1. The Commander-in-Chief and Past Commanders-in-Chief who are members in good standing in a Post in the District.
2. The National Council of Administration member who is in good standing in a Post in the District.
3. The Department Commander and Past Department Commanders who are members in good standing in a Post in the District.
4. The District Commander, all Past District Commanders who are members in good standing in a Post in the District, all elective officers of the District and the Adjutant.

   Should any District's geographical boundaries be changed, due to redistricting, any Past District Commander, who is a member in good standing, in a Post, within the geographical boundaries of the District he was elected from and served to the end of his term as District Commander shall retain his title, recognition and any privilege he may otherwise be entitled to, including voting.
5. All County Council Commanders (if applicable) throughout the District.
6. All Post Commanders throughout the District. In the absence of the Post Commander, the Post Senior Vice Commander, or, in

his absence the Post Junior Vice Commander may function as a member of the Convention or meetings.
7. Delegates to be elected by the Posts as prescribed in Section 421 of the By-Laws.

M-20 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 404--By-Laws.

Amend Section 404 –Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 404—Governing Body; Composition.

(See Section 404 By-Laws)

B-16 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 405--Conventions.

Amend Section 405 – Conventions, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 405

M-21 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 405--Conventions.

Amend Section 405 – Conventions, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 405

B-17 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 406--Conventions.

Amend Section 406 – Conventions, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 406 – District Dues

Delegates assembled at a District Convention, providing notice has been given to each Post thirty (30) days in advance of pending proposal, may assess or increase annual dues per member per Post.

M-22 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 406—Regular and Special Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

Amend Section 406 – Regular and Special Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 406 – District Dues

(See Section 406 By-Laws)

B-18 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 408—Surrender or Forfeiture of Charter.

Amend Section 408 – Surrender or Forfeiture of Charter, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 408

M-23 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 408—Surrender or Forfeiture of Charter.

Amend Section 408 – Surrender or Forfeiture of Charter, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 408

B-19 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 409—Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Amend Section 409 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 409

M-24 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 409—Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Amend Section 409 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 409

B-20 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 410—Defunct Districts.

Amend Section 410 – Defunct Districts, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 410 – Surrender of Charter

Voluntary Surrender. A District may voluntarily surrender its charter only upon a vote at a District convention conducted in accordance with the procedures herein set forth. A proposition to surrender the charter must be made at a meeting of the District at least four (4) weeks before the convening of the District Convention and due notice of the proposition must be given, in writing, to every Post in the District, and to the Department Commander. If a majority of the Posts vote to surrender the Charter, the District Commander shall, within thirty (30) days, notify the Department Commander of such action and unless the Department Commander during said thirty (30) day period receives a demand in writing from two-thirds (2/3) of the Posts in the District to continue the District, the cancellation or revocation of the District

Charter shall be effected by requesting the Commander-in-Chief to cancel or revoke the Charter.

Disposition of Property. In case of surrender or forfeiture of a charter, all of the property of the District, including real property, books of record and papers and money belonging to it, shall be immediately recovered by the Department Commander and turned over to the Department for disposition as directed by the Department Council of Administration for the purposes set forth in the Congressional Charter.

In case of surrender or forfeiture of a charter, the Department Council of Administration in the case of trust funds or trust property, or both, shall carry out the intent and purpose of such trust to the extent of such funds or property, or both.

M-25 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 410—Defunct Districts.

Amend Section 410 – Defunct Districts, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 410 – Surrender of Charter

(See Sec. 410 By-Laws)

B-21 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 411—District Dues.

Amend Section 411 – District Dues, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 411 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

(a) **Actions by the Department Commander--Suspension.** The Department Commander may suspend a District Charter.
(b) **Actions by the Department Convention--Revocation.** The Department Convention may cancel or revoke a District Charter.
(d) **Establishment of a Trusteeship.** Upon the imposition of any suspension under this section, the Department Commander shall establish a trusteeship as prescribed in Section 411 of the Manual of Procedure.

M-26 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 411—District Dues.

Amend Section 411 – District Dues, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 411 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

1. Actions by the Department Commander—Suspension.

The Department Commander may suspend a District Charter in accordance with the procedures herein set forth.

a. The Department Commander shall issue a Special Order suspending a District Charter and appointing trustees consisting of three to five members. Pursuant to a written grant of powers and limitations, such trustees shall carry on the business and affairs of the District during the period of suspension. The acts and actions of the trustees shall be subject to the approval or disapproval of the Department Commander.

b. The District Commander shall be notified in writing of the action by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the address of record or by personal delivery by a designated representative.

c. The Department Commander shall notify the Commander-in-Chief in writing within two (2) days.

d. While under suspension no meetings shall be held in the name of the District or organization, except for the sole purpose of the discussion of the cause, effect or removal of the penalty and no funds of the District shall be expended or obligations incurred during and while the order of suspension is in force and effect except as may be expended or obligated by the trustees appointed under this subsection.

e. Following an initial suspension period as provided in this subsection, the Department Commander shall revoke or extend the suspension for an additional period of time not to exceed ninety (90) days.

2. Actions by the Department Convention—Revocation.

The Department Commander may at any time during the suspension period, recommend revocation of the District Charter to the Department Convention.

B-22 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 412--Solicitation of Funds.

Amend Section 412 – Solicitation of Funds, National By-Laws, by

substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 412--Defunct Districts.

Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 410, if and when the Posts in good standing in a District are less than five (5) in number, the District's charter may be canceled by the Department Convention.

In the event of such a cancellation, disposition of the property and trust funds of the District shall be in the manner prescribed in Section 410.

M-27 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 412--Solicitation of Funds.

Amend Section 412 – Solicitation of Funds, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 412--Defunct Districts.

(See Sec. 412 By-Laws)

B-23 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 413—Eligibility to Office.

Amend Section 413 – Eligibility to Office, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 413—Arrearages, Deficiencies and Omissions.

The Commander of the District in arrears for financial obligations to Department or National, for fees, dues, poppy money, supply money, or failing to have the office of the Quartermaster properly bonded in accordance with Section 703, failing to ensure that the District is properly insured in accordance with Section 709, failing to submit properly completed District Trustees Report of Audit, District Election Report for the ensuing year, or other obligations, shall be deprived of all representation at the Department Convention. Such representation shall be restored promptly upon proper adjustment of such deficiencies.

A properly completed District Election Report shall be submitted to National Headquarters prior to the convening of the Department Convention.

M-28 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 413—Eligibility to Office.

Amend Section 413 – Eligibility to Office, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 413—Arrearages.

(See Sec. 413 By-Laws)

B-24 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 414--Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Section 414 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 414—Solicitation of Funds.

Districts shall be permitted to solicit funds or donations only as prescribed in the Manual of Procedure.

M-29 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 414--Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Section 414 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 414—Solicitation of Funds.

Districts may solicit funds or contributions or otherwise engage in fund-raising activities and projects only by prior vote of the District agreeing to such solicitations, activities or projects. Districts shall assure that such solicitations, activities or projects do not violate any applicable governmental law, ordinance or regulation or bring or tend to bring dishonor or embarrassment upon the District, its members 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.

A District shall not solicit funds or contributions or engage in fund-raising activities or projects of any kind outside the immediate geographical area of the District. A District whose territory is partly within a city may solicit funds within the entire city.

Fund-raising organizations or individuals conducting solicitations, activities or projects for a profit shall not be engaged or used by any District for such purpose unless such engagement is made by written agreement between the District and the organization or individuals providing those services. The form of any such written agreement must be submitted to the Department Commander for review and approval at least thirty (30) days prior to any District entering into any such agreement.

In the event a District shall employ or enter into an agreement with a fund-raising organization or individual to solicit contributions or engage in a fund-raising project, a surety bond or cash advance in the full amount of expected collections from the solicitation or project shall be furnished by the fund-raising organization or individual, said bond or cash advance guaranteeing payment of the funds solicited or raised to a bonded officer of the District within thirty (30) days of the close of the solicitation or project, provided, however, that the bond shall be discharged or cash advance returned if such fund-raising organization or individual shall make payment within thirty (30) days. If a bond or cash advance cannot be furnished, then all collections shall be made by members of the District sponsoring the solicitation or fund-raising project and funds shall be paid to a bonded officer of the District who shall hold the funds pending proper distribution.

B-25 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 415--Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

Amend Section 415 – Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 415—Eligibility to Office.

Any member in a Post in the District shall be eligible to any office in the District; provided, no member shall hold two (2) elective District offices at the same time, but may hold one (1) elective and one (1) or more appointive offices. District officers, elected or appointed, shall be eligible to hold office in a higher or lower body, and such offices may be held concurrently, except as provided for in Section 515 of these By-Laws.

District trustees shall not be eligible to serve on committees or as officers having to do with the receipt and expenditure of District funds whose records and accounts are audited by the trustees.

Any officer or committee member whose membership is not in good standing by reason of failure to pay current dues by December 31 shall forfeit his eligibility to hold any office during that administrative year.

Any member who has been suspended of certain rights or privileges of membership for a specified period of time shall forfeit his eligibility to hold any office during the period of suspension.

M-30 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 415--Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

Amend Section 415 – Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 415—Eligibility to Office.

(See Sec. 415 By-Laws)

B-26 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 416—Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations.

Amend Section 416 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 416—Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

(a) The elected officers of each District shall consist of a Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster, Judge Advocate, Chaplain, Surgeon and three (3) Trustees.
(b) The appointed officers of each District shall consist of at least an Adjutant, Chief of Staff and Inspector, as prescribed in Section 416 in the Manual of Procedure.
(c) Committee chairmen and committees shall be appointed by the District Commander as may be required.

M-31 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 416—Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations.

Amend Section 416 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 416—Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

The Commander, on the date of election or as soon thereafter as possible, shall appoint the Adjutant, Chief of Staff, Inspector and such other officers, chairmen and committees as may be required by District or Department. The Commander may appoint such other officers, chairmen and committees as he deems appropriate to properly conduct the affairs of the District. The Commander retains authority to remove officers, committee chairmen and committee members appointed by him at any time.

District officers, elected and appointed, shall submit proof of eligibility to the District Adjutant. Additionally, District Commanders, District Senior Vice Commanders, and District Junior Vice Commanders shall submit proof of eligibility to the Department Adjutant. District 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 District Commander, Adjutant and Quartermaster 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, the office declared vacant and the eligibility qualifications of such officer shall be questioned in accordance with the provisions of Section 108 of the National By-Laws.

B-27 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 417

Amend Section 417, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 417--Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

The elected District officers shall be nominated and elected annually at the District Convention. Nomination, election and installation shall be in the manner prescribed in the Manual of Procedure.

An officer elected and assuming the duties of his office shall continue to hold office for the period for which elected and until his successor assumes the duties of the office unless the office is declared vacant under the provisions of Sections 416 or 420 of these By-Laws. An officer or committee member must remain in good standing in a Post in the District, otherwise he forfeits the office and the office shall be vacated.

M-32 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 417

Amend Section 417, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:
Sec. 417--Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

Order of nominations and elections. The order of nominations and elections shall be Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster, Chaplain, Judge Advocate, Surgeon and Trustee(s).

Nomination. A member may be nominated and elected although not present at the meeting. A member making a nomination of an absentee for any office shall have presented to the Adjutant, in writing, the consent of the member being nominated prior to the closing of nominations. Any nominee shall have the opportunity to decline nomination for the office to which he has been nominated before nominations are closed. Nominations shall remain open until the District Convention is ready to vote.

Election. In balloting for District officers, a majority of all the votes cast shall be necessary for election. If there is no election on the first ballot, the name of the comrade receiving the lowest number of votes shall be dropped and so on in successive ballots until an election is made.

Challenging Election Results: If irregularities are claimed with respect to the election to any office, such challenge must be made in a writing containing specific details concerning the irregularities, signed by the challenger, and forwarded to the Department Commander, mailed no later than three (3) days after the election.

Installation. District officers shall be installed before the adjournment of the meeting at which elected. The installation shall be conducted by a member in good standing who holds or has held an office equal to or higher than District Commander. The District Commander-elect shall select the installing officer. An officer who may be absent for good and sufficient reason or cause shall be installed at any succeeding regular or special meeting of a unit of the organization, within sixty (60) days of the date of installation. If not then installed, the office will automatically become vacant.

Term of Office. Officers shall be elected for a term of one (1) year except that three trustees shall initially be elected for terms of one (1), two (2) and three (3) years and thereafter one (1) trustee shall be elected each year for a term of three (3) years. District officers shall take office upon the confirmation of election and installation of the Department Commander by the Department Convention.

B-28 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 418—Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers.

Amend Section 418, Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 418—Officers: Duties and Obligations.

District officers, elective and appointive, shall have such duties and obligations as prescribed in these By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

M-33 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 418—Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers.

Amend Section 418, Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 418—Officers: Duties and Obligations.

(a) **Officers.**
(1) **Commander.** Among the duties of a District Commander, he shall:
a. Preside at all meetings of the District conducting such convention and meetings in accordance with Article X of the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure and other applicable parliamentary procedures.
b. Promote schools of instruction for Post officers at District meetings.
c. Enforce strict observance of the laws and usages of this organization, including District and Department By-Laws and the Congressional Charter, National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual and all lawful orders from proper authorities.
d. Insist that District 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 dishonor or embarrassment on the District, its members or the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.
e. Decide all questions of law and usage in the District, subject to an appeal pursuant to these By-Laws.
f. Immediately after entering upon his office, appoint an Adjutant, Chief of Staff, Inspector and Service Officer, and all other officers, committee chairmen and committees not otherwise provided for.
g. Approve all disbursements of funds properly authorized by the District.
h. Assure that the office of District Quartermaster is bonded according to Section 703 of these By-Laws.
i. Assure that all monies due the Department and National Headquarters are forwarded promptly.
j. Assure that all reports are correctly prepared and promptly forwarded

and that all the business of the District is handled with dispatch.

k. Assure that the District Trustees have examined the books and records of the District and prepared the District Trustees Report of Audit. He shall forward a copy to the Department Quartermaster for referral to the Department Inspector.

l. Assure that the District Inspector has properly inspected the books and records of the Posts within the District in accordance with the Department By-Laws or as directed by the State Commander.

m. Assure that eligible veterans are encouraged to join and maintain membership.

(2) **Senior Vice Commander.** The District Senior Vice Commander shall assist the Commander in preserving order, preside in the absence of the Commander, 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.

(3) **Junior Vice Commander.** The District Junior Vice Commander shall assist the Commander in preserving order, preside in the absence of the Commander and Senior Vice Commander, 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 of him by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(4) **Commander Pro-Tempore**: In the event that neither the Commander, Senior Vice Commander, or Junior Vice Commander is present, the District shall elect a Commander Pro-Tempore to preside at the meeting of the District.

(5) **Quartermaster**: Among the duties of the District Quartermaster, he shall:

a. Receive and hold all monies, securities, vouchers and other personal property of the District as may pertain to his office.

b. Disburse funds as properly authorized by the District using accepted banking practices. Unless otherwise provided for in District By-Laws, all disbursements of District funds shall bear the signature of the Quartermaster or other person(s) authorized by the Quartermaster. Such other authorized person(s) shall be bonded with an indemnity company as surety in a sum at least equal to the amount of the liquid assets for which he may be accountable in accordance with Section 703.

c. Before entering upon his duties, and for the faithful performance thereof, he shall qualify by good and sufficient bond in accordance with Section 703 in a sum at least equal to the amount of the liquid assets for which he may be accountable, the cost of which shall be paid from District funds.

d. Collect all monies due the District, giving receipts therefor.

e. Maintain the books and records at all times in a neat and efficient manner. The books and records of the Quartermaster shall be uniform and shall be those prescribed by the National Headquarters, provided, however, that a computer record keeping system may be used so long as the records contain the same data as required on forms prescribed by National Headquarters. Books and records shall be available for inspection by authorized persons at all reasonable times.

f. Deliver to his successor in office, or to anyone designated by the District or higher authority, all books, records, vouchers, monies, securities and

other properties of the District in his possession or under his control.

g. Serve as Treasurer of all District committees handling funds.

h. Comply with and perform all duties required of him by the laws and usages of this organization, applicable By-Laws and orders from lawful authority and perform such other duties as are usually incident to such office.

(6) **Adjutant**: Among the duties of the District Adjutant, he shall:

a. Be the corresponding officer of the District, and shall keep a correct record of the minutes of each District meeting and each District Convention.

b. Immediately after each District Convention, notify the Department Adjutant of the names and addresses of all elective and appointive officers.

c. Maintain a file containing a copy of the proof of eligibility submitted by all District officers as prescribed by the By-Laws.

(7) **Trustees**: Among the duties of the District Trustee, he shall:

a. At each District Convention or District meeting, or as Department By-Laws may provide, properly audit the books and records of the District Quartermaster, District Adjutant, and any activity or unit sponsored, conducted or operated by, for or in behalf of the District and submit a detailed statement of such audit to the District.

b. Submit a Trustees Report of Audit to the Department Quartermaster. The report shall be in accordance with and upon such form as may be prescribed. The audit shall be signed by the District Commander and District Trustees, who shall, by their signatures, certify to the accuracy of the information contained therein.

c. Audit the records and accounts of all committees, officers and members having to do with the receipt and expenditure of District funds. Trustees shall not be eligible to serve on committees or as officers whose books, records and accounts are audited by the Trustees.

d. Perform such other duties as may be usually incident to the office or may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(8) **Chaplain:** During the annual District Convention, the District Chaplain shall see that a fitting tribute is paid to our departed comrades. He shall perform such other duties as may be incident to his office or as may from time to time be required of him by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(9) **Judge Advocate:** The District Judge Advocate shall give the District Commander such legal assistance incident to his office as he may request and perform such other duties as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(10) **Chief of Staff:** The District Chief of Staff shall, under the supervision of the District Commander, perform the duties incident to his office as the District Commander may require such other duties as may be from time to time required of him by the laws and usages of this organization or orders from proper authority.

(11) **Inspector**: The District Inspector shall ensure that each Post in the District is inspected in accordance with the Department By-Laws or as directed by the State Commander. The requirements of such inspection are:

a. That all books and records be inspected in accordance with a properly executed Inspection Form.

b. The Inspector shall provide a copy of each inspection to the Post Commander, District and Department and set forth therein any constructive criticism and recommendations.

The Inspector shall perform such other duties as may be incident to the office or may be from time to time required by the laws and usages of the organization or on lawful orders of proper authority.

(12) **Assistant Inspector:** The District Commander may appoint an Assistant Inspector (s).

(13) **Surgeon:** The District Surgeon shall perform the duties properly pertinent to his office. He shall assist with the schools of instruction for Post Surgeons. He shall perform such other duties as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(14) **Service Officer:** The District Service Officer shall assist Post Service Officers.

B-29 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 419--Voting.

Amend Section 419, Voting, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 419

M-34 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 419--Voting.

Amend Section 419, Voting, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 419

B-30 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 420--Arrearages.

Amend Section 420, Arrearages, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 420- Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.

Vacancies. All vacancies occurring in the elective offices of the District should be filled by nominating and electing at the next stated meeting of the District or special meeting called for such purposes as prescribed in Section 420 of the Manual of Procedure.
Removal. Elective officers or committee members can be removed as prescribed in Section 420 of the Manual of Procedure.

The Department Commander may, with respect to any District within the Department, remove any District officer who fails to fulfill the duties of his office as required by Section 418.

Any District officer removed by the Commander-in-Chief by the reason of failure to pay current dues or under the provisions of this section, shall not be eligible to serve in any District office in the same administrative year in which the officer is removed.

M-35 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Sec. 420--Arrearages.

Amend Section 420, Arrearages, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 420--Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.

Districts may fill any vacancy in their offices at any regular or special meeting.

Vacancies. In the event of a vacancy in the office of Commander or Commander-elect, the Senior Vice Commander or Senior Vice Commander-elect shall at once, and without further formality, succeed to the title and duties of such office and the Junior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander-elect shall at once, and without further formality, succeed to the title and duties of the Senior Vice Commander. Likewise, in the event of a vacancy in the office of Senior Vice Commander or Senior Vice Commander-elect, the Junior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander-elect shall at once, and without further formality, succeed to the title and duties of said office. If the Senior Vice Commander does not move to the position of Commander then the Junior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander-elect shall at once, and without further formality, succeed to the title of Commander. If neither the Senior nor Junior Vice Commander succeed as described herein then the Senior Vice Commander shall assume the duties of the Commander until the election of the new Commander.

Should the vacancy occur in the office of District Quartermaster, the District Commander may appoint a Pro Tempore Quartermaster to carry out the duties incident to that office. The appointment shall be valid only until

the next regular or special meeting and shall be null and void upon the election of a District Quartermaster.

Removal. A District may, upon motion duly passed at any meeting, propose the removal of an officer or committee member at the next stated meeting or special meeting called for such purpose. The member holding such office and the Department Commander shall be notified at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting by certified or registered mail addressed to the member's last known address stating the reasons for the proposed action.

The District, at the next stated meeting or special meeting, may by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present declare vacant the position of any an elective officer or elected chairman or committee member who may have:

1. Absented himself from two (2) consecutive meetings.
2. Failed to fulfill the duties of office specified in Section 418 of the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

The Department Commander may, with respect to any District in the Department, and with the concurrence of a majority vote of the Department Council of Administration, declare vacant the position of any elective District officer who fails to fulfill the duties of his office as required by Section 418. Any elective officer whose office is vacated under the provisions of this Section may appeal the decision under the provisions of Section 109 of these By-Laws.

Notification of Removal. Such actions and reasons therefore, shall be in the form of a Special Order, and delivered personally or by certified or registered mail at the removed officer's last known address. The special order shall advise the member of his rights to appeal under these By-Laws.
Any elective District officer whose office is vacated under the provisions of this Section shall not be eligible to serve in any District office in the administrative year in which the office is vacated.

B-31 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Add Section 421, Voting, National By-Laws:

Sec. 421--Voting.

Each member of a District Convention or District meeting as those persons are defined in Section 404, except delegates elected by the Posts, present at a District Convention or meeting shall be entitled to one vote, and an individual possessing more than one qualification for membership in the District Convention or meeting shall have no more than one vote. The delegate or delegates of a Post present at a District Convention or meeting shall be entitled to vote the full delegate strength to which the Post is entitled. Unless otherwise provided for in District By-Laws, the delegate strength for a Post shall be one (I) delegate for each fifteen (15) members based on the membership strength of the Post at the time of the District meeting.

Should there be a division among the delegates representing the Post,

each delegate present shall cast his pro rata share of the total voting strength of the Post. For the purpose of this section, a Post Commander shall be considered a delegate.

A roll call vote may be required and entered upon the record at the call of any three officers or delegates representing three different Posts.

M-36 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV– DISTRICTS

Add Section 421, Voting, Manual of Procedure:

Sec. 421--Voting.

(See Section 421 By-Laws)

B-32 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 501—Formation, Chartering.

Amend Section 501, Formation, Chartering, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 501—Formation, Institution and Chartering.

Formation. When twenty-five (25) or more Posts with a total membership of at least one thousand (1,000) have been organized in any State, Territory, Foreign Possession or Country, a new Department may be chartered in said State, Territory, Foreign Possession or Country.

Institution. Each new Department shall be instituted within sixty (60) days of the date the charter application is approved by the Commander-in-Chief. If not instituted within sixty (60) days from the date of approval, said approval may be rescinded.

Chartering. Charters of Departments shall be authorized by the Commander-in-Chief.

M-37 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 501—Formation, Chartering.

Amend Section 501, Formation, Chartering, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 501—Formation, Institution and Chartering.

(See Section 501 By-Laws)
B-33 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 502—Provisional Departments.

Amend Section 502, Provisional Departments, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 502—By-Laws.

A Department may adopt By-Laws governing the Department, provided such By-Laws do 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 approved by a Department shall be forwarded as provided in the Manual of Procedure prior to becoming effective.

M-38 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 502—Provisional Departments.

Amend Section 502, Provisional Departments, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 502—By-Laws.

A Department may adopt or amend By-Laws at a Department Convention. Copies of By-Laws, including amendments, adopted by a Department shall be forwarded to the Commander-in-Chief, through channels. No By-Laws or amendments adopted by a Department 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.

B-34 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 503—Governing Body; Composition.

Amend Section 503, Governing Body; Composition, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 503— Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

Each Department shall hold one (1) Convention each year, which shall begin no earlier than ninety (90) days prior to the convening of the National Convention and shall be concluded no less than thirty (30) days prior to the convening of the National Convention.

The minimum number of delegates required to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a Department Convention shall be not less than one (1) delegate each from ten (10) Posts in the Department; provided, the Department By-Laws may prescribe a different number of delegates required to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Any member in good standing or one on official business may visit a Department Convention, however, such visitor shall have no voice in business discussions unless requested by the Commander, and shall have no voting privileges. Those on official business shall be recognized by the Commander for the conduct of business.

M-39 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 503—Governing Body; Composition.

Amend Section 503, Governing Body; Composition, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 503— Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

(See Section 503 By-Laws)

B-35 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 504

Amend Section 504, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 504-- Governing Body; Composition.

Each Department shall be governed by a Department Convention.
The Department Convention shall consist of:

1. The Commander-in-Chief and Past Commanders-in-Chief who are members in good standing in a Post within the Department.
2. The National Council Member, the Department Commander, all Past Department Commanders who are members in good standing in a Post within the Department; all elective officers of the Department, Chief of Staff, Inspector, and the Adjutant.
3. All District Commanders throughout the Department. In the absence of the District Commander, the District Senior Vice Commander, or, in his absence, the District Junior Vice Commander may be registered and function as a member of the Convention.
4. All Post Commanders throughout the Department. In the absence of the Post Commander, the Post Senior Vice Commander, or, in his absence, the Post Junior Vice Commander may be registered and function as a member of the Convention.
5. Delegates to be elected by the Posts.

M-40 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 504

Amend Section 504, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 504-- Governing Body; Composition.

(See Section 504 By-Laws)

B-36 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 505—By-Laws.

Amend Section 505, By-Laws, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 505

M-41 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 505—By-Laws.

Amend Section 505, By-Laws, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 505

B-37 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 506—Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

Amend Section 506, Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 506—Department Dues.

Each Department Convention at its annual session shall assess Department dues of not less than fifty cents per annum on each member in good standing in each and every Post within its jurisdiction or as otherwise provided for in Department By-Laws.

M-42 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 506—Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

Amend Section 506, Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 506—Department Dues.

(See Section 506 By-Laws)

B-38 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 508—Surrender or Forfeiture of Charter.

Amend Section 508, Surrender or Forfeiture of Charter, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 508

M-43 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 508—Surrender or Forfeiture of Charter.

Amend Section 508, Surrender or Forfeiture of Charter, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 508

B-39 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 509—Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Amend Section 509, Suspension and Revocation of Charter, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 509—Consolidation of Departments.

Two or more Departments may consolidate upon recommendation of the Commander-in-Chief and approval of the National Council of Administration as prescribed in Section 509 of the Manual of Procedure.

M-44 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 509—Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Amend Section 509, Suspension and Revocation of Charter, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 509—Consolidation of Departments.

Two or more Departments may consolidate upon a vote of their respective Department Conventions in accordance with the procedures as follows:

1. A motion to consider the consolidation must be approved by the individual Department Councils of Administration.
2. Each Department Commander shall submit the names of three members to serve on a joint Consolidation Committee to investigate along with a Chairman appointed by the Commander-in-Chief. A slate of line officers for the consolidated Department will be submitted to each Department Convention for approval along with the consolidation proposal. District Commanders from all Departments shall serve as members of the Council of Administration until District geographical boundaries are established at the next convention.
3. A resolution containing the committee's final report shall be provided to every Post in each Department and to the Commander-in-Chief at least thirty (30) days prior to the Department Conventions.
4. The consolidation resolution requires a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the delegates present at each Department Convention.
5. The Commander-in-Chief may appoint an oversight committee to complete the consolidation of the Departments.
6. The property of each Department shall be conveyed to and become the property of the consolidated Department. All past officers in each Department shall be entitled to rank as of date of service in their respective Departments.
7. Once approved by the Commander-in-Chief, the consolidated charter shall be issued. The Certificate of Charter shall rank from the date of the senior Department's charter.

B-40 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 510—Defunct Departments.

Amend Section 510, Defunct Departments, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 510—Surrender of Charter.

A Department may voluntarily surrender its charter only upon a vote at a Department Convention conducted in accordance with the procedures as prescribed in Section 510 of the Manual of Procedure.

M-45 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 510—Defunct Departments.

Amend Section 510, Defunct Departments, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 510—Surrender of Charter.

Voluntary Surrender. A Department may voluntarily surrender its charter only upon a vote at a Department Convention conducted in accordance with the procedures herein set forth. A proposition to surrender the charter must be made at a meeting of the Department Council of Administration at least four (4) weeks before the convening of the Department Convention and due notice of the proposition must be given, in writing, to every Post in the Department and to the Commander-in-Chief. If a majority of the Posts vote to surrender the charter, the Department Commander shall, within thirty (30) days, request that the Commander-in-Chief cancel the charter, unless during such thirty (30) day period, the Department Commander receives a demand in writing from two-thirds (2/3) of the Posts in the Department to continue the Department.

Disposition of Property. In case of surrender or forfeiture of a charter, all of the property of the Department, including real property, books of record and papers and money belonging to it, shall be immediately recovered by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States 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 purpose of such trust to the extent of such funds or property, or both.

B-41 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 511--Department Dues.

Amend Section 511, Department Dues, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 511--Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

(a) **Actions by the Commander-in-Chief--Suspension.** The Commander-in-Chief may suspend a Department Charter for a period of up to six (6) months for violations of the National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.
(b) **Establishment of a Trusteeship.** Upon the imposition of any suspension under this section, the Commander-in-Chief shall establish a trusteeship as prescribed in Section 511 of the Manual of Procedure.

(c) **Actions by the Commander-in-Chief--Revocation.** The Commander-in-Chief may revoke the charter of a Department.
(d) **Property and Funds.** Disposition of property and trust funds shall be as prescribed in Section 510 of the Manual of Procedure.

M-46 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 511--Department Dues.

Amend Section 511, Department Dues, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 511--Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

1. Actions by the Commander-in-Chief—Suspension.
The Commander-in-Chief may suspend a Department Charter in accordance with the procedures herein set forth.

a. The Commander-in-Chief shall issue a Special Order suspending a Department Charter and appointing trustees consisting of three to five members. Pursuant to a written grant of powers and limitations, such trustees shall carry on the business and affairs of the Department during the period of suspension. The acts and actions of the trustees shall be subject to the approval or disapproval of the Commander-in-Chief.
b. The Department Commander shall be notified in writing of the action by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the address of record or by personal delivery by a designated representative.
c. The Commander-in-Chief shall notify the National Council of Administration.
d. While under suspension no meetings shall be held in the name of the Department or organization, except for the sole purpose of the discussion of the cause, effect or removal of the penalty and no funds of the Department shall be expended or obligations incurred during and while the order of suspension is in force and effect except as may be expended or obligated by the trustees appointed under this subsection.
e. Following an initial suspension period as provided in this subsection, the Commander-in-Chief shall revoke or extend the suspension for an additional period of time not to exceed ninety (90) days.

2. Actions by the Commander-in-Chief—Revocation.
The Commander-in-Chief may revoke a Department Charter in accordance with the procedures herein set forth.

a. The Department Commander shall be notified in writing of the proposed action by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the address of record.
b. Unless the Department Commander notifies the Commander-in-Chief in writing by certified mail, return receipt requested, within

fifteen (15) days of receipt of notice that the Department desires a hearing, the revocation of the Charter shall be effected.
c. In the event that the Department requests a hearing, said hearing shall be held within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the notice. A hearing will be scheduled at a time and place and in a manner prescribed by the Commander-in-Chief.
d. The Commander-in-Chief shall decide the matter within thirty (30) days.
e. If the Department is not already under suspension at the time that the notice of proposed revocation is given, the Department shall thereafter be under suspension.
f. The Commander-in-Chief may at his discretion, and after hearing the matter if so requested, revoke the charter of the Department by issuing a Special Order to that effect.

B-42 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 512--Arrearages.

Amend Section 512, Arrearages, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 512—Defunct Departments.

The Commander-in-Chief shall revoke a Department's Charter and declare it defunct if such Department has less than ten (10) Posts.

In the event of cancellation under this Section, disposition of the property and trust funds of the Department as prescribed in Section 510 of the Manual of Procedure.

M-47 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 512--Arrearages.

Amend Section 512, Arrearages, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 512—Defunct Departments.

In the event a Department falls under ten (10) Posts, the Commander-in-Chief shall issue a Special Order canceling the charter of said Department. The Department Commander shall be notified in writing of the action by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the address of record or by

personal delivery by a designated representative.

B-43 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 513—Solicitation of Funds.

Amend Section 513, Solicitation of Funds, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 513—Arrearages, Deficiencies and Omissions.

The Commander of a Department in arrears for National dues payments, poppy money, supply money or other financial obligations or failing to have the office of Quartermaster bonded, or failing to submit quarterly financial reports, annual budgets or Department Election Reports shall be deprived of all representation in the National Convention. Such representation shall be restored promptly upon proper adjustment of such deficiencies.

A properly completed Department Election Report shall be submitted to National Headquarters prior to the convening of the National Convention.

M-48 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 513—Solicitation of Funds.

Amend Section 513, Solicitation of Funds, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 513—Arrearages, Deficiencies and Omissions.

If a Department has any outstanding financial obligations due National Headquarters that remain unpaid on September 1, the amount due will be deducted from future dues payments until balance due is paid in full.

B-44 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 514—Eligibility to Office.

Amend Section 514, Eligibility to Office, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 514—Solicitation of Funds.

Departments shall be permitted to solicit funds or donations only as prescribed in the Manual of Procedure.

M-49 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 514—Eligibility to Office.

Amend Section 514, Eligibility to Office, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 514—Solicitation of Funds.

Departments may solicit funds or contributions or otherwise engage in fund-raising activities or projects only after prior vote of the Department Convention or Department Council of Administration. Departments shall assure that solicitations, activities and projects do not violate any applicable governmental law, ordinance or regulation nor bring or tend to bring dishonor or embarrassment upon the Department, its members 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.

A Department shall not solicit funds or contributions or engage in fund-raising activities or projects of any kind outside the immediate geographical area of the Department. A Department whose territory is partly within a city may solicit funds within the entire city.

Fund-raising organizations or individuals conducting solicitations, activities or projects for a profit shall not be engaged or used by any Department for such purpose unless such engagement is made by written agreement between the Department and the organization or individuals providing those services. The form of any such written agreement must be submitted to the Commander-in-Chief for review and approval at least thirty (30) days prior to any Department entering into any such agreement.

In the event a Department shall employ or enter into an agreement with a fund-raising organization or individual to solicit contributions or engage in a fund-raising project, a surety bond or cash advance in the full amount of expected collections from the solicitation or project shall be furnished by the fund-raising organization or individual, said bond or cash advance guaranteeing payment of the funds solicited or raised to a bonded officer of the Department within thirty (30) days of the close of the solicitation or project, provided, however, that the bond shall be discharged or cash advance returned if such fund-raising organization or individual shall make payment within thirty (30) days. If a bond or cash advance cannot be furnished, then all collections shall be made by members of the Department sponsoring the solicitation or fund-raising project and funds shall be paid to

a bonded officer of the Department who shall hold the funds pending proper distribution.

B-45 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 515—Elected and appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Section 515, Elected and appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 515—Eligibility to Office.

Any member in good standing in a chartered Post in the Department shall be eligible to any office in the Department, provided, no member shall hold two elective Department offices at the same time, but may hold one elective and one or more appointive offices. Department officers, elected or appointed, may be eligible to hold office in a higher or lower body, and such offices may be held concurrently. District Commanders shall be ineligible to simultaneously hold an elected Department office.

Any officer or committee member whose membership is not in good standing by reason of failure to pay current dues by December 31 shall forfeit his eligibility to hold any office during that administrative year.

Any member who has been suspended of certain rights or privileges of membership for a specified period of time shall forfeit his eligibility to hold any office during the period of suspension.

M-50 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 515—Elected and appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Section 515, Elected and appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 515—Eligibility to Office.

(See Section 515 By-Laws)

B-46 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Michigan

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 515-- Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Section 515--Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees, subsection(c) National By-Laws, first sentence, by changing the title "Service Officer" to "Certified Veterans Advocate."

B-47 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 516—Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

Amend Section 516, Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 516— Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.
(a) The elective officers of each Department shall be a Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster, Judge Advocate, Surgeon and Chaplain.
(b) The Department Commander shall appoint an Adjutant, Chief of Staff, Inspector, Service Officer, and such other officers.
(c) Committee chairmen and committees shall be appointed by the Department Commander as may be required.

M-51 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 516—Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

Amend Section 516, Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 516— Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

The Commander, on the date of election or as soon thereafter as possible, shall appoint the Adjutant, Chief of Staff , Inspector, Service Officer and such other officers, chairmen and committees as may be required by Department or National. The Commander may appoint such other officers, chairmen and committees as he deems appropriate to properly conduct the affairs of the Department. With respect to salaried officers, the appointment shall be made subject to the approval of the majority of the Department Council of Administration. The Department Commander retains authority to remove officers, committee chairmen and committees appointed by him at any time; provided, however, that salaried officers appointed by the Commander may only be removed by the Commander with the approval of a majority of the

Department Council of Administration.

Department officers, elected and appointed, shall submit proof of eligibility to the Department Adjutant. Additionally, Department Commanders, Department Senior Vice Commanders, Department Junior Vice Commanders, Department Adjutants and Department Quartermasters shall submit proof of eligibility to the Adjutant General. Department 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 Department Commander, Adjutant and Quartermaster 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, the office declared vacant and the eligibility qualifications of such officer shall be questioned in accordance with the provisions of Section 108 of the National By-Laws.

B-48 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 517—Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations.

Amend Section 517, Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 517— Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

With the exception of District Commanders, Department officers shall be nominated, elected or appointed and installed as prescribed in the Manual of Procedure.

An officer elected and installed shall continue to hold office for the period for which elected and until his successor is installed unless his office is earlier declared vacant under the provisions of Sections 516 or 520 of these By-Laws. Appointed officers and appointed 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 the Department, otherwise he forfeits the office and the office shall be declared vacant.

M-52 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 517—Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations.

Amend Section 517, Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 517— Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.

Order of nominations and elections. The order of nominations and elections shall be Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster, Chaplain, Judge Advocate and Surgeon. The elective Department officers shall be nominated and elected by voice vote or roll call at the annual Department Convention.

Nomination. A member may be nominated and elected although not present at the Department Convention. A member making a nomination of an absentee for any office shall have presented to the Adjutant, in writing, the consent of the member being nominated prior to the closing of nominations. Any nominee shall have the opportunity to decline nomination for the office to which he has been nominated before nominations are closed. Nominations shall remain open until the Department Convention is ready to vote.

Election. In balloting for Department officers, a majority of all the votes cast shall be necessary for election. If there is no election on the first ballot, the name of the comrade receiving the lowest number of votes shall be dropped and so on in successive ballots until an election is made. District Commanders shall be ineligible to simultaneously hold an elected Department office.
Challenging Election Results: If irregularities are claimed with respect to the election to any office, such challenge must be made prior to the close of election unless otherwise prescribed in the Department Convention Rules.

Installation. Department officers shall be installed before the adjournment of the convention at which elected. The installation shall be conducted by a member in good standing who holds or has held an office equal to or higher than Department Commander. The Department Commander-elect shall select the installing officer. An officer who may be absent for good and sufficient reason or cause shall be installed at any succeeding regular or special meeting of a unit of the organization, within sixty (60) days of the date of installation. If not then installed, the office will automatically become vacant.

Term of Office. Department officers shall take office at the close of the Department Convention. Officers shall be elected for a term of one (1) year.

M-53 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Michigan

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 517 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations.

Amend Section 517 -- Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations, (a) Officers. (11) Duty of Service Officer., Manual of Procedure, by changing the title "Duty of Service Officer" to "Certified Veterans Advocate".

M-54 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Michigan

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 517 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations.

Amend Section 517 -- Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations, (a) Officers. (11) Duty of Service Officer., Manual of Procedure, by changing the title "Department Service Officer" to "Department Certified Veterans Advocate."

B-49 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 518

Amend Section 518, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:
Sec. 518—Officers: Duties and Obligations.

The Department officers, elective and appointive, shall have such duties and obligations as prescribed in these By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

M-55 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 518

Amend Section 518, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 518—Officers: Duties and Obligations.

(a) **Officers.**
(1) **Commander.** Among the duties of a Department Commander, he shall:
a. Preside at all meetings of the Department conducting such conventions and meetings in accordance with Article X of the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure and other applicable parliamentary procedures.
b. Enforce strict observance of the laws and usages of this organization, including Department By-Laws and the Congressional Charter, National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual and all lawful orders from proper authorities.
c. Insist that Department 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 dishonor or embarrassment on the Department, its members or the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

d. Decide all questions of law and usage in the Department, subject to an appeal pursuant to these By-Laws.

e. Immediately after entering upon his office, appoint an Adjutant, Chief of Staff, Inspector and Service Officer, and all other officers, committee chairmen and committees not otherwise provided for.

f. Approve all disbursements of the funds properly authorized the Department Council of Administration.

g. Assure that the office of Department Quartermaster is bonded according to Section 703 of these By-Laws.

h. Assure that all monies due the National Headquarters and received by the Department are forwarded promptly.

i. Assure that all reports are correctly prepared and promptly forwarded and that all the business of the Department is handled with dispatch.

j. Assure that eligible veterans are encouraged to join and maintain membership.

k. Assure the books and records of the Department are properly audited.

(2) **Senior Vice Commander.** The Department Senior Vice Commander shall assist the Commander in preserving order, preside in the absence of the Commander, 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.

(3) **Junior Vice Commander.** The Department Junior Vice Commander shall assist the Commander in preserving order, preside in the absence of the Commander and Senior Vice Commander, 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 of him by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(4) **Quartermaster.** Among the duties of the Department Quartermaster, he shall:

a. Qualify and secure a bond in a sum at least equal to the amount of the liquid assets for which he may be accountable in accordance with Section 703.

b. Collect all monies due the Department and have charge of the funds, securities and other property of the Department, all of which shall be placed in his care. He shall be the accountable officer of the Department and the Treasurer of all committees handling funds.

c. Disburse funds as properly authorized by the Department using accepted banking practices. Unless otherwise provided for in Department By-Laws, all disbursements of Department funds shall bear the signature of the Quartermaster.

d. Receive annual membership dues (admission fees if applicable) and life membership fees and forward the National dues and life membership fees immediately to National Headquarters as prescribed in Section 104.

e. Provide the auditors with all records, files and statements required or necessary for the preparation of the Department report of audit.

f. Maintain a dues reserve fund as prescribed in Section 717 of the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

g. The books and records of the Quartermaster shall be maintained

in a legible and uniform format. Record keeping by electronic means may be used, provided a back-up and a hard copy is maintained. Books and records shall be available for inspection by authorized officers and Department members at all reasonable times. Reconcile and verify all transactions listed on all bank statements to assure the accuracy of Department records. Unless authorized by the Department to remove such books and records from its facilities, all such books and records shall be kept at the Department facilities.

h. He shall provide access and transfer to his successor in office or anyone designated by higher authority, without delay, all books, records, papers, monies, securities and other property of the Department in his possession or under his control.

i. Comply with, and perform all duties required of him by the laws and usages of this organization, applicable By-Laws and order's from lawful authority and perform such other duties as are incident to such office.

j. Report on transactions concerning receipts and expenditures, for any given period, at a regular or special meeting of the Department.

k. Budget. Prepare a tentative budget for the financial operations of the ensuing year. Said budget shall set forth all anticipated income and estimated expense. Restricted funds shall be budgeted separately in every instance, and the budget shall be in balance. Final action must be taken on the adoption of the budget at the first stated meeting of the Department Council of Administration and, when adopted, the budget shall be the expenditure guide for the ensuing year. The budget must be adopted by the Department Council of Administration and forwarded to the Adjutant General by August 31 of the current administrative year.

l. Reports.

1. Prepare for the Department Convention a complete financial report, membership report, a list of Posts in good standing and the number of delegates to which each Post is entitled.

2. Prepare a quarterly and final year-end financial report for the Department Council of Administration.

3. Forward the final year-end financial report and a copy of Form 990 filed with the IRS to the Adjutant General.

4. Prepare other reports as directed by the Department Commander, Council of Administration or Department Convention.

m. Comply with and perform all other duties required of him by the laws and usages of this organization, the Department Convention, Department By-Laws, Department Commander and Department Council of Administration, the National Convention and the National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure, Ritual and lawful orders from proper authority and perform such other duties as may be incident to the office.

(5) **Adjutant.** Among the duties of the Department Adjutant, he shall:

a. Be the official corresponding officer for the Department and shall attest to all official communications and reports with his signature.

b. Prepare reports as directed by the Department Commander, Council of Administration or Department Convention.

c. Maintain the books and records in a legible and uniform format.

Record keeping by electronic means may be used, provided a back-up and a hard copy is maintained. Books and records shall be available for inspection by authorized officers and Department members at all reasonable times. Unless authorized by the Department to remove such books and records from its facilities, all such books and records shall be kept at the Department facilities.

d. Records. Maintain a roster of the following:

1. Department Officers and Committees.

2. Districts and County Councils (if applicable) to include officers, committee chairmen, and meeting times and places.

3. Posts, Post Officers, meeting times and places, membership data and other information provided by the Department Quartermaster.

e. **Files.**

1. Maintain such records and correspondence as prescribed by National Headquarters and the Department Council of Administration.

2. Prepare and maintain minutes of each Council of Administration meeting and Department Convention after correction and approval.

3. A file containing a copy of the proof of eligibility submitted by officers pursuant to Section 516.

f. Maintain a current copy of the By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and copies of the By-Laws of the Department, District and County Council (if applicable), and all Posts within its jurisdiction.

g. Transfer to his successor, without delay, all books, papers, records, monies and other records and property of the Department in his possession or under his control.

h. Comply with and perform all duties required of him by the laws and usages of this organization, applicable By-Laws and orders from lawful authority and perform such other duties as are incident to such office.

(6) **Chaplain.** The Department Chaplain shall, during the annual Department Convention, 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.

(7) J**udge Advocate.** The Department Judge Advocate shall give the Department Commander, Council of Administration and Department Convention such legal assistance, incident to his office and perform such other duties as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(8) **Chief of Staff.** The Department Chief of Staff shall perform the duties incident to his office as the Department Commander or Department Council of Administration may require and such other duties as may be from time to time required of him by the laws and usages of this organization or orders from proper authority.

(9) **Inspector.** The Department Inspector shall:

a. Ensure each District, County Council (if applicable) and Post are inspected in accordance with Department and National guidelines.

b. Receive from each District Inspector all completed inspections

c. Review and forward each report and submit recommendation(s) to the Department Commander

d. Shall perform such other duties as may be incident to the office or may be from time to time required by the laws and usages of the organization or on lawful orders of proper authority.

(10) **Surgeon.** The Department Surgeon shall perform the duties properly pertaining to his office. The Department Surgeon shall assist Post Surgeons, in an advisory capacity, and promote statewide health programs. He shall perform such other duties as may be incident to his office or as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.

(11) **Service Officer.** The Department Service Officer shall assist the members of the Department, their widows and orphans and other worthy cases in obtaining rightful benefits from the federal or state governments. His work shall be performed in accordance with policies established by the National Veterans Service Committee. He shall perform such other duties as are incident to his office or may be from time to time required by the laws and usages of this organization or as may be directed by proper authority.

(12) **Other Officers.** Other officers appointed by the Department Commander under the authority of Section 516, National By-Laws, shall perform the duties incident to their respective offices, or as the Department Commander may direct.

B-50 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 519—Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers.

Amend Section 519, Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 519

M-56 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 519—Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers.

Amend Section 519, Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 519

B-51 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 520—Voting.

Amend Section 520, Voting, National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 520—Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.

Vacancies. All vacancies occurring in the elective offices of the Department shall be filled by nominating and electing at the next stated meeting of the Department or special meeting called for such purposes as prescribed in Section 520 of the Manual of Procedure.

Removal. Elective officers or committee members can be removed as prescribed in Section 520 of the Manual of Procedure.

The Department Commander with the concurrence of the Department Council of Administration may, with respect to any elected or appointed officer, remove any Department officer who fails to fulfill the duties of his office as required by Section 518.

Any Department officer removed by the Commander-in-Chief by the reason of failure to pay current dues or under the provisions of this section, shall not be eligible to serve in any Department office in the same administrative year in which the officer is removed.

M-57 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 520—Voting.

Amend Section 520, Voting, Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 520—Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.

Departments may fill any vacancy in their offices at any regular or special meeting.

Vacancies. In the event of a vacancy in the office of Commander or Commander-elect, the Senior Vice Commander or Senior Vice Commander-elect shall at once, and without further formality, succeed to the title and duties of such office and the Junior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander-elect shall at once, and without further formality, succeed to the title and duties of the Senior Vice Commander. Likewise, in the event of a vacancy in the office of Senior Vice Commander or Senior Vice Commander-elect, the Junior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander-elect shall at once, and without further formality, succeed to the title and duties of said office. If the

Senior Vice Commander does not move to the position of Commander then the Junior Vice Commander or Junior Vice Commander-elect shall at once, and without further formality, succeed to the title of Commander. If neither the Senior nor Junior Vice Commander succeed as described herein then the Senior Vice Commander shall assume the duties of the Commander until the election of the new Commander.

Should the vacancy occur in the office of Department Quartermaster, the Department Commander may appoint a Pro Tempore Quartermaster to carry out the duties incident to that office. The appointment shall be null and void upon the election of a Department Quartermaster as described below.

All other vacancies occurring in the elective offices, including the office of Junior Vice Commander, of the Department shall be filled by the Department Council of Administration in the following manner:

1. In the event that a stated meeting is scheduled within thirty (30) days of the date the office is vacated, an election will be held to fill such office at that stated meeting. In the event that no stated meeting is scheduled within thirty (30) days of the date the office is vacated, the Department Commander may call a special meeting of the Department Council of Administration pursuant to Section 521. Election to office at either a stated or special meeting shall be by majority vote of all votes cast. If there be no election on the first ballot, the name of the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes shall be dropped and so on in successive ballots until an election is made.
2. In lieu of calling a special meeting, the Department Commander may notify all members of the Council that the vacancy exists and names of nominees are being accepted. Fifteen (15) days thereafter the Department Commander shall advise the Council of the names of comrades presented for the same. Members of the Council may vote to fill such vacancy by using sealed envelopes marked "Ballot", enclosed in an envelope and forwarded to the Department Adjutant. These ballots shall be opened at a time specified by the Commander by tellers appointed by him in the presence of such Department officers as the Department Commander may designate. The comrade receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared duly elected to the office designated.

Removal. The Department Council of Administration may, upon motion duly passed at any meeting, propose the removal of an officer or committee member at the next stated meeting called for such purpose. The member holding such office and the Commander-in-Chief shall be notified at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting by certified or registered mail addressed to the member's last known address stating the reasons for the proposed action.

The Department Council of Administration, at the next stated meeting, may by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present declare vacant the position of any an elective officer or elected chairman or committee member who may have:

1. Absented himself from two (2) consecutive meetings.
2. Failed to fulfill the duties of office specified in Section 518 of the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

Notification of Removal. Such actions and reasons therefore, shall be in the form of a Special Order, and delivered personally or by certified or registered mail at the removed officer's last known address. The special order shall advise the member of his rights to appeal under these By-Laws.

B-52 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 521--Council of Administration—Composition, Powers and Duties.

Amend Section 521, Council of Administration—Composition, Powers and Duties**,** National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 521--Voting.

Each member of the Department Convention as those persons are defined in Section 504, except delegates elected by the Posts, present at a meeting of the Convention shall be entitled to one vote, and an individual possessing more than one qualification for membership in the Department Convention shall have no more than one vote. The delegate or delegates of a Post present at a meeting of the Department Convention shall be entitled to vote the full delegate strength to which the Post is entitled. The Post Commander, or the Senior or Junior Vice Commander functioning in his place as a member of the Convention, may, at his option, choose to vote as a delegate rather than as a Post Commander. Should there be a division among delegates representing the Post, each delegate present shall cast his pro rata share of the total delegate voting strength of the Post. A roll call may be required and entered upon the record of the Department Convention at the call of at least three officers or delegates representing at least three different Posts.

M-58 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 521--Council of Administration—Composition, Powers and Duties.

Amend Section 521, Council of Administration—Composition, Powers and Duties**,** Manual of Procedure, by substituting in its place the following:

Sec. 521--Voting.

(See Section 521 By-Laws)

M-59 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Kansas

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 521 – Council of Administration—Composition, Powers and Duties.

Amend Section 521 – Council of Administration—Composition, Powers and Duties, Manual of Procedure, by adding the following sentence to the end of the section:

Said special meetings of the Council of Administration may be conducted online by electronic means.

B-53 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Add Section 522, Council of Administration—Composition, Powers and Duties**,** National By-Laws:
Sec. 522--Council of Administration—Composition, Powers and Duties.

(a) **Composition.** The Council of Administration of a Department shall consist of the Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Adjutant, Quarter master, Judge Advocate, Chief of Staff, Inspector, Surgeon, Chaplain and District Commanders. In the absence of a District Commander the District Senior Vice Commander and in the absence of the District Senior Vice Commander, the District Junior Vice Commander may function as a member of the Council of Administration. The retiring Department Commander shall also be a member of the Department Council of Administration until such time as another Department Commander retires. In the event the retiring Department Commander is unwilling or unable to serve on the Department Council of Administration, his place shall be filled by the last retired Past Department Commander who is ready, willing and able to serve. In the Departments of Alaska, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Latin America/Caribbean and Europe , the Commanders of all Posts in good standing shall be voting members of the Department Council of Administration. Other Departments having a membership of 9,500 or less may adopt By-Laws to include all Post Commanders as voting members of the Department Council of Administration. Also the four (4) immediate Past Department Commanders may be voting members of the Council of Administration, on the condition that the By-Laws adopted by the Department Convention so provide.
(b) **Administration of Affairs Between Conventions.** The Department Council of Administration shall be responsible for administering the affairs and transacting the business of the Department between Department Conventions. The Council shall be governed in its duties by the mandates of the National Convention, the Congressional Charter, By-Laws, Manual of Procedure, Ritual and laws and usages of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as well as by the mandates of the Department Convention, Charter and By-Laws.
(c) **Budget.** The Council of Administration shall at the first meeting following the Department Convention approve and fix an annual budget covering the

financial operations of the Department for the ensuing year. The Council of Administration shall have the power to establish the compensation of all Department officers and employees.

(d) **Audits-Accounts.** The Council of Administration may authorize an audit of the accounts of all Department officers.

(e) **Disposition of Property.** In the case of surrender or forfeiture of a Post or District charter, the Department Council of Administration shall have the authority to make disposition of all proper ties in accordance with Sections 210 and 410 and its action therein shall be final.

(f) **Regular Meetings.** The Council of Administration shall meet in regular session not less than twice each year and shall hold such other meetings as the Department By-Laws may provide.

(g) **Special Meetings.** The Department Commander may call a special meeting of the Council of Administration whenever the same may be necessary for the welfare of the Department.

The Department Commander shall call a special meeting upon written request signed by a majority of the members of the Department Council of Administration.

In case the Department Commander refuses to call such meetings, the Department Council of Administration may proceed to hold such meetings, due notice of which shall be sent to all members of the Council of Administration by the Department Adjutant not later than ten (10) days prior to the date of said meeting.

No business shall be transacted at any special meeting except that business for which the meeting is called, as set forth in the notice.

(h) **Time and Place.** Meetings of the Department Council of Administration shall be held at such times and places as the Department By-Laws may provide, or as may be provided by majority vote of the Council. Special meetings shall be called at such times and places as may be decided by the Department Commander, except in case of a special meeting ordered by a majority request of the Council of Administration, which shall be held at such time and place as may be determined by those requesting the meeting.

(i) **Quorum.** A majority of the members of the Council of Administration shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

(j) **Voting.** Each member of the Council of Administration present at a meeting shall be entitled to one vote. On matters requiring action by the Department Council of Administration between stated meetings, the Department Commander may direct the Department Adjutant to conduct mail ballots, the results of such mail ballots shall be reported for the record at the next stated meeting.

(l) Any valid action taken by the Council of Administration in the performance of its duties shall be effective upon passage and shall remain in effect until such time as it may be terminated or superseded by the Council of Administration or by a Department Convention acting within the limits of its own authority.

M-60 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE V– DEPARTMENTS

Add Section 522, Council of Administration—Composition, Powers and Duties**,** Manual of Procedure:

Sec. 522--Council of Administration—Composition, Powers and Duties.

(See Section 522 By-Laws)

B-54 APPROVED
Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION
Sec. 603--Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.

Amend Section 603, Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees, National By-Laws, by inserting the following after the first sentence in the first paragraph:

Beginning in 2012, the stated meeting of the National Convention shall be held annually between July 1 and September 1, at such time and place as shall have been determined previously by the National Council of Administration, which shall have full power to act in selecting a Convention city.

B-55 APPROVED
Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group
Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE VI– NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 615 – National Committees.

Amend Section 615, National Committees**,** National By-Laws, by substituting in its place the following:

There shall be the following National Committees:

a. National Veterans Service Advisory Committee.
b. National Committee on Awards and Citations.
c. Trust Fund Committee.
d. Political Action Committee

The Commander-in-Chief may establish such other committees as may be appropriate to properly conduct the affairs of the National Organization and disband such other committees as may be appropriate. The Commander-in-Chief may appoint the committee chairmen and members of such other committees and remove them at his pleasure.

(a) National Veterans Service Advisory Committee.

(1) Composition: The National Veterans Service Advisory Committee shall consist of the Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief and four Past Commanders-in-Chief. Whenever a Commander-in-Chief shall retire at the end of his term, he shall thereupon become a member of the National Veterans

Service Advisory Committee and the Senior Past Commander-in-Chief shall thereupon retire from the Committee.

(2) Under the supervision of the National Council of Administration, and subject to provisions of the National By-Laws and orders of the National Convention, the National Veterans Service Advisory Committee shall establish the policy under which the Veterans Service work of the organization shall be conducted and may make appropriate budget recommendations.

(3) The National Veterans Service Advisory Committee shall establish the practice and procedures for representation by service officers accredited to the Department of Veterans Affairs or other federal government agencies through the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(4) All welfare, poppy and service monies allocated to Veterans Service work shall be kept in a separate fund and disbursed as prescribed in Section 610(d) of these By-Laws.

(5) Departments may provide in their By-Laws the means of organization and control of their Veterans Service work.

(b) National Committee on Awards and Citations.

(1) Composition: The National Committee on Awards and Citations shall consist of five (5) members appointed by the Commander-in-Chief, subject to confirmation by the National Council of Administration, with the Commander-in-Chief serving as an ex-officio member. One member shall be appointed each year for a five-year term. The Commander-in-Chief shall designate the Chairman each year.

(2) The National Committee on Awards and Citations shall determine the name, title, type and style of each authorized award or citation, the qualifications and/or accomplishments of the suggested recipients and shall make recommendations with respect thereto to the National Council of Administration for its approval.

(c) Trust Fund Committee.

(1) Composition: The Trust Fund Committee shall consist of the Commander-in-Chief, Adjutant General, Quartermaster General and three (3) members elected by the National Council of Administration. One member shall be elected each year for a three-year term. The Quartermaster General shall be Treasurer of the Trust Fund Committee.

(2) The Trust Fund Committee shall have custody of monies contributed by donors for the express purpose of promoting the objectives and purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. The Committee shall have broad administrative powers. It shall invest and reinvest funds in its custody in Class A securities and administer said trust funds in the best interest of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(d) Political Action Committee.

(1) Composition: The Political Action Committee shall consist of a Director, a Treasurer, and a nine (9) member Board of Directors.

The nine (9) member Board of Directors shall be appointed by the Commander-in-Chief. Two members shall be appointed each year for a four year term. One member, as recommended by the National President, Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, shall be

appointed each year for a one year term. The Director and Treasurer shall be appointed annually by the Commander-in-Chief with the approval of the Board of Directors. The Commander-in-Chief may also appoint members to fulfill unexpired terms created by a vacancy on the board.

(2) The Political Action Committee shall have custody of and authority to expend monies contributed to it for the advancement of the purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars by political action in elections to federal office in the United States. The Political Action Committee shall report annually to the National Convention and periodically to the National Council of Administration at its request detailing all receipts and expenditures.

The Political Action Committee shall adopt By-Laws governing the operation of the Committee. Said By-Laws and any amendments thereto shall be presented to and approved by the Council of Administration.

B-56 APPROVED
Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sec. 618—National Council of Administration--Composition, Powers and Duties.

Amend Section 618 – National Council of Administration—Composition, Powers and Duties, subsection (g), National By-Laws, by deleting "sixty (60)" and inserting "ninety (90)".

B-57 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Michigan

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 703--Bonds.

Amend Sec. 703 – Bonds, National By-Laws, by deleting the section in its entirety and inserting the following:

Sec. 703 – Bonds, Dishonesty Insurance.

Each officer accountable for funds or property pursuant to any provision of these By-Laws shall be bonded or insured with an indemnity company as surety in a sum at least equal to the amount of the liquid assets for which, so far as can be anticipated, he may be accountable. The bond or dishonesty insurance policy premium shall be paid from the funds of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Department, District, County Council or Post, as the case may be, to which each officer is accountable.

The bonds or dishonesty insurance policies of such accountable officers, in amount and as to surety, shall be approved by their respective units and held by their respective Commanders. The Commander of each unit shall be responsible for the proper and adequate bonding or insuring of all accountable officers in his unit.

M-61 APPROVED
Proposed by Department of Washington

ARTICLE VIII – UNIFORMS, BADGES, ETC.

Sec. 803—Manufacture and Use of Seals, Emblems, Badges, Insignia and Uniforms.

Amend Section 803-- Manufacture and Use of Seals, Emblems, Badges, Insignia and Uniforms, Official Uniform., Manual of Procedure, by removing the words "or the right sleeve" in the third paragraph.

B-58 REJECTED
Proposed by Department of Maryland

ARTICLE XIII – MENS AUXILIARY

Sec. 1302—Eligibility.

Amend Section 1302—Eligibility, National By-Laws, by deleting the first sentence and substituting the following:

Membership in the Mens Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars shall be limited to husbands, widowers, fathers, grandfathers, sons, grandsons, brothers, half-brothers and stepbrothers of persons who were or are eligible for membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

R-1 APPROVED
Proposed by Department of Latin America/Caribbean

RITUAL

Special Prayers.

Amend the RITUAL, Special Prayers, by adding the following prayer at the end of the section:

Veterans Prayer of Thanks

Almighty God, Father of us all! We, Thy servants, turn to Thee for continuance of Thy blessings upon us, Thou who hath spared us combat veterans from the grasp of our enemies, grant us the full understandings of Thy precious comfort. We thank Thee for the privileges of life and the blessings we enjoy through Thy graciousness in our country, the land in which we are given freedom of speech, religion and the pursuit of happiness.

R-2 APPROVED
Proposed by Department of Washington

RITUAL

Order of Business (Post).

Amend the RITUAL, Order of Business (Post), 2. Commander:, second sentence, by adding a comma(,) and the word charitable after the word historical.

RESOLUTIONS
CONSIDERED AT THE 109TH CONVENTION, ORLANDO, FLORIDA

TO COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

No. 201 (Submitted by Department of Maryland)
SUPPORT FOR THE YOUNG MARINE
(Rejected)

No. 202 (Submitted by Department of Montana)
BLACK BERET AUTHORIZED HEAD COVERING
(Rejected)

No. 203 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
DISCONTINUE THE NATIONAL CONVENTION BANQUET
BE IT RESOLVED, that as soon as current convention site contracts and Agreements permit, the National Convention banquet be discontinued.
(Approved)

TO COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

No. 301 (Submitted by Department of Florida)
PRISONER OF WAR AND MIA RECOGNITION DAY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars recognizing that all Americans have an immeasurable debt to those who were prisoners of war and those still missing in action that it petition The Congress of the United States designate by statute that the third Saturday in September as Prisoner of War and Missing in Action Recognition Day.
(Approved)

No. 302 (Submitted by Department of Montana)
CLARIFY PROTOCOL FOR THE POW/MIA FLAG
(Rejected)

TO COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON POW/MIA

No. 410 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
POW/MIA FULL ACCOUNTING COMMITMENT AND AGENCY FUNDING

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we remain steadfast in our commitment to the goal of the fullest possible accounting of all U.S. military personnel from all of our nation's wars; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon Congress to fully fund the efforts of the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office and all operations of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command.

(Approved)

No. 402 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
POW/MIA PUBLIC AWARENESS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we will provide routine distribution to the field of pertinent, credible and responsible information and reports, such as those initiated by the VFW National Security & Foreign Affairs Director; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that each Department, District and Post is encouraged to exercise maximum effort to maintain the vitality and thrust of the POW/MIA program and appoint an interested member to act as the POW/MIA project officer or committee chairman; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support the annual National POW/MIA Recognition Day and encourage the display and daily flying of the POW/MIA flag.

(Approved)

No. 403 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
FULL FUNDING FOR THE JOINT POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we remain strongly supportive of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and urge the President and Congress to demonstrate their resolve to keeping this issue a high national priority by earmarking a fully funded dedicated line item appropriation for the JPAC budget.

(Approved)

No. 404 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
RECOVER THE REMAINS OF THE GEORGE ONE CREW

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Department of Defense and the United States Navy to fully fund and support the recovery operation to retrieve the remains of the George One crew; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon Congress to provide the needed funding and direct the Department of Defense to carry out this operation.

(Approved)

No. 405 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
SUPPORT FOR THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we continue to support decisive action in the war on terrorism by staying on the offensive against international terrorist organizations and groups, as well as rogue or outlaw states guilty of inciting, harboring or aiding and abetting terrorists; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we unequivocally support the men and women of our armed forces who carry out the orders to prosecute the war on terrorism around the world and across the nation.

(Approved)

No. 406 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
SUPPORT FOR THE TROOPS AND THEIR MISSION IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the Commander-in-Chief and the brave men and women fighting the war in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, as a matter of security for the American people: and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon to the Administration and Congress to provide all the funding necessary to ensure the safety of our armed forces and to secure victory in the war on terrorism.

(Approved)

No. 407 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
INCREASE THE DEFENSE BUDGET

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Administration and Congress to increase defense spending to a minimum level of at least 5% of the Gross Domestic Product in order to adequately provide for the readiness, training, modernization, and sustainability of our armed forces; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call for an increase in personnel end strength for all branches of the military.

(Approved)

No. 408 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE IS A NATIONAL SECURITY PRIORITY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the development and deployment of a ballistic missile defense system to protect our country and our deployed military forces; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Congress to fully fund a ballistic missile defense program as a high priority national security requirement.

(Approved)

No. 409 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
MAINTAIN GLOBAL AIR SUPREMACY

BE IT RESOLVED by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress and the Department of Defense to provide the aircraft that the Air Force and all services need to carry out their mission and maintain global air supremacy.

(Approved)

No. 410 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
SUPPORT FOR THE NAVY'S DD(X) DESTROYER PROGRAM
BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the need to design and produce the Navy's next generation destroyer, and call upon the Congress to fully fund the DD(X) program.

(Approved)

No. 411 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
SUPPORT FOR THE COAST GUARD DEEPWATER PROGRAM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we fully support the United States Coast Guard Deepwater Program, and call upon the Congress to fully fund the modernization and recapitalization of the Coast Guard through this program initiative.

(Adopted)

No. 412 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
RAISE MILITARY BASE PAY TO EQUAL PRIVATE-SECTOR WAGES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to provide a military base pay raise that will restore full comparability with private-sector wages.

(Approved)

No. 413 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
LOWER THE RESERVE COMPONENT RETIREMENT PAY AGE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress and the Administration to lower the retirement pay eligibility age to 55 for all Reserve Component members.

(Approved)

No. 414 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
CORRECT THE FY08 NDAA RESERVE RETIREMENT PAY PROVISION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to provide all Reserve Component members who served on active duty in support of a contingency operation since September 11, 2001, with eligibility for early receipt of retirement pay as outlined in the provision included in the FY08 National Defense Authorization Act.

(Approved)

No. 415 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL AUTHORIZATION DATE CHANGE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the President of the United States to issue an executive order changing the effective date to qualify for the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal to March 3, 1946; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Joint Chiefs of Staff to review all military operations during this period and award the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal to participants of those operations that qualify.

(Approved)

No. 416 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
SECURE AMERICA'S BORDERS/HALT ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Administration and Congress to fast-track funding to departments and agencies responsible to halt the flow of illegal immigrants from entering the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Department of Homeland Security to expedite all initiatives to secure the entire United States border and ports of entry; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we insist the U.S. government aggressively work to identify all illegal immigrants and determine who should be deported and who should be allowed to apply for citizenship under existing laws.

(Approved)

No. 417 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
NATIONAL NATO EXPANSION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the continued expansion of the NATO Alliance to ensure the future security of Europe, as well as U.S. strategic interests in that region.
(Approved)

No. 418 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
SUPPORT FOR THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the government of the United States to keep a substantial military presence in South Korea and 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 Pacific and Asian regions.

(Approved)

No. 419 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
SUPPORT FOR THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Administration and Congress to strictly adhere 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 capability; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Administration to employ its full range of influence to contain aggressive posturing of the Peoples Republic of China; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to support the admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan into the United Nations and the World Health Organization; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage the Administration to afford the President of Taiwan (ROC) the same respect and privileges as afforded to other visiting heads of state.

(Approved)

No. 420 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
INVESTIGATE THE ISRAELI ATTACK ON THE USS LIBERTY
BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to immediately investigate the attack on the USS 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.

(Approved)

No. 421 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL FOR ALL CODE TALKERS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to support the efforts to identify all Native Americans who served as "Code Talkers"; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon Congress to award all Native American Code Talkers the Congressional Gold Medal.

(Approved)

No. 422 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
OPPOSE TRICARE FEE INCREASES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose any TRICARE fee increases and urge Congress to prevent the Department of Defense from escalating or realigning co-payments or any other fees for TRICARE services and benefits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support legislative action to move the authority to set TRICARE fees to the United States Congress.

(Approved)

No. 423 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
EUROPE DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that

we call upon the United States Congress to establish a Europe Defense Service Medal to recognize the significant contributions of U.S. military personnel in the defense of Europe that resulted in the Cold War victory.

(Approved)

No. 424 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
WORLD WAR ONE (WWI) GENERATION NATIONAL HONORS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that in recognition of a grateful nation's homage to its WWI veterans' courage and service, we urge the Congress to endorse and the President to proclaim that the flag of the United States be flown at half-staff from all public buildings, military installations, and naval ships for the time of notification of the passing of the last WWI veteran until that individual is laid to rest, or for one week, whichever is shorter.

(Approved)

No. 425 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
HALT NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM
BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon the Administration to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons development program and the proliferation of nuclear weapons or material to third world countries, terrorist states or organizations.

(Approved)

No. 426 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
COLD WAR VICTORY MEDAL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the creation and awarding of a Cold War Victory Medal to all eligible U.S. service personnel who served in the military during the Cold War era, 2 September 1945 to 26 December 1991, and whose service has not already been recognized by a campaign or service medal.

(Approved)

No. 427 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
EXPAND THE DATES OF ELIGIBILITY FOR THE VIETNAM SERVICE MEDAL

(Rejected in favor of No. 437)

No. 428 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
RE-DESIGNATE THE POSITION OF SECRETARY OF THE NAVY AS THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

(Rejected in favor of No. 445)

No. 429 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
AMEND CRITERIA FOR AWARD OF THE ARMY OF OCCUPATION WWII MEDAL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Congress of the United States, the Secretary of Defense, and/or the Secretary of the Army to rectify this injustice by awarding the

Army of Occupation Medal to those who served in Trieste, Italy with the U.S. Army from May 8, 1945, to October 25, 1954.

(Approved)

No. 430 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
RECOGNIZE MILITARY VETERANS WHO WERE KILLED OR WOUNDED DURING THE EARLY PERIOD OF THE COLD WAR

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the President to sign an Executive Order that will award the Purple Heart Medal to members of the military during the period 9 May 1945 to 25 April 1962 under identical circumstances as contained in Executive Order 11016 and Executive Order 12464.

(Approved)

No. 431 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
EXPAND ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ARMY COMBAT ACTION BADGE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Congress to direct the Department of the Army to expand the eligibility for the Army Combat Action Badge to those soldiers who served during the dates ranging from December 7, 1941 to September 18, 2001.

(Approved)

No. 432 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
UNIFORMED SERVICES FORMER SPOUSES PROTECTION ACT

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to reform the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act to include granting divorce awards based on the service member's rank at the time of divorce, and not require service members with more than 20 years of service to divide their expected retired pay before they actually retire.

(Approved)

No. 433 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
SUPPORT FOR THE ARMY'S FUTURE COMBAT SYSTEMS PROGRAM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the Army's Future Combat Systems program that will better prepare and protect soldiers for current and future threats; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon Congress to fully fund the Future Combat Systems program this year and into the future to achieve program stability.

(Approved)

No. 434 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
AUTHORIZE THE COMBAT ACTION BADGE FOR PENTAGON SERVICE ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Congress to direct the Secretary of the Army to authorize the Combat Action Badge for service members who were present for duty in the Pentagon on 11 September 2001; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Combat Action Badge be posthumously awarded to those service members killed in action on 11 September 2001 or who subsequently succumbed to wounds suffered on 11 September 2001.

(Approved)

No. 435 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
U.S. ACCEPTANCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA SERVICE MEDAL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Congress to direct the Secretary of Defense to make an exception to the current policy and authorize the acceptance of the Republic of Korea Service Medal from the Korean government; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all service members who have met the qualification criteria for the ROKSM, retroactive to August 1974, be authorized the medal and allowed to permanently wear it on their uniform.

(Approved)

No. 436 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
ESTABLISH A COMBAT ACTION MEDAL FOR NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PERSONNEL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Congress to direct the Secretary of the Navy to establish a suitable corresponding medal to the Combat Action Ribbon and rename it the Navy Combat Action Medal; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support the Navy Combat Action Medal as a replacement for the Combat Action Ribbon with the same eligibility criteria, thereby authorizing its wear by all who previously were awarded the Combat Action Ribbon; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the eligibility for the Navy Combat Action Medal be authorized retroactive to 7 December 1941, which is the same date now established for the Combat Action Ribbon.

(Approved)

No. 437 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
EXPAND THE DATES OF ELIGIBILITY FOR THE VIETNAM SERVICE MEDAL

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Congress to direct the Secretary of Defense to authorize the Vietnam Service Medal to those that served in the Republic of Vietnam, Thailand and on the ships in the Gulf of Tonkin in support of military operations during the period of 29 March 1973 to 28 April 1975, providing

the service member meets the eligibility criteria considered as qualifying service during 3 July 1965 through 28 March 1973.

(Approved)

No. 438 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
EXPAND THE DATES OF ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL

(Rejected in favor of No. 437)

No. 439 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
RECOVER THE REMAINS OF THE "HOT AS HELL" CREW

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly support the efforts of the United States and Indian government officials to reestablish humanitarian efforts for the recovery of remains of the "Hot As Hell" crew; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**,** that we urge the Congress to direct the Department of Defense to carry out this recovery mission as quickly as possible.

(Approved)

No. 440 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
RENEW POW/MIA DISCUSSIONS WITH NORTH KOREA

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly encourage the renewal of bilateral talks between the U.S. government and North Korean officials for the purpose of resuming humanitarian operations to recover and account for Americans still missing and unaccounted for from the Korean War.

(Approved)

No. 441 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
CALL FOR VIETNAM POW/MIA UNILATERAL ACTION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we encourage Socialist Republic of Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung to continue in this cooperative effort by authorizing officials in his government to locate and release immediately to the United States all records relating to Americans still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam conflict; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we strongly urge the Vietnamese government to find and repatriate Americans or the remains of Americans last known alive in captivity or in immediate proximity to capture by their forces that are in Vietnamese possession or control.

(Approved)

No. 442 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
US-RUSSIA JOINT COMMISSION ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge Russian Federation Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and

President Dmitry Medvedev to commit to the agreement made between our governments when the U.S. – Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs was established, and requests their full cooperation on all humanitarian objectives of this committee; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Speaker of the House of Representatives to appoint a qualified Member of the House to actively serve as Democrat Commissioner.

(Approved)

No. 443 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
USE OF U.S. NAVY VESSELS AND/OR U.S. GOVERNMENT VESSELS FOR VIETNAM UNDERWATER ACCOUNTING ACTIVITIES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the government of Vietnam to honor the 2006 agreement and permit humanitarian underwater recovery missions in the territorial waters of Vietnam that could help account for Americans lost during the Vietnam War; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon U.S. Government officials to implement the terms of this agreement in an expeditious manner.

(Approved)

No. 444 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
SHORE UP OUR BORDERS

(Rejected in favor of 416)

No. 445 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
RE-DESIGNATE THE POSITION OF SECRETARY OF THE NAVY AS THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation to re-designate the position of the Secretary of the Navy to Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps.

(Approved)

No. 446 (Submitted by Department of New York)
CALL FOR AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW AND INVESTIGATION OF CURRENT ARMED FORCES PREVENTIVE MEDICAL PROCEDURES AND PROTOCOLS

(Rejected)

No. 447 (Submitted by Department of Michigan)
INTERSTATE COMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon all state governments to

expeditiously adopt the language of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a duly authenticated copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Council of State Governments and the Department of Defense.

(Approved)

No. 448 (Submitted by Department of New Jersey)
ENERGY DEPENDENCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we encourage the President and Congress to develop and implement a long-term comprehensive strategy that reduces our dependence on foreign oil through conservation; substitute and alternative fuels; and the development of more efficient propulsion systems, power generators, machinery, and light-weight vehicles; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage the President and Congress to secure our oil supply by diversifying the geographic sources of U.S. oil imports; investigate the feasibility of expanded production of biofuels; and enhance the protection of critical shipping choke points (i.e., Straits of Hormuz, Malacca) and develop contingency plans for seaborne terrorism aimed at tanker ships.

(Approved)

No. 449 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
AUTHORIZE 2ND INFANTRY DIVISION PERMANENT AWARD AND WEAR OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to direct the Secretary of Defense to make an exception to the current policy and authorize the permanent wear of the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation for unit members assigned to the 2nd Infantry Division during the 1982, 1994, and 1999 award periods

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the military service records be updated to reflect that the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation was permanently awarded to all 2nd Infantry Division members who have met the qualification criteria.

(Approved)

TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE

No. 601 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
ADEQUATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BUDGET

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, 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, veteran entitlement

programs and health care system.

(Approved)

No. 602 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
CONSIDER TREATMENT FOR A PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTED CONDITION AS A FORMAL CLAIM FOR VA COMPENSATION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation requiring that treatment for a condition or disease recognized as presumptively service connected will be considered to be an informal claim for service connection for compensation purposes.

(Approved as Amended)

No. 603 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
EXTENDING GULF WAR PRESUMPTIONS, REGISTRY, AND HEALTH CARE TO AFGHANISTAN THEATER VETERANS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress and the VA to include Afghanistan in the Southwest Asia theater of operations so that appropriate benefits, including eligibility for compensation based on undiagnosed illnesses, and medical care eligibility, will be provided, retroactive to the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom.

(Approved)

No. 604 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
OPPOSE VA PHARMACEUTICAL CO-PAYMENT INCREASES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose increases in the VA pharmaceutical co-payment.

(Approved)

No. 605 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to provide sufficient funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that appropriate screening, diagnostic services, treatment and life-long case management services are available to every veteran suffering from TBI; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase its research pertaining to, screening methods, diagnostic tools, and more effective treatments for traumatic brain injury patients. To ensure that wounded TBI veterans are receiving the best treatment and rehabilitation care available.

(Approved)

No. 606 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to provide sufficient funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that appropriate screening, diagnostic services, treatment and life-long case management services are available to every veteran suffering from TBI; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase its research pertaining to, screening methods, diagnostic tools, and more effective treatments for traumatic brain injury patients. To ensure that wounded TBI veterans are receiving the best treatment and rehabilitation care available.

(Approved)

No. 607 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
EFFECTIVE VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SYSTEM

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, 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

BE IT 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.

(Approved)

No. 608 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
HIGH QUALITY VA SERVICES FOR WOMEN VETERANS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge VA to increase priority given to women veterans by providing adequate mental health care services to include individuals trained to provide care for Military Sexual Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge VA to also mandate a full-time women veterans program manager at all VA medical centers and to ensure necessary and gender-specific health care services are available to women veterans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veteran Affairs to improve outreach and expand programs for women veterans to close critical gaps by offering a full-range of services, designed to meet their current and future needs.

(Approved)

No. 609 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
EXTEND A PRESUMPTION OF SERVICE CONNECTION TO BLAST SURVIVORS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign War of the United States, that

we urge Congress to approve a presumption of service connection for the conditions associated with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and/or Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) that are the direct result of blast events sustained in combat, and manifest themselves at a later date.

(Approved)

No. 610 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
ASSURED FUNDING FOR VETERANS HEALTH CARE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to establish an assured funding mechanism for VA Health Care to ensure that all veterans receive the needed care they have earned from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(Approved)

No. 611 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
VETERAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars that VA help eliminate the barriers that veterans face when trying to establish and/or maintain a veteran or service disabled veteran owned small business; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress must provide the Department of Veterans Affairs with additional funding for the Center for Veterans Enterprise so they can meet the increasing veteran demand for entrepreneurial services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA must expedite the full implementation of P.L. 109-461 so veteran entrepreneurs can receive set-aside and sole source contracts. Further delays in approving policy and regulation dangers the success and longevity of recently established service disabled veteran owned small businesses.

(Approved)

No. 612 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION VETERANS PROGRAMS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the strengthening and sufficient funding of an effective veterans entrepreneurship program in the Office of Veteran Business Development within the United States Small Business Administration.

(Approved)

No. 613 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
EXPAND DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) PRE-SEPARATION COUNSELING AND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we request that Congress require that a comprehensive DOL review of TAP sites be conducted and encourage state cooperation in providing adequate Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) staff and Local Veterans'

Employment Representatives (LVER) personnel to conduct TAP sessions via contracting out the work of the DVOPs and LVERs, and further allow the inclusion of nationally accredited service organizations in their programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that DoD expand their existing pre-separation counseling programs to ensure counseling services are available to all service members during regular duty hours; add additional information on VA healthcare and entitlements, federal and private sector employment opportunities, information on homelessness, and to assure that individual service members will receive at least eight hours of transitioning services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that DoD's pre-separation counseling and DOL's TAP programs include information pertaining to National Guard and Reserve members and ensure that they receive the same level of services as regular active duty members prior to demobilization.

(Approved)

No. 614 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
VA CLAIMS BACKLOG

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to continue to exercise its oversight capacity and provide sufficient resources to hire, train and sustain a workforce sufficient to overcome the backlog and provide quality and timely service to those claiming benefits or appealing decisions from VA.

(Approved)

No. 615 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
SUPPORT THE UNIFORMED SERVICE EMPLOYMENT AND RE-EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the provisions of the Uniformed Service Employment and Re-Employment Rights Act be strictly enforced; and

BE IT 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 hiring National Guard and Reserve members and the employer's responsibilities as mandated by USERRA.

(Approved)

No. 616 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING ALLOWANCE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress should review and amend the law to allow an eligible veteran to receive multiple uses of the specially adapted housing allowances during the course of their lifetime.

(Approved)

No. 617 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTION FOR TINNITUS AND HEARING LOSS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to grant service connection on a presumptive basis for any veteran diagnosed after discharge with hearing loss or tinnitus when the evidence shows that the veteran participated in combat or worked in a position or occupational specialty likely to cause acoustic trauma.

(Approved)

No. 618 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
DOD CERTIFIED TRAINING

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge DOD to align Military Occupational Specialty training programs with civilian licensure and certification requirements so recently separated service members can take licensing and certification exams based on skills acquired while servicing in the military.

(Approved)

No. 619 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE BENEFITS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to take necessary actions to upgrade Guard and Reserve benefits to include medical care, Montgomery G.I. Bill educational benefits and entitlement to the VA Home Loan program. This will allow guard and reservists a comparable level of benefits as their active duty counterparts and provide a means to help ease the tremendous operational stresses imposed on Guard and Reserve members and their families.

(Approved)

No. 620 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
DEFINITION OF SERVICE CONNECTION FOR VA BENEFITS PURPOSES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to reject any revision of the standard or definition that would change the terms of VA compensation for disabilities or deaths as a result of service in the armed forces.

(Approved)

No. 621 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
VETERANS' PREFERENCE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose all attempts to limit or circumvent veterans' preference laws and require the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) who administers entitlement to veterans' preference and the Department of Labor (DOL) who is responsible to investigate alleged violations of veterans' preference to aggressively provide training and oversight of government hiring

personnel and hold them accountable for violations of veterans' preference laws; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we also encourage both state and municipal governments to establish or strengthen veterans' preference laws as an entitlement for those who served in the armed forces of the United States.

(Approved)

No. 622 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
HEALTH CARE FOR SEXUAL TRAUMA

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge both the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Defense (DoD) to ensure necessary and appropriate health care services are available to all veterans to include those suffering from sexual trauma; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the current screening process for sexual trauma be expanded in a way that will convince veterans that the process protects the victims confidentiality and provides a full assessment and treatment for the symptoms associated with sexual trauma; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that DoD must aggressively support a zero tolerance policy for sexual trauma and include a new definition pertaining to sexual assaults in the Code of Military Justice; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that service members be provided educational programs aimed at prevention of and response to sexual trauma during initial training and pre-deployment.

(Approved)

No. 623 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
INCREASE IN SPECIAL MONTHLY COMPENSATION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation to increase the special monthly compensation above the annual adjustment for inflation.

(Approved)

No. 624 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
EXEMPT BOTH CATASTROPHICALLY DISABLED VETERANS AND LOW INCOME, PENSION ELIGIBLE VETERANS FROM PAYING ANY VA CO-PAYMENTS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to exempt category 4, catastrophically disabled veterans and low-income, pension-eligible veterans in category 5 from paying any VA co-payments.

(Approved)

No. 625 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
A GI BILL FOR THE 21st CENTURY

(Rejected)

No. 626 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
HOMELESS VETERANS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to fully fund all veteran homeless programs to include the government Grant and *Per Diem* programs that are administered at the federal level.

(Approved)

No. 627 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
THE SURVIVOR'S BENEFIT PLAN AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION OFFSET

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to eliminate the Survivor's Benefit Plan and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset.

(Approved)

No. 628 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
MINIMUM COMPENSATION FOR HEARING LOSS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation that will authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to amend the Schedule for Rating Disabilities to provide a minimum compensable evaluation for any hearing loss for which a hearing aid is medically indicated.

(Approved)

No. 629 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
BURIAL PLOT ALLOWANCE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress pass legislation increasing the burial plot allowance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress pass legislation expanding eligibility for the burial plot allowance to include the spouse and dependent child eligible for burial with the veteran.

(Approved as Amended)

No. 630 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
LUNG CANCER SCREENING AND RESEARCH

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we request the Secretaries of the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to establish a lung cancer screening program for the purpose of early detection of lung cancer among military service members and veterans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Department of Defense to request and Congress to fund lung cancer research through the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program.

(Approved)

No. 631 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
EMERGENCY CARE SERVICES FOR ALL VA ENROLLED VETERANS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, 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.

(Approved)

No. 632 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
EXTEND THE SERVICE DISABLED VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS OF P.L. 109-461 TO ALL FEDERAL AGENCIES

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we urge Congress to pass legislation like that of P.L. 109-461, *"The Veterans Health Care, Benefits and Information Technology Act of 2006,"* for each specific agency in relation to Service Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to exercise oversight to ensure adherence to existing laws related to SDVOSB and Executive Order 13360 with the goal of meeting and exceeding the three percent government procurement goal for SDVOSBs.

(Approved)

No. 633 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
ESTABLISH REGIONAL VA EPILEPSY CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish centers of excellence for epilepsy to increase research opportunities and to improve treatment for all veterans suffering from epilepsy's effects.

(Approved)

No. 634 (Submitted by Department of Florida)
ELIMINATE RECOUPMENT OF SEVERANCE PAY FROM DEATH INDEMNITY COMPENSATION (DIC) AND VA COMPENSATION

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition Congress to enact legislation which completely abolishes the garnishment of Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation for medically discharged veterans and their families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress enact legislation which abolishes the garnishment of Death Indemnity Compensation (DIC) to families of medically discharged veterans who die as a result of their

service connected injuries.

(Approved as Amended)

No. 635 (Submitted by Department of Kansas)
ESTABLISH REGIONAL VA EPILEPSY CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

(Rejected)

No. 636 (Submitted by Department of Latin America/Caribbean)
PROPOSAL TO PETITION CONGRESS FOR APPROVAL OF THE BARTLETT MONTGOMERY GI BILL ACT

(Rejected)

No. 637 (Submitted by Department of Montana)
HEALTH RISKS OF DEPLETED URANIUM

(Rejected)

No. 638 (Submitted by Department of Nebraska)
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS REGIONAL CALL-IN CENTERS

(Rejected)

No. 639 (Submitted by Department of New York)
ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR STATE VETERANS HOME PROGRAMS

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we fully support the State Veterans Home program receiving from VA a payment that equals 50 percent of the national, average cost of providing care in a State Veterans Home; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Congress of the United States to fully fund the State Veterans Home Construction Grant Program for fiscal year 2009; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the President and the Congress of the United States to pledge their full support to the State Veterans Home Program, as it is the most cost-effective nursing care alternative to VA.

(Approved as Amended)

No. 640 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)
STAFFING GRANTS FOR DVOPS/LVERS

(Rejected)

No. 641 (Submitted by Department of Minnesota)
VA COMPENSATION WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we ask Congress to adopt legislation to repeal the provisions of 38 U.S.C. 5304(c) that mandates the termination of VA compensation when an individual returns to active duty.

(Approved as Amended)

No. 642 (Submitted by Department of Minnesota)
RECOGNIZE PARKINSON'S DISEASE AS A PRESUMPTIVE CONDITION
(Rejected)

No. 643 (Submitted by Department of Michigan)
FURNISH A HEADSTONE, MARKER, MEDALLION OR OTHER DEVICE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support amending Public Law 110-157 to allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to furnish a government headstone, marker, medallion or other device to eligible veterans notwithstanding the fact that the graves are already marked with a private marker and the veteran died prior to November 1, 1990.
(Approved as Amended)

No. 644 (Submitted by Department of Michigan)
HEADSTONE AND MARKER MEDALLION
(Rejected)

No. 645 (Submitted by Department of Michigan)
PRESUMPTION OF SERVICE CONNECTION FOR MELANOMA WITH RELATED DISABILITIES
(Rejected)

No. 646 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
OPPOSE ATTEMPTS TO PRIVATIZE VETERANS HEALTH CARE

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge the Congress and the Administration to resist any attempts for wide-scale privatization of the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system.
(Approved)

No. 647 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)
IMPROVE TREATMENT FOR CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISORDER

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge VA to improve the health care treatment options for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder to include making necessary adjustments to the formulary to ensure that pharmaceuticals that have shown to be effective are easily available to veterans without hassle and that VA create specialty clinics to educate, train and recruit health care professionals to deal with this disease's harmful effects.
(Approved)

109TH CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN
COMMITTEE ON CONVENTION RULES

Chairman, Clifford G. Olson, Jr. Post 8699, Massachusetts
Vice Chairman, James R. Mueller, Post 5077, Missouri

Michigan	David E. Prohaska	4434
Missouri	Kevin c. Jones	4050

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

Chairman, Larry W. Rivers, Post 1736, Louisiana
Vice Chairman, James E. Nier, Post 8919, Texas

Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	Charles R. Stephens	3128
Alaska	Melvin R. Sheppard	3836
Alaska	Martin E. Miller	9785
Arizona	Loren L. Gripp	10188
Arizona	Robert J. Rankin	9399
Arizona	George K. Mead	9400
Arkansas	Bobby G. Julian	6527
Arkansas	Michael K. Nuckolls	2330
California	John G. Lowe	2111
California	Mike M. Maynor	52
California	Earl D. Fulk	9557
California	Dean J. Lee	8358
Colorado	Earl J. Havens	3917
Colorado	Wayne J. Thompson	5061
Connecticut	Edward L. Burnham	1724
Connecticut	Gregory M. Smith	7788
Connecticut	Dominic J. Romano	7330
Connecticut	Ronald Rusakiewicz	9460
Delaware	Paul R. Phillips	2863
Dist. of Col.	Lynn R. Hill	7284
Europe	John C. Neilson	2566
Florida	Wayne E. Carrignan	5625
Florida	W. Benny Bachand	4287
Florida	Thomas L. Kissell	7909
Florida	William R. Kirsop	8083
Georgia	Ronald E. Keller	8385
Georgia	Ray E. Brooks	2785
Hawaii	Norbert K. Enos	2875
Illinois	Robert F. White	2791
Illinois	Robert A. Crider	2801
Illinois	Paul E. Kallembach	2287
Illinois	John Patterson	7448
Indiana	Jesse J. Morando	2724
Indiana	David G. Havely	5864
Iowa	Robert C. Peters	5981

Department	Name	Post No.
Iowa	John E. Chidester	817
Iowa	Roger D. Schwieso	941
Kansas	Vernon W. Russell	852
Kansas	Robert B. Greene	7397
Kentucky	Robert O. Hendrickson	8639
Kentucky	Michael G. Penney	1191
Louisiana	Douglas S. Evans	2277
Louisiana	Larry W. Rivers	1736
Maine	Kevin G. Woodward	11553
Maryland	D Harvey. Cunningham	8185
Maryland	Victor W. Fuentealba	9083
Massachusetts	John A. Martin	5737
Massachusetts	Donald R. Lafond	7239
Massachusetts	William J. Shea	3236
Michigan	Barry F. Walter	4005
Michigan	James N. Hixenbaugh	3087
Michigan	Sherwood H. Pea	3791
Michigan	David E. Prohaska	4434
Michigan	Robert D. Weiss	2406
Michigan	Kirk S. Kennedy	701
Minnesota	Patrick T. Bohmer	246
Minnesota	Larry G. Ziebarth	806
Missouri	Paul E. Connors	30
Missouri	Kevin C. Jones	4050
Missouri	Donald W. Watts	5553
Missouri	Robert J. Eckerle	7356
Missouri	John S. Holton	7356
Missouri	Lawrence M. Maher	7356
Montana	Larry H. Longfellow	1087
Montana	Raymond M. Lutz	1087
Nebraska	Billy C. Smith	7028
Nebraska	Rolland E. Hild	8334
Nevada	Marvin Alig	10047
New Hampshire	Richard F. Hillman	4368
New Hampshire	Paul J. Lloyd	1631
New Jersey	Albert J. Bucchi	3020
New Jersey	Thomas J. Farrell	3020
New Jersey	Fredrick Di Pietro	8840
New Mexico	William D. Teweleit	7686
New York	Michael Pascal	9486
New York	Ronald J. Bush	6433
New York	Harold M. Burke	1895
New York	Robert E. Barnhart	686
North Carolina	Raymond J. Yamrus	7318
North Carolina	Mark Bergman	10630
North Dakota	Wayne L. Paulson	753
Ohio	Danny R. Crow	2529
Ohio	Gerald J. Ward	5713
Ohio	Harry Crabtree	8402
Oklahoma	Donald R. Fenter	5263
Oregon	Dennis B. Gloyn	4116

Pacific Areas	William H. Wichmann	727
Pennsylvania	Albert S. Thomas	974
Pennsylvania	John B. Getz	3376
Pennsylvania	Robert C. Eiler	8805
Rhode Island	Michael K. Corriveau	4487
Rhode Island	Leo R. Swider	2929
South Carolina	Gerald T. Pothier	10256
South Carolina	John P. Williams	7607
South Dakota	Marvin M. Czerwonka	1273
South Dakota	Rick W. Barg	628
Tennessee	Charles P. Cassidy	4973
Texas	Richard D. Shawver	5073
Texas	John T. Spahr	8787
Texas	Richard K. King	8790
Texas	Ronald C. Hornsby	10428
Texas	James E. Nier	8919
Utah	Russell S. Pogue	10900
Vermont	Catherine S. De Marco	771
Virginia	Charles R. Wells	4301
Virginia	John J. Mc Neill	5412
Virginia	Roy E. Swanner	7726
Washington	Richard A. Petersen	10018
West Virginia	Donna E. Evick	6454
Wisconsin	Thomas J. Robinson	2126
Wyoming	Ed Wilkerson	10056

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

Chairman, Paul A. Spera, Post 144, Massachusetts
Vice Chairman, John E. Moon, Post 2873, Ohio

Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	Thomas W. Murray	668
Alaska	Mahalia J. Binns	9978
Arizona	Daniel J. Reilly	10695
Arizona	Frank V. Page	7968
Arizona	John H. Sims	6310
Arkansas	Ruben Tamariz	2256
Arkansas	A M. Armstrong	2283
California	David B. Norris	52
California	Selso A. Cavazos	5991
California	Laura C. Dobbins	4084
California	James R. Rowoldt	10040
Colorado	James E. Mauck	2601
Connecticut	Jerry R. Blonigen	9452
Delaware	Gary Frederick	2863
Dist. of Col.	Troy E. Gatling	341
Europe	Robert L. Gambert	10810
Florida	John E. Hamilton	7909
Florida	Laurence Schatz	3559
Florida	Harvey F. Eckhoff	7674
Georgia	Al J. Lipphardt	12002

Hawaii	John S. Chapman	10154
Idaho	Dale W. Smith	3646
Illinois	Barbara R. Wilson	2649
Illinois	Matthew C. Claussen	2378
Illinois	Terry W. Vance	9789
Iowa	John C. Toomey	788
Iowa	Phillip P. Bastian	5240
Kansas	Robert B. Greene	7397
Kansas	James O. Clark	1786
Kentucky	Brian J. Duffy	1170
Louisiana	Precilla Wilkewitz	4224
Maine	Chris L. Armstrong	887
Maine	Philip M. Farrell	11299
Maryland	Harvey A. Stephens	2632
Massachusetts	Robert M. Van Kirk	2394
Massachusetts	Paul A. Spera	144
Massachusetts	Walter Gansenberg	834
Massachusetts	Edward C. Walsh	6712
Michigan	Jackie L. Pickard	2780
Michigan	James E. Bowie	2233
Michigan	Robert L. Williams	1137
Minnesota	David L. Adams	1782
Minnesota	Louie R. Mrozek	6316
Mississippi	Terry D. Carlock	4057
Missouri	Lawrence M. Maher	7356
Missouri	Paul G. Jones	2866
Missouri	Donald L. Hentges	35
Montana	Wayne L. Mc Kee	689
Nebraska	Dick Mc Michael	131
New Hampshire	Michael S. Annis	2860
New Jersey	Leonard J. Hennig	1429
New Jersey	James S. Woodside	1795
New Jersey	Joe Tamayo	10065
New Mexico	Rita J. Stubblefield	3274
New York	Michael W. Webster	6338
New York	James M. Longendyke	1386
New York	William J. Schmitz	524
North Dakota	Charles L. Weible	7564
Ohio	Jeffery C. Carroll	9927
Ohio	Francis L. Clendenen	9473
Ohio	Wayne M. Waligorski	6979
Ohio	John E. Moon	2873
Ohio	Robert W. Crow	4027
Oklahoma	Darryl D. Mabry	1193
Oklahoma	Curtis O. Bohlman	1335
Oregon	Thomas G. Laing	3965
Pacific Areas	Kenneth W. Schaefer	2485
Pennsylvania	John A. Biedrzycki	418
Pennsylvania	Wrayburn D. Reinsmith	6168
Pennsylvania	William C. Allen	7213
Pennsylvania	Jack E. Wettig	7418
Rhode Island	Frank E. Lightowler	6342

Rhode Island	Roger J. Lavoie	5392
South Carolina	Richard N. Bell	4262
South Carolina	Daniel Thompson	4262
South Dakota	Jeffrey B. Wilkes	628
Tennessee	Thomas L. De Hoog	1733
Tennessee	Randall E. Durham	7175
Texas	John F. Lozanski	5076
Texas	John A. Sargent	3892
Texas	Ferrell E. Warden	8552
Utah	Elmer L. Zoltz	8307
Vermont	Thomas J. Keyes	648
Vermont	Samuel R. Haskins	1034
Virginia	John J. Mc Neill	5412
Virginia	Eugene Chavis	10826
Washington	Richard E. Hazelmyer	51
West Virginia	William G. Wilson	7048
Wisconsin	Frank L. Capps	987
Wisconsin	Eric E. Mortensen	1391
Wisconsin	John L. Fredrickson	2204
Wisconsin	William F. Hustad	10549
Wyoming	Pete Quinnell	7756

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

Chairman, Edward S. Banas, Post 10004, Connecticut
Vice Chairman, Walter G. Hogan, Post 6498, Wisconsin
Vice Chairman, Thomas A. Pouliot, Post 1116, Montana
Vice Chairman, R. D. Smith, Jr., Post 4346, Georgia

Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	Dennis P. Doherty	3016
Alabama	Stephanie Allen	8640
Alaska	James M. Dahlke	3629
Arizona	George W. Robinson	8987
Arizona	Anthony D. Mangine	6790
Arkansas	Ernest D. Kyzer	3543
California	Eugene L. Cota	6298
California	Doug L. Rockwell	2323
California	Walter W. Hamilton	7420
Colorado	John J. Holland	1
Colorado	Warren E. Wellensiek	4171
Connecticut	Ronald Christopher	5095
Connecticut	Neil V. Hunt	296
Connecticut	Stanley W. Borusiewicz	1946
Connecticut	Melvin E. Hewston	9965
Connecticut	Edward S. Banas	10004
Delaware	Lawrence M. Waters	475
Delaware	Mark M. Newman	3238
Dist. of Col.	William Bennett	346
Florida	Ernest R. Sandman	2500
Florida	Robert Shepherd	4864
Florida	Eugene Le Shore	10174

Florida	Allen E. Hall	7909
Florida	Larry R. Stover	8002
Georgia	R D. Smith	4346
Hawaii	Stanley Y. Fernandez	10276
Idaho	Alvin R. Mason	63
Illinois	Richard A. Coombe	4551
Illinois	William G. Oerly	4551
Illinois	Elton H. Murphy	4668
Indiana	Johnny R. Capps	6653
Indiana	Frank Garcia	802
Indiana	John K. Ayres	1152
Iowa	Donald W. Roepke	8884
Kansas	Troy G. Danderson	12073
Kansas	Robert B. Greene	7397
Kansas	Stephen L. Van Buskirk	7397
Kansas	Buddy J. Haney	56
Kansas	Victor F. Malson	704
Kentucky	Alexander J. Feher	5171
Louisiana	Kenneth G. Wilkewitz	4224
Maine	Bruce B. Arnold	3381
Maine	Wayne H. Elkins	1285
Maryland	Robert L. Miedzinski	2632
Maryland	Michael W. Reamy	9376
Massachusetts	Alvin B. Smart	2547
Michigan	Larry A. Coleman	1888
Michigan	James R. Pintar	6165
Michigan	Charles R. Abner	9885
Minnesota	John L. Shalloe	8510
Minnesota	Stephen J. O`Connor	4114
Minnesota	Leon R. Ulferts	3915
Mississippi	Ronald H. Eriksen	5699
Missouri	Lyle J. Seelinger	3118
Missouri	Jerry F. Jones	1829
Missouri	Frank J. Rick	6603
Missouri	Debra L. Anderson	7356
Missouri	Lawrence M. Maher	7356
Montana	Thomas A. Pouliot	1116
Montana	Arthur J. Widhalm	3107
Nebraska	David V. Beran	1504
Nebraska	Richard E. Morrison	8334
New Hampshire	Shannan F. Brown	7217
New Hampshire	Paul J. Chevalier	168
New Hampshire	James R. Merrill	4368
New Hampshire	Russell E. Gora	5791
New Jersey	Gary L. Stoop	4589
New Jersey	Allen N. Rhodes	220
New Jersey	Edward M. Kubas	633
New Jersey	Manuel Almeida	2226
New Mexico	Mucio J. Lopez	2528
New York	Bernard L. Thompson	1896
New York	John S. Brunato	53
New York	Melvin Garrett	6396

New York	Dennis M. Sullivan	4927
New York	Ronald Sakonyi	7325
North Carolina	Jason L. Schoolcraft	8073
Ohio	Christopher J. Clapper	7651
Ohio	John E. Keirns	7174
Ohio	James W. Dickens	5532
Ohio	John Wasylik	2529
Oklahoma	George S. Morris	1857
Oklahoma	Jeff W. Harris	1098
Oregon	John L. Cook	922
Oregon	Dennis G. Guthrie	4108
Pacific Areas	Ronald D. Teets	10033
Pennsylvania	Glenn R. Umberger	7155
Pennsylvania	Guy J. Sunderland	7377
Pennsylvania	Gary M. Anders	7689
Pennsylvania	Ernest J. Huffine	5424
Rhode Island	Robert D. Harkin	4487
South Carolina	Lyn D. Dimery	10420
South Dakota	Patrick E. O`Neill	1273
South Dakota	Verne H. Hansen	2118
Tennessee	Carl T. Jackson	684
Tennessee	Jerald A. Sweeney	11160
Texas	Duane G. Shriver	8787
Texas	John Snyder	9170
Texas	James H. Hoffman	9299
Utah	Roy G. Kunzi	3586
Vermont	Allston J. Gilmond	6689
Virginia	John J. Mc Neill	5412
Virginia	Kevin R. Ehrhardt	3160
Washington	Brad T. Pieratt	3617
Washington	Charles T. O'Donahue	10018
Wisconsin	Walter N. Matzek	9060
Wisconsin	Lemuel J. Ellis	7591
Wisconsin	Walter G. Hogan	6498
Wisconsin	Philip J. Jasinski	2895
Wyoming	Charles F. Sutter	4797
Wyoming	Huber H. King	10969

COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Chairman, John Furgess, Post 1970, Tennessee
Vice Chairman, James N. Goldsmith, Post 4139, Michigan

Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	John W. Hancock	3550
Alabama	Lawrence D. Dean	4572
Alaska	Alvin J. Moye	10252
Arizona	James R. Currieo	9972
Arizona	Michael K. Ferguson	7968
Arkansas	Walter Bader	4453
California	Edward J. Mc Coy	2275

California	Roger E. Luehrs	2805
California	Carl F. Miller	11012
Colorado	Warren R. Tellgren	9644
Connecticut	Robert B. Andersen	591
Connecticut	Philip R. Hodge	3263
Delaware	Richard H. Bennar	7234
Delaware	George M. Ritchie	7234
Dist. of Col.	Rodolfo B. Ines	5471
Europe	Peter H. Luste	8862
Europe	Richard F. Kennedy	9534
Florida	Peter C. Nicholsen	10097
Florida	Edward S. Valenjevick	10167
Florida	Lee F. Kichen	12055
Florida	Katrina M. Smailis	5968
Hawaii	Nicholas S T. Young	1540
Idaho	Denny Croner	2738
Idaho	Daniel K. Johnson	63
Illinois	Michael J. Zarembski	2791
Illinois	Jerry Foreman	1984
Illinois	Russell R. Rieke	5694
Illinois	William H. Regan	7452
Indiana	John L. Dahman	857
Iowa	Clinton L. Hoferman	6172
Iowa	William L. Kendall	9599
Kansas	Darrell F. Bencken	2981
Kentucky	John H. Ranson	6095
Louisiana	John R. Fauver	3784
Maine	Marvin W. Woodbury	887
Maryland	James L. Youngblood	9083
Maryland	Michael A. Perini	8672
Massachusetts	James F. Williams	8164
Massachusetts	Fredrick Gordon	1628
Michigan	Garry J. Goff	2406
Michigan	Maurice B. Morton	1370
Michigan	James N. Goldsmith	4139
Michigan	Arnold E. Huuki	6507
Michigan	Robert H. Jackson	4012
Minnesota	John S. Staum	9625
Minnesota	Gary R. Anderson	6587
Minnesota	Steven P. Van Bergen	6587
Minnesota	James R. Tuorila	428
Mississippi	Tony G. Farmer	2706
Mississippi	William H. Long	4302
Missouri	Charles D. Dickinson	3135
Missouri	Robert E. Newell	5789
Missouri	Dewey M. Riehn	280
Montana	John W. Mahan	1116
Montana	Ken R. Utter	6786
Nebraska	Dan G. Petersen	131
Nebraska	James H. Pierce	5547
Nevada	Kenneth D. Veith	3848
Nevada	James A. Dorsey	10047

New Hampshire	Gregory P. Lynch	1088
New Hampshire	James J. Golden	1772
New Jersey	Ernest R. Cuff	1795
New Jersey	Stephen G. Abel	3020
New Jersey	Fred G. Betteridge	6650
New Jersey	G B. Eveland	7677
New Jersey	Donald E. Marshall	9503
New Jersey	Michael H. Wysong	9503
New Mexico	Tyrone M. Benson	7686
New Mexico	George W. Brown	401
New York	Thomas J. Todaro	53
New York	Kenneth E. Rain	8645
North Carolina	Billy R. Cameron	5631
North Carolina	Tommie E. Warren	6018
North Dakota	John D. Hanson	1874
Ohio	Chuck Keller	3761
Ohio	George R. Dountz	9473
Oklahoma	Darrell R. Mc Gee	5263
Oregon	Glenn D. German	2302
Pacific Areas	Joseph F. Mortimer	9612
Pennsylvania	Raymond P. Shipp	1754
Pennsylvania	Dominic A. De Franco	764
Pennsylvania	Cecil K. Dennis	5958
Rhode Island	Armondo C. Azzinaro	8955
South Carolina	Paul F. Slater	10804
South Dakota	Richard R. Schwanke	628
South Dakota	Gerald E. Kuecker	750
South Dakota	Gary Knudson	2038
Tennessee	John Furgess	1970
Tennessee	Edward F. Southern	4862
Texas	Lazaro Velasquez	2397
Texas	Sylvia C. Sanchez	8936
Texas	Jerry R. Foreman	8246
Utah	Robert O. Steele	3586
Vermont	Vito S. De Marco	771
Vermont	Bradley F. Reynolds	798
Virginia	David W. Kipfinger	2820
Virginia	Robert G. King	4637
Washington	Darren L. Dyer	1949
Washington	Thomas E. Darling	9474
Washington	Charles E. Vitiritti	9430
West Virginia	Robert W. Caruthers	9926
West Virginia	Melvin L. Reed	573
Wisconsin	Steven D. Lawrence	10272
Wyoming	John D. Darnell	954

SUBCOMMITTEE ON POW/MIA

Chairman, John F. Gwizdak, Post 5080, Georgia
Vice Chairman, George R. Cramer, Post 3873, Illinois
Vice Chairman, Norman G. Staab, Post 6240, Kansas

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

Chairman, John W. Smart, Post 483, New Hampshire
Vice Chairman, Gary L. Kurpius, Post 9365, Alaska

Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	John W. Hancock	3550
Alabama	Lawrence D. Dean	4572
Alaska	Alvin J. Moye	10252
Arizona	James R. Currieo	9972
Arizona	Michael K. Ferguson	7968
Arkansas	Walter Bader	4453
California	Edward J. Mc Coy	2275
California	Roger E. Luehrs	2805
California	Carl F. Miller	11012
Colorado	Warren R. Tellgren	9644
Connecticut	Robert B. Andersen	591
Connecticut	Philip R. Hodge	3263
Delaware	Richard H. Bennar	7234
Delaware	George M. Ritchie	7234
Dist. of Col.	Rodolfo B. Ines	5471
Europe	Peter H. Luste	8862
Europe	Richard F. Kennedy	9534
Florida	Peter C. Nicholsen	10097
Florida	Edward S. Valenjevick	10167
Florida	Lee F. Kichen	12055
Florida	Katrina M. Smailis	5968
Hawaii	Nicholas S T. Young	1540
Idaho	Denny Croner	2738
Idaho	Daniel K. Johnson	63
Illinois	Michael J. Zarembski	2791
Illinois	Jerry Foreman	1984
Illinois	Russell R. Rieke	5694
Illinois	William H. Regan	7452
Indiana	John L. Dahman	857
Iowa	Clinton L. Hoferman	6172
Iowa	William L. Kendall	9599
Kansas	Darrell F. Bencken	2981
Kentucky	John H. Ranson	6095
Louisiana	John R. Fauver	3784
Maine	Marvin W. Woodbury	887
Maryland	James L. Youngblood	9083
Maryland	Michael A. Perini	8672
Massachusetts	James F. Williams	8164
Massachusetts	Fredrick Gordon	1628
Michigan	Garry J. Goff	2406
Michigan	Maurice B. Morton	1370
Michigan	James N. Goldsmith	4139
Michigan	Arnold E. Huuki	6507
Michigan	Robert H. Jackson	4012
Minnesota	John S. Staum	9625
Minnesota	Gary R. Anderson	6587

Minnesota	Steven P. Van Bergen	6587
Minnesota	James R. Tuorila	428
Mississippi	Tony G. Farmer	2706
Mississippi	William H. Long	4302
Missouri	Charles D. Dickinson	3135
Missouri	Robert E. Newell	5789
Missouri	Dewey M. Riehn	280
Montana	John W. Mahan	1116
Montana	Ken R. Utter	6786
Nebraska	Dan G. Petersen	131
Nebraska	James H. Pierce	5547
Nevada	Kenneth D. Veith	3848
Nevada	James A. Dorsey	10047
New Hampshire	Gregory P. Lynch	1088
New Hampshire	James J. Golden	1772
New Jersey	Ernest R. Cuff	1795
New Jersey	Stephen G. Abel	3020
New Jersey	Fred G. Betteridge	6650
New Jersey	G B. Eveland	7677
New Jersey	Donald E. Marshall	9503
New Jersey	Michael H. Wysong	9503
New Mexico	Tyrone M. Benson	7686
New Mexico	George W. Brown	401
New York	Thomas J. Todaro	53
New York	Kenneth E. Rain	8645
North Carolina	Billy R. Cameron	5631
North Carolina	Tommie E. Warren	6018
North Dakota	John D. Hanson	1874
Ohio	Chuck Keller	3761
Ohio	George R. Dountz	9473
Oklahoma	Darrell R. Mc Gee	5263
Oregon	Glenn D. German	2302
Pacific Areas	Joseph F. Mortimer	9612
Pennsylvania	Raymond P. Shipp	1754
Pennsylvania	Dominic A. De Franco	764
Pennsylvania	Cecil K. Dennis	5958
Rhode Island	Armondo C. Azzinaro	8955
South Carolina	Paul F. Slater	10804
South Dakota	Richard R. Schwanke	628
South Dakota	Gerald E. Kuecker	750
South Dakota	Gary Knudson	2038
Tennessee	John Furgess	1970
Tennessee	Edward F. Southern	4862
Texas	Lazaro Velasquez	2397
Texas	Sylvia C. Sanchez	8936
Texas	Jerry R. Foreman	8246
Utah	Robert O. Steele	3586
Vermont	Vito S. De Marco	771
Vermont	Bradley F. Reynolds	798
Virginia	David W. Kipfinger	2820
Virginia	Robert G. King	4637
Washington	Darren L. Dyer	1949

Washington	Thomas E. Darling	9474
Washington	Charles E. Vitiritti	9430
West Virginia	Robert W. Caruthers	9926
West Virginia	Melvin L. Reed	573
Wisconsin	Steven D. Lawrence	10272
Wyoming	John D. Darnell	954