

PROCEEDINGS
of the
114TH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES

(SUMMARY OF MINUTES)

Louisville, Kentucky
July 21 – 24, 2013



VFW

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

May 21, 2014—Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and ordered to be printed.

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

[Approved October 2, 1968.]

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

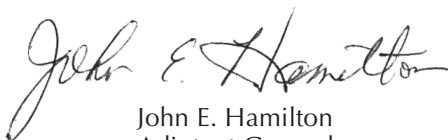
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES,
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
MAY, 2014

Honorable John Boehner
The Speaker U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In conformance with the provisions of Public Law No. 620, 90th Congress, approved October 22, 1968, I am transmitting to you herewith the proceedings of the 114th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in Louisville, Kentucky, July 21-24, 2013, which is submitted for printing as a House document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John E. Hamilton". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

John E. Hamilton
Adjutant General

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

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

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

* indicates deceased

American Veterans of Foreign Service

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

**American Veterans of Foreign Service
(Eastern Branch)**

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

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

Army of the Philippines

1900-1901	Gen. Francis V. Greene *	Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1901-1902	Gen. Irving Hale *	Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.
1902-1903	Gen. Irvin Hale *	Elected at Council Bluffs, Iowa.
1903-1904	Gen. Charles King *	Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1904-1905	Gen. Wilder S. Metcalf *	Elected at St. Louis, Missouri.
1905-1906	Col. Alfred S. Frost *	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.

1906-1907	Gen. Arthur MacArthur *	Elected at Des Moines, Iowa.
1907-1908	Capt. H.A. Crow *	Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1908-1909	Maj. P.J.H. Farrell *	Elected at Galesburg, Illinois.
1909-1910	Col. Charles L. Jewett *	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1910-1911	A. H. Anderson *	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1911-1912	F. Warner Karling *	Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1912-1913	F. Warner Karling *	Elected at Lincoln, Nebraska.

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

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

1949-1950 Clyde A. Lewis* Elected at Miami, Florida.
 1950-1951 Charles C. Ralls* Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
 1951-1952 Frank C. Hilton* Elected at New York, New York.
 1952-1953 James W. Cothran* Elected at Los Angeles, California.
 1953-1954 Wayne E. Richards* Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
 1954-1955 Merton B. Tice* Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
 1955-1956 Timothy J. Murphy* Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
 1956-1957 Cooper T. Holt* Elected at Dallas, Texas.
 1957-1958 Richard L. Roudebush* Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
 1958-1959 John W. Mahan* Elected at New York, New York.
 1959-1960 Louis G. Feldmann* Elected at Los Angeles, California.
 1960-1961 T.C. Connell* Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
 1961-1962 Robert E. Hansen Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
 1962-1963 Byron B. Gentry* Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
 1963-1964 Joseph J. Lombardo* Elected at Seattle, Washington.
 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 Wasyluk 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 at Kansas City, Missouri.
2008-2009	Glen M. Gardner, Jr.	Elected at Orlando, Florida.
2009-2010	Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr.	Elected at Phoenix, Arizona.
2010-2011	Richard L. Eubank	Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.

VFW NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 2012-2013

Commander-in-Chief	John E. Hamilton
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief	William A. Thien
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief	John W. Stroud
Adjutant General	Allen F. "Gunner" Kent
Quartermaster General	Robert B. Greene
Judge Advocate General	David B. Norris
Surgeon General.....	Dr. James R. "Doc" Tuorila
National Chaplain	Rev. William J. Bleiler
National Chief of Staff.....	William R. Kirsop
Inspector General	Carl J. Kaelin
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Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Kansas City.....	Jerry L. Newberry
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Director, National Military Services	Michael G. Penney
Director, National Veterans Service	William L. Bradshaw
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Director, Programs.....	Stephen L. Van Buskirk
Director, Properties.....	Billy R. Weissend
Director, Publications and Editor-in-Chief, VFW magazine.....	Richard K. Kolb

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Department of Arizona	Timothy Borland
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Department of Missouri	David Morgan
Department of Montana.....	Timothy Peters
Department of Nebraska	Dan Petersen
Department of Nevada	Herman Hagen
Department of New Hampshire	David Ouellette
Department of New Jersey	Otto Gollon
Department of New Mexico	Allan Kuchinsky
Department of New York.....	Ronald Bush
Department of North Carolina	James Goins
Department of North Dakota	Dale Ronning
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Department of Oregon.....	Bert Key
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Department of South Carolina	Frank Fogner

Department of South Dakota	Russel Dramstad
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Department of Utah	Brent Neilsen
Department of Vermont	Malcolm MacAskill
Department of Virginia	James Martin
Department of Washington	Jerry Herker
Department of West Virginia	Charles Haney
Department of Wisconsin	Allen Kochenderfer
Department of Wyoming	James Pedersen
Immediate Past Commander-in-Chief	Richard L. DeNoyer

NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE

July 21-25, 2012, Reno, Nevada

Convention Committee Chairman	Jack McMIndes
Operations Officer	Michael Musgrove
Health Fair Chairman	William Maltman
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-Chairman	Lewie Cooper
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-Chairman	Bernard Juran
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Manager, Meetings & Events	Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM
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Patriotic Rally Chairman	Herman Hagen
Registration Chairman	Stephen Gibbs
Transportation Chairman	Jerry Chamlee
Military Contests Chairman.....	Rick Isom

NATIONAL HONOR GUARD

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Barbara Floyd.....	521 MD
Raymond Glock	1858 MD
Gary Lee.....	609 VA
Charles McConville.....	521 MD
Stephen Olcott	9619 MD
Henry Servary.....	521 MD
Alfred Simmons.....	8509 MD
Clinton Slack.....	475 DE
Edward Smith	838 DE

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Bryan P. O'Brien POST
2394 MA

NATIONAL ASSISTANT SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

Joy Ausman 10043 ID
Gary W. Barringer 9134 NC
Lonnie Garza..... 7110 TX
George Lott10152 NJ
Keith MacDonald2275 CA
Joseph P. Schirmers 4847 MN



John E. Hamilton
Commander-in-Chief
2012-2013



William A. Thien
Commander-in-Chief
2013-2014

VFW NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 2013-2014

Commander-in-Chief	William A. Thien
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief	John W. Stroud
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief	John A. Biedrzycki, Jr.
Adjutant General	John E. Hamilton
Quartermaster General	Robert B. Greene
Judge Advocate General	Harold M. "Hal" Burke, Jr.
Surgeon General	Peter T. Buchanan
National Chaplain	Robert H. Dickerson
National Chief of Staff.....	David G. Havelly
Inspector General	Terry W. Vance
Assistant Adjutant General & Executive Director, Washington Office	Robert E. Wallace
Assistant Adjutant General, Operations.....	Jerry L. Newberry
Director, Administration & Operations, Washington Office.....	Fredrick W. Burns
Director, Administrative Operations	Kevin C. Jones
Deputy Director, Administrative Operations	David Prohaska
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Washington	Joseph E. Davis
Director, Human Resources	Debra L. Anderson
Director, Legal/General Counsel	John R. Muckelbauer
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Director, National Military Services	Michael G. Penney
Director, National Veterans Service	William L. Bradshaw
Deputy Director, National Veterans Service.....	Gerald T. Manar
Director, Operations for the Quartermaster General	Patrick J. Botbyl
Director, Programs.....	Daniel J. Parker
Director, Properties.....	Billy R. Weissend
Director, Publications and Editor-in-Chief, VFW magazine	Richard K. Kolb

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Department of Alaska	Robert Myles
Department of Arizona	Timothy Borland
Department of Arkansas.....	Michael Nuckolls
Department of California	Denis Wells
Department of Colorado	Ronald Lattin
Department of Connecticut.....	Richard DiFederico
Department of Delaware	John Morrow
Department of District of Columbia	Herman Salley
Department of Europe.....	Peter Mascetti
Department of Florida.....	Allen Hall
Department of Georgia	Dean Smith
Department of Hawaii	Norbert Enos

Department of Idaho.....	John Crotinger
Department of Illinois	Jules Spindler
Department of Indiana	Richard Faulk
Department of Iowa.....	Darrell Blasberg
Department of Kansas.....	J. T. Plummer
Department of Kentucky	Brian Duffy
Department of Latin America/Carib	Jose Claudio
Department of Louisiana.....	Federico Arends
Department of Maine.....	Raymond Lupo
Department of Maryland.....	Eugene Stewart
Department of Massachusetts	George Murray
Department of Michigan	Jack Pray
Department of Minnesota	Donald Nix
Department of Mississippi.....	Johnnie Richard
Department of Missouri	Jessie Jones
Department of Montana.....	Timothy Peters
Department of Nebraska	Dan Petersen
Department of Nevada	Herman Hagen
Department of New Hampshire	Paul Lloyd
Department of New Jersey	Manuel Almeida
Department of New Mexico	Allan Kuchinsky
Department of New York.....	James McNally
Department of North Carolina	James Goins
Department of North Dakota	Dale Ronning
Department of Ohio	Richard Uzl
Department of Oklahoma	Harlan Bjorgoind
Department of Oregon.....	Bert Key
Department of Pacific Areas	Gerald Kraus
Department of Pennsylvania	Robert Eiler
Department of Rhode Island	Allen Wagonblott
Department of South Carolina	Frank Fogner
Department of South Dakota	Russel Dramstad
Department of Tennessee	John Scott
Department of Texas.....	Dennis Barber
Department of Utah.....	Brent Neilsen
Department of Vermont	Ronald Tallman
Department of Virginia	James Martin
Department of Washington	Jerry Herker
Department of West Virginia	Charles Haney
Department of Wisconsin	Allen Kochenderfer
Department of Wyoming.....	James Pedersen
Past Commander-in-Chief.....	John E. Hamilton

NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE
July 20 - 24, 2013, Louisville, Kentucky

Convention Committee Chairman..... Carl Kaelin
 Health Fair Chairman Martha Cassity
 Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-ChairmanLewie Cooper
 Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-ChairmanBilly Garwood
 Assistant Adjutant General, Administration Operations.....Jerry Newberry
 Manager, Meetings & Events..... Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM
 Memorial Service Chairman David Graetz
 Patriotic Rally ChairmanMike Whitfield
 Registration ChairmanJohn Ranson
 Transportation Chairman Jerry Kayrouz

NATIONAL HONOR GUARD

	POST
Ronald Servary, Captain	521 MD
Albert Brown	3792 DE
Jay Cabacar	5471 DC
Eugene Daisey	5118 MD
Barbara Floyd	521 MD
Raymond Glock.....	1858 MD
Gary Lee	609 VA
Alfred Simmons	8509 MD
Clinton Slack	475 DE
Edward Smith	838 DE

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

	POST
Bryan P. O'Brien	2394 MA

NATIONAL ASSISTANT SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

Joy Ausman	10043 ID
Gary W. Barringer	9134 NC
James Galen	6802 MI
Lonnie Garza.....	7110 TX
George Lott	10152 NJ
Keith MacDonald	2275 CA
Joseph P. Schirmers	4847 MN

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE 114th NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY JULY 21–24, 2013

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE
SUNDAY, JULY 21, 2013

(The Memorial Service of the 114th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Kentucky International Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief John Hamilton presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Sergeants-at-Arms, please escort the Gold Star Families, Honored Guests and Past National Chaplains to their reserved seating, please.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BRIAN O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. Comrades and Sisters, please rise and remain standing, and I request that you do not applaud while the Gold Star mothers and parents are escorted into the hall. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the Assistant Sergeants-at-Arms escorted the Gold Star Families, Honored Guests and National Past Chaplains into the hall at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Sergeant-at-Arms, please prepare the hall for the Posting of the Colors, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. Captain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Honor Guard, advance, post and salute the Flag of the United States of America.

ADVANCE OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the VFW National Honor Guard Advanced, Posted and Saluted the Flag of the United States of America.)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, Sisters and Friends, please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag followed by our National Anthem, and then the Posting of the Colors.

(Whereupon, the Assembly gave the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the National Anthem sung by Julia Price, National Soloist, Ladies Auxiliary.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: You will remain standing for the Invocation by Chaplain David Graetz.

INVOCATION

CHAPLAIN DAVID GRAETZ: Shall we pray. O, Lord our God, we give you our thanks for the opportunity to gather together as VFW comrades, to honor our departed friends and family. We counted it a privilege to have worn the uniform and to have defended our nation in times of conflict.

We are thankful of all who have served, and who continue to serve this nation. We especially remember and honor those who have been killed in combat and for their families, some of whom are in our midst today. May we never forget their sacrifice and may we live our lives in such a way that will emulate the way they lived their lives.

Holy words tell us that greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. We recognize the love of those who have died as a sacrifice expressing their love for his or her country.

May we show our appreciation and continue to support our nation through our work here this week. We also remember our VFW comrades and other veterans who have died in this last year. May we continue their work within this organization, that the work they began will be brought to fruition by our efforts. Guide us this week in our deliberations. We ask all of this in the name of the one who has been with us in times of need and continues to support us in all of our challenges of life and death. Amen.

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 HAMILTON: Please be seated. The Graefenburg Baptist Church Choir will now sing "Patriotic Medley."

IN MEMORIAM TO RAY R. SODEN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Sadly, Ray R. Soden, one of the VFW great Commanders-in-Chief, passed away July 22nd, 2012. As indicated in the program, Ray was Commander-in-Chief from 1973-1974. Please remember him in your prayers.

MEMORIAL RITUAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Comrades, Ladies, Gentlemen and Friends, we have met at this time to commemorate our comrades of the United States Armed Forces, who have answered the final call. The VFW Ritual provides that the audience shall refrain from applauding. The Chief of Staff will see there is no disturbance during the ceremony.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you. I request that the National Chaplain preside.

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

We will now have the lighting of the Prisoner of War and Missing in Action Candle and the Armed Forces Vigil Candle by the Commander-in-Chief and the National President of our Ladies Auxiliary. Let us pray.

Almighty God, you are the source of all that is good and holy. We beseech you. Look kindly on our Prisoners of War and Missing in Action, and in all wars engaged upon by our great nation.

Help us, O, God, to never forget their sacrifices, deprivations in those foreign lands in fields and seas of battle.

Bless those who search and identify the remains of those who died. Bring them home that their families may celebrate honorable closure.

O, God, we ask that you will strengthen and protect all of our members of the Armed Forces of the United States of America at home and abroad. In the day of battle, may they be courageous and strong, resourceful and capable, resolute and victorious, and in the time of peace may they serve with dignity and honor, as an effective emissary of goodwill for our nation.

May their devotion and loyalty to you and to our homelands inspire them in moments of challenge and comfort them in tribulation and long separations from loved ones.

Finally, O, God, we ask they may return safely to serve you and our country in the days and years to come. Amen.

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

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

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

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF WILLIAM THIEN: For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as with all our fathers; our days on earth are a shadow, and there is none abiding.

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

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN STROUD: I have.

The Book of Life tells us that, "Like a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: What message has the Chaplain of the Ladies Auxiliary?

LADIES AUXILIARY CHAPLAIN FRANCISCA GUILFORD: I have a message of hope that should inspire our comrades at this 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, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: Comrades, Sisters and Friends, we are thankful for those inspiring thoughts. Let us learn the lesson of the hour which is that we, too, are nearing the end of life's pilgrimage and sooner or later these services will 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.

Heavenly Father, with grateful hearts, we thank you for our wonderful voluntary military. Many of them and their families are under present distress and for multiple reasons. Many are in situations that they need mental health counselors. Grant them, O, God, your daily and divine assistance that they may avoid potential tragedy, and gather, O, God, into your loving arms our departed comrades and sisters around the world where they are buried.

Bring them to your heavenly abode of peace, love and internal rest. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

(Whereupon, Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist Julie Price sang "Sleep Soldier Boy" at this time.)

SYMBOLIC TRIBUTE

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: Comrades, Sisters and Friends, in commemorating the virtues of our departed heroes, comrades who served their country in a time of need, we now offer our symbolic tributes.

I place upon our 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 RICHARD DeNOYER: These white flowers I place as a token of the purity of affection we have for our departed comrades.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: Commander-in-Chief, have you a tribute to place upon the sacred shrine?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: 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 BLEILER: Madam President and Ladies Auxiliary, will you offer a tribute to the memory of our departed comrades?

LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT LEMLEY: I place upon our sacred shrine this wreath as a symbol of eternity. Its color bespeaks of 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 grateful people.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: The Graefenburg Baptist Church Choir will now sing "Be Thou My Vision."

(Whereupon, the Graefenburg Baptist Church Choir performed at this time.)

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It is now my distinct pleasure to introduce to you Bishop Walter Jones, Jr., from Louisville. Bishop Jones is retired from the Department of Veterans Affairs where he worked for 38 years collectively as a Medical Technologist and Supervisor of the

Chemistry Department and the Staff Chaplain, and then the Chief of Chaplain Service.

He attended the University of Louisville and received a Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology, and attended Simmons College of Kentucky receiving his Bachelor of Theology Degree.

Among his many honors, he was the recipient of the Secretary's Hands and Heart Award from the National Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Receiving the Citizen's Award from the Mayor of Louisville, Kentucky, he was commissioned by the State Governor as a Kentucky Colonel of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Bishop Jones has been the pastor of the Baptist Pentecostal Holiness Church in Louisville, Kentucky, for the past 40 years.

Bishop Jones and his wife, Patricia, have been married for 51 years and have two sons, Reverend Dr. Walter A. Jones, III, and Dr. Charles A. Jones. Please join me in welcoming Bishop Walter Jones, Jr.

BISHOP JONES: To the National Officers and the Past National Chaplains, to the platform guests, the honored guests, certainly the Gold Star Families whom I feel humble to have met a few moments ago as we look to you thanking God for your presence and seeing how with such dignity and grace you bear your losses.

To this great assembly, I am grateful to be with you this morning. It is my distinct pleasure to be in the company of a great category of people whom I love, and it has been my pleasure working with and serving for so many years you, our United States veterans and indeed your families.

Here is a word of the Lord, a passage that I am sure most, if not all, are familiar with. In the Book of Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3, Verses 1 through 8, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

"A time to be born, and a time to die: a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted:

"A time to kill, and a time to heal: a time to break down, and a time to build up:

"A time to weep, and a time to laugh: a time to mourn, and a time to dance:

"A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together: a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing:

"A time to seek, and a time to lose: a time to keep, and a time to cast away:

"A time to tear, and a time to sew: a time to keep silence, and a time to speak:

"A time to love, and a time to hate: a time of war, and a time of peace."

These words represent all of the pieces of the fabric of life. For our purpose today, we are directed to these words that speak of death and dying, weeping, mourning and losing as we memorialize our departed ones.

It is wise to consider the departed, those who died while actively serving our nation and those taken from our ranks as veterans who have honorably served.

This Memorial Service allows us to do three things, the first of which is to remember. By remembering, we commemorate. We commemorate

sons and daughters, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, extended family members and friends, names and lives known well as those unknown to us.

We remember and commemorate countless individuals who have passed on. What I care to remember is the memory of each one who is significant.

Abraham Lincoln reflected on the Battle of Gettysburg and stated in his Gettysburg Address commemorating the deceased, and I quote, "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here."

This was stated because as humans, over time we do have a tendency to forget. But God has given us the capacity to remember and we exercise that gift today.

Remembering those who are no longer with us by lifting their memories on our minds and certainly in our hearts. Our attempt today is to follow the pattern of the Lord who in the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 49, Verses 15 through 16, asks the question, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the child of her womb?"

Then the Lord answers by saying, "Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See I have inscribed your name on the palms of my hands."

Now, we remember those who have answered the last call by our thoughts of those unknown to us and by the memory of faces and names of those known to us who are inscribed on our minds and certainly in our hearts. But we have one of the strongest declarations of God's love in which he said I will remember and not forget my people. You, your names are engraved, he says, on the palms of my hands.

So, as God remembers, it is at this service and on this solemn occasion that we take time to remember. This Memorial Service allows us not only to remember but for point number two, to recognize. By recognizing, we acknowledge. We acknowledge what those departed from us have done.

Lincoln continued in his Gettysburg Address, and I again quote, "The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

We must recognize and acknowledge those that departed from us who sacrificed serving in defense of liberty and freedom.

Liberty and freedom, words sometimes taken for granted, but the reality of which can neither be experienced nor enjoyed, unless they are sought for and fought for, unless they are practiced as well as defended.

Recognition and acknowledgement are expressed also in the Book of Jeremiah, Chapter 24, Verses 1 through 5.

As Jeremiah was given a vision of a basket of good figs and another basket of rotten figs Jeremiah stated again, "The word of the Lord came to me saying thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, like these good figs so will I acknowledge or recognize them that I carried away captive from Judah."

As the Lord recognized and acknowledged those who carried away as captive from Judah, so we recognize and acknowledge those carried away from our midst. We recognized them for their love of God and country. We recognize them for their devotion and service to God and country.

This Memorial Service affords us the additional opportunity for point number three. That is respect. By respect, we honor. We honor those now departed, who served a noble cause and fulfillment of their duty.

Lincoln again said, "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 here gave the last full measure of devotion - that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain."

As of late, when our nation on special recognition days respect and honor our veterans, those living as well as our departed comrades and heroes, I receive personal joy and personal satisfaction in observing the increased presence, involvement and participation of our young people, of our youth, at veterans' cemeteries and other sites of hallowed ground and observances, planting flags, standing at attention out of respect, and in honor of our beloved veterans, including those who are absent from us.

In keeping with God's holy word, we follow his admonition to give honor and our respect to those that are due it. I commend each of you here today. As you remember, as you recognize and as you respect those called from our midst, may the blessings of God with his accompanying spirit and his presence be with us as you keep their memories alive.

Now, to ensure that those that we have memorialized have not died in vain, it is for us to continue in lifting the virtues of liberty and freedom for which they lived and for which they died.

With reference to the passage of the scripture read earlier from the Book of Ecclesiastes, while speaking of death, dying, weeping, mourning and losing, that passage also speaks of living, a feeling, building up, embracing and loving.

When we grieve, it is difficult, it is sometimes hard to speak of this element when we are going through the burden of heartache and grief, but remember with God all things are possible; all things are possible.

Going forward, help us to understand that we as free men and women use our liberty as servants of God. As we remember, recognize and respect the deceased, may we also remember, recognize and respect the living God who abides with us, the one who says to those who believe and trust in him, I will never leave you nor forsake you. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go.

He says I will die with you. Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and through the rivers they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned nor shall the flames scorch you. Blessed are those, he says, who mourn for they shall be comforted. I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you. Lo, he says, I am with you always even to the end of the world.

So, let us now hold and uphold it for which our nation was founded and those righteous principles which make America great. May we so live and dedicate our lives to God that when our time comes to answer the final call, we may say I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.

Finally, there is laid out for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.

Let us pray. Eternal God, as we remember and as we recognize, and as we so respect, we pray your blessings now continually upon these, your children. Bless those who bring, and then lift us all to serve you for your glory. Keep us as we continue to stand on your word and to look forward to the establishment of your kingdom.

For it is now in the faith of the Lord, our Savior, we pray. Amen.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: We will now have Julia Price, National Soloist, Ladies Auxiliary, to sing "If Heaven was Needing a Hero" at this time.

(Whereupon, National Ladies Auxiliary Soloist, Ladies Auxiliary, sang "If Heaven was Needing a Hero" at this time.)

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: Please stand for the Benediction by Chaplain Brenson Bishop.

BENEDICTION

CHAPLAIN BRENSON BISHOP: Let us pray. We pray and give thanks for the veterans' sacrifice and love of the country. We ask now, Lord, that you bless our work this week as we honor those who have served, sacrificed and gone before us. Honor, O, Lord, the covenants that we made, the oath that we have taken, and guide us in our decisions as we go forward and honor those by how we live this day forward.

Now, we ask that God bless those in uniform, God bless those that are serving, and as always God bless America. Amen.

RETIRING OF COLORS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: National Sergeants-at-Arms, please prepare for the Retiring of the Colors.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Captain of the VFW National Honor Guard, advance and receive the Flag of the United States of America.

(Whereupon, the Retiring of the Colors was had at this time, followed by the escorting of the Gold Star Families and Past National Chaplains from the hall.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We would like to acknowledge and thank all that participated in making this program a success.

Comrades, Sisters and Guests, this concludes our Memorial Service. Thank you for your attention and enjoy the convention and thank you all for attending.

(Whereupon, the Memorial Service was concluded at 9:40 o'clock a.m.)

JOINT OPENING SESSION
MONDAY, JULY 22, 2013

(The Joint Opening Session of the 114th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the 100th National Convention of the Ladies Auxiliary, held in the Kentucky International Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, was called to order on Monday, July 22, 2013, at 8:00 o'clock a.m., by Adjutant General Allen "Gunner" Kent.)

CALL TO ORDER

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Joint Opening of the 114th VFW National Convention. I am "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

We want to thank our generous sponsors for helping to make this year's convention possible as they are identified on the large screen. Special appreciation goes to our primary supporters: USAA, Sport Clips, Burger King, Humana and UAW-GM.

With us this morning are representatives from the 2012-2013 Outstanding Community Service Posts. Please stand as a group and be recognized. (Applause)

This year, 264 Commanders have earned the right to be named All American. There are 20 Department Commanders, 40 District Commanders and 204 Post Commanders to be honored, and those in attendance today will be presented their awards later this morning.

Commanders, please stand so we can properly thank you for the excellent work you so well performed this year. (Applause)

I have two brief announcements before we proceed. First, all Korean War veterans had the chance to win one of ten copies of the book, "Battles of the Korean War." Visit the Publications/Magazine booth, No. 352, to enter your name in the drawing. The drawing will be held at 4:00 o'clock p.m. today and the winners will be announced tomorrow morning.

Also, Humana has generously pledged to donate one dollar for every 200 steps we take at this convention to VFW's National Veterans Service. If we can hit five million steps collectively, they will donate \$25,000 to the program.

Be sure to stop by the Humana Booth Nos. 75 and 76 to get your free pedometer, wear it, and then report your total steps back to Humana before you leave every day, but no later than 3:00 o'clock p.m., Tuesday afternoon.

Now, please join me in welcoming this year's Convention Chairman, Carl Kaelin. (Applause)

WELCOME BY NATIONAL CONVENTION CHAIRMAN CARL KAE LIN

CONVENTION CHAIRMAN KAE LIN: Welcome, comrades and sisters. I am so pleased to see you all again. I am delighted to be the Convention Chairman for this year and to have the honor to welcome you all to my home state, the Blue Grass State, the great state of Kentucky.

Our state motto is “United We Stand, Divided We Fall”, and that’s why it is so fitting that the National Convention be held here.

Kentucky and the City of Louisville are extremely proud to host the 114th National Convention. We sincerely hope the time you spend with us this week is enjoyable and that you leave here with a great sense of appreciation and pride for this wonderful organization.

Our conventions serve to reinforce our commitment to America’s veterans and our military and bring new excitement to your work as a member of the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Now, please rise as we officially open the Convention with the Advancing of the Colors.

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

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman. Captain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Honor Guard, advance, post and salute the flag of the United States of America.

ADVANCEMENT OF COLORS

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

CONVENTION CHAIRMAN KAELIN: For this morning’s Invocation, we will have the National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Father William Bleiler. Then please remain standing as we recite the Pledge of Allegiance, led by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the National Anthem sung by Julia Price, the Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist, and for the posting of the Colors.

INVOCATION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN WILLIAM BLEILER: Let us pray. Almighty Eternal God, to you belong praise, glory, honor and all blessings. For our spirit upon us that we may look backwards and forward to appreciate our leadership and the joy of our fellowship.

By sharing the good things we have done may we rebuild with clear vision the duty of our organization as we serve the needs of our veterans and their families, and our military of our great nation. This we ask in your holy name. Amen.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, Sisters and Friends, please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States followed by our National Anthem, then the posting of the Colors.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND NATIONAL ANTHEM

(Whereupon, Sergeant-at-Arms O'Brien led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the National Anthem sung by Julia Price, Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist, and then the posting of the Colors.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: The opening of the 114th National Convention has been completed, sir, and your orders have been obeyed.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

CONVENTION CHAIRMAN KAE LIN: The house lights will now dim for a special presentation on Commander-in-Chief Hamilton's year.

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

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN E. HAMILTON AND PRESENTATION OF THE OFFICIAL CONVENTION BADGE

CONVENTION CHAIRMAN KAE LIN: It is now my pleasure to introduce an extraordinary man who has dedicated many years to serving our veterans, as well as our great organization in a multitude of roles, and who is now our Commander-in-Chief.

John E. Hamilton was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on July 25, 2012, at the VFW's 113th National Convention, held in Reno, Nevada.

Mr. Hamilton served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1968-1970, including a tour in Vietnam. His decorations include the Purple Heart and two Gold Stars, Combat Action Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with two Bronze Stars, Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation, Gallantry Cross Color, the Republic of Vietnam Unit Citation Civil Actions Color First Class, and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

He joined the VFW in 1974 at Post 7909 in Jacksonville, Florida, where he maintains his Gold Legacy Life Membership. He has served the VFW in many leadership positions, including the National Council of Administration from 1989-1991, and as State Commander from 1987-1988. He served on the Board of the VFW National Home from 2002-2008, and as its President from 2004-2005. He also served as Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cooties from 1992-1993.

Mr. Hamilton graduated with honors from Georgia Military Academy in 1967. He worked as a professional wrestler throughout the United States and the world for 15 years as Johnny Montana, also known as "Doctor Death," along with other names and identities.

Commander-in-Chief Hamilton was named Florida's Young Veteran of the Year in 1981. He has been honored by President Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush for his outstanding community service and leadership.

He is a member of the Military Order of the Cootie, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Disabled American Veterans, American Legion and the Semper Fidelis Society.

Please welcome our Commander-in-Chief, John E. Hamilton.
(Applause)

REMARKS - COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you very much. Good morning. I would like to start this morning by taking a moment to acknowledge the magnificent men and women serving in our armed forces. I want to thank each of them and their families for the sacrifices they make for our nation.

It's only because of their selfless devotion to duty and their courage that we are able to live in freedom.

I urge each of you to reflect upon all the freedoms that we enjoy today. Think about the intrepid service and sacrifice of the men and women of our armed forces, those who, for more than 200 years, have provided our nation with the security necessary to exercise these freedoms.

The VFW is deeply committed to supporting our service members and their families through programs and services that are dedicated specifically to alleviating their needs.

I am proud of what we have been able to do on their behalf over the past year. Our members have provided some amazing assistance to those who needed it most, and certainly to those who deserved it most.

I am extremely fortunate. As a member of the VFW, I have had the distinctive honor to lead, develop and be entrusted with your confidence. Also, I have valued the responsibility and accountability that accompany this office.

And, as I look around the room, I see so many who I would like to personally thank for everything you have done in helping me succeed this past year. There are so many of you and not enough time to name you all.

Please know that I owe a deep gratitude to you who encouraged me, served as role models, and inspired me, who befriended me and you who reminded me of my purpose as VFW Commander-in-Chief.

I would like to recognize and thank Past Commanders-in-Chief Richard Eubank and Richard DeNoyer for allowing me the opportunity to be a part of their outstanding leadership team. I would like to thank "Gunner" Kent, my Adjutant General, who has had a great impact on me. He truly epitomizes the VFW spirit and has worked diligently for the past eight years to ensure that each leadership team has had a smooth and successful year.

I also extend my sincerest thanks to two outstanding leaders who I have had the pleasure of serving with: Senior Vice Commander Bill Thien and Junior Vice Commander John Stroud. Thank you for all of your hard work and support.

Together, we have celebrated many accomplishments over the past year. These successes cannot be attributed to any one person in this room. They are a direct result of teamwork and the concerted efforts we have all put forth as members of this great organization.

And it has been a genuine honor to have led such an honorable and selfless group of Americans such as yourselves.

This leadership experience has taught me much, and will stay with me for the remainder of my life.

In a few days, I will pass the mantle of leadership on to our esteemed comrade, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Thien. I am confident that under his leadership the VFW will continue to succeed in its mission to fight for those who need us.

The next chapter in life that is waiting for me will not be without challenges. But make no mistake about it, I will continue to serve the VFW to the best of my ability.

I am sure you all have heard me say at some point or another throughout my tenure that I believe there is great strength in numbers. Comrades, the enduring strength of the VFW mission is highly-dependent

on the number of VFW and Auxiliary members and their desire to get involved when our service members and their families need us.

For this reason, the very reason for which the VFW was founded, we must continue to avidly reach out to our youngest veterans who have served in our country's longest war. Today's eligible members are the ones who will need the VFW the most in the future.

As my term comes to an end, please know that I have the utmost confidence that the VFW will continue to fulfill its mandate of service of serving America's veterans and their families. I know this because I know all of you, your selflessness and steadfast commitment has made us the nation's leading veterans service organization, a reputation that was hard-earned and is well-deserved.

Thank you for your kindness, support and generosity, but most of all, thank you for your friendship. God bless you, God bless America and God bless all the men and women who serve so proudly today, and the families who support them. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT AND CITATION TO LEANNE LEMLEY, NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY

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

Leanne Lemley is a member of Hartman-Dawson Auxiliary Post 1805 in Fort Madison, Iowa. She began her participation in the organization in 1964 on the eligibility of her father, who served in the U.S. Navy Seabees during World War II.

Since joining, she has served in a number of capacities for the organization, including Auxiliary District and State President. She has also served on the Council of Administration and held many chairmanships. I am very proud to have served with her over the past year.

I am pleased to now present the VFW Gold Medal of Merit to my wonderful counterpart, a person of great integrity and devotion to those we serve, National Ladies Auxiliary President Leanne Lemley. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Gold Medal of Merit and Citation Awarded to Leanne Lemley, National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

"In esteemed recognition and sincere appreciation of her loyal and benevolent concern for America's veterans as the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. Her theme, "Serving from the Heart for our Veterans," reflects her outstanding dedication and unique vision, and will forever serve as the true and honorable legacy of her presidency.

"Her wealth of experience and long-time commitment to the objectives of the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary have justly earned 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 hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 22nd day of July, 2013."

This has been signed by John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT LEANNE LEMLEY

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT LEMLEY: Thank you so much, Commander-in-Chief Hamilton. National VFW and Ladies Auxiliary Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief, Past National Presidents, Comrades, Sisters and Guests: It is humbling to accept this award just as it has been humbling to represent my Auxiliary Sisters all year long.

Working with our VFW counterparts, the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary set high goals this year. Commander-in-Chief Hamilton and all the members of the VFW, a job well done. To all the Auxiliary Sisters, you make me proud.

This will be the 100th National Convention of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. One hundred years! I can hardly grasp the breadth of our organization's impact on this country, and even those abroad.

Our 100th Anniversary book, "100 Years, for *Our Veterans*", is an opening look at the mission we have taken on to serve veterans, their families and our communities.

From orphans of veterans to drug abuse, to the Team Charm program, to military suicide awareness, we have engaged all cultures on every level.

The flags given, the money donated, the lives touched, the assistance given, the tribute paid. All these things, 100 years every day since we began and in every way imaginable.

The members of this organization have served as only you know how to do. One hundred more years, thousands more flags, millions more donated, billions of hours served. Can we do it, can we continue? Should we continue? The answer can only be "yes".

All who are eligible to join and who want to serve and honor veterans, look closely at our commitment to the Veterans of Foreign Wars and examine the objectives of our organization, and the answer is, "Yes, 100 more years." We can, we should and we must.

This medallion I wear is a promise from every National President before and all those after me, we will continue 100 more years for our veterans. To every veteran here today, thank you. Thank you for answering the call, thank you for your sacrifices, thank you for serving our country. May God bless you all and may God continue to bless America. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE MITCH McCONNELL, UNITED STATES SENATOR

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Our next guest was elected to the United States Senate in 1984, representing the great state of Kentucky. Senator Mitch McConnell, the current Senate Republican leader, has long been a friend to veterans and a strong supporter of our nation's service members and military. More importantly, he has the record to prove it.

For example, in March, Senator McConnell wrote a letter to Defense Secretary Hagel urging him to reconsider the placement of the Distinguished Warfare Medal, awarded to those using advanced technology in warfare, but who do so largely out of harm's way.

Senator McConnell, along with the VFW and several other veterans organizations, wanted to ensure the new medal did not occupy a position of precedence above the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart, believing it could weaken the morale and diminish the recognition given to our nation's brave service members.

He followed that up by sponsoring legislation which would require the Bronze Star and Purple Heart to occupy positions of precedence above the Distinguished Warfare Medal. Of course, we all know the Distinguished Warfare Medal has since been cancelled, thanks in part to Senator McConnell's efforts.

He also recently introduced a resolution in support of our missing service members. The resolution expresses the sense of the Senate that no member of the armed forces who is missing in action or captured should be left behind. This reinforces America's commitment to leave no man or woman unaccounted for in any military action, something the VFW works tirelessly to ensure. Veterans are fortunate to have such an ally in the Senate.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming United States Senator Mitch McConnell. (Applause)

GREETINGS – HONORABLE MITCH McCONNELL

SENATOR McCONNELL: Good morning, everyone. Thank you very much, John, for that kind introduction. It is an honor to address this assembly of America's Veterans of Foreign Wars. Welcome to Louisville, Kentucky.

In a little while you will be hearing from my good friend and colleague from Kentucky, Senator Rand Paul. We are both happy to welcome you to the Bluegrass State and are pleased that Kentucky is hosting your 114th National Convention. You represent nearly two million members of the VFW and its Auxiliary, men and women who promote patriotism, honor military service and care for our veterans and their families. I want to particularly thank my good friend, VFW Inspector General Carl Kaelin of Litchfield, Kentucky. Carl is right over there. Thank you, Carl. (Applause)

He is the first Kentuckian to become Inspector General, and he has been tirelessly working on behalf of the veterans since he first joined Post 1170 in Middletown, Kentucky, in 1969. It is good to see you, as always, Carl.

In addition to Carl and Commander-in-Chief Hamilton, I also want to thank my good friend Brian Duffy and John Ransom as well as Ladies Auxiliary National President Leanne Lemley and the National Officers and members of the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary. It is an honor to share the hall with all of you today.

I can think of no better place for the VFW to be than right here in Kentucky. The people in this state are no strangers to the hardship and the heroism entwined with military service. We are home to 339,000 veterans and 56,000 active duty and civilian employees of the armed forces in posts, including Fort Campbell, Fort Knox, and the Blue Grass Army Depot, as well members of the Reserves and the National Guard.

Kentucky ranks ninth of all 50 states in the number of active duty military personnel stationed within its borders. I think it is clear that this Commonwealth has a great understanding and empathy for the men and women who have worn the uniform. For those of you who have traveled far, I hope you will find your stay with us to be an enjoyable one.

Now, let me turn to what I know is an important topic for many of you: The current state of affairs in Washington. Look, I have got to say, as honored as I am to be selected by my fellow Kentuckians to serve in the nation's capital, it is a real relief to be back in Louisville. Only in Washington, can people become lost in thought, because for them it is such unusual territory.

As you already know, over-spending by the federal government has reached-never-before-seen heights. Deficits are out of control and the debt has nearly reached \$17 trillion. Unlike some of my friends in the Senate, on the other side of the aisle, I believe the root of this problem is not that Americans are taxed too little, but that their government spends too much. (Applause)

The American people know that spending must be reined in, and both Democrats and Republicans in Congress agree when both parties voted to cut the government by \$2.1 trillion over the next ten years. We should not go back on this agreement now, or cut even a penny less than we promised.

Any Kentuckian will tell you it is completely ridiculous to think Washington can't find a way to cut two to three percent of the federal budget at a time we are nearly \$17 trillion in debt. I meet Kentuckians who have had to figure out how to make ends meet with a little bit less in their paychecks all too often. And I am sure that many of you had to do so as well. Are we saying Washington can't do the same? Of course, that is absurd.

This shift is about reshaping the government priorities. Let me say, however, even in a time when the government clearly must tighten its belt, I believe support for its American veterans always remain a top, top priority. (Applause)

Every American who served made a solemn promise to this country. The least your government can do is to uphold its promises to you in return. We must never break faith with the American veteran. (Applause)

I am proud of my record of support for the veterans and the military. But advocacy for veterans is a team effort, and I have been very fortunate to be able to team up with the VFW on a number of issues over the years. Whether it is supporting veterans' education, or veterans' healthcare, both the national and the Kentucky VFW have been extremely helpful in keeping me abreast of the developments that affect our veterans.

Nor has my work with the VFW been limited to the VA. When the Department of Defense suggested that the all new military decoration, the Distinguished Warfare Medal, should take precedence over the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart, my friends of the State VFW, including Carl, Brian and John, quickly brought the matter to my attention. Ray Kelley of the VFW National Office did the same.

I co-sponsored legislation to ensure the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart would retain their appropriate positions and not be shoved below the Distinguished Warfare Medal. (Applause) I also expressed this belief by

letter to Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel. As you know, the Defense Department actually reconsidered and decided not to reduce the positions or precedence enjoyed by the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. I am glad they did. Let me just take this opportunity to say to the Bronze Star and Purple Heart recipients assembled out here today, thank you for your service. (Applause)

On the local level, Carl and other Kentucky veterans urged that the Louisville veterans hospital be named after Robley Rex, a service member from the World War I era, who was well-known for his prolific service in support of his fellow veterans.

I was happy to get enacted legislation that did just that. For those of you around the country who have had no opportunity to know Mr. Rex, he was incredible. He lived to be over 100 years old and went to help veterans every single day after he retired. And he, of course, was retired for a very, very long time.

Another issue that the VFW and I worked on together is the backlog of VA disability claims. Let me tell you the size of this problem is a national disgrace. (Applause)

At the beginning of 2009, there were 390,000 claims filed by veterans and awaiting action - way, way too many. Today, however, the backlog has almost doubled in number and this is totally unacceptable.

In the past four years, the number of claims pending for over a year has grown by over 2,000 percent. This despite promises from the Obama administration to address the issue, despite attempts to modernize the VA claims system, and despite a 40-percent increase in VA's budget. In fact, five years ago, I supported funding to the VA that was over \$750 million more than the VA itself requested, specifically to address this unacceptable backlog.

Yet today, the average waiting time for a veteran who has filed a claim is nearly a year. And more than 750,000 veterans are literally stuck in this backlog. That is 750,000. Just to put that in perspective, that is as many people that live in the metro Louisville area.

For this reason, I personally advocated and will continue to advocate, the President himself to take direct action and involvement to end the VA backlog. An issue this important demands attention from the very top.

Veterans ought to be able to count on their government and they ought to be able to count on their Commander-in-Chief. (Applause) On another matter, I think we can all agree that it is of the utmost importance that our government do all we can to ensure the safe return of every service member who is currently believed to be of POW or MIA status. Take the specific case of Sergeant Bergdahl, captured in Operation Enduring Freedom, and currently held in enemy hands.

On behalf of the Kentucky veterans, I have expressed my concern to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense about the safe recovery of Sergeant Bergdahl. I supported Senate legislation reinforcing that it is unacceptable to abandon the search efforts for any member of the armed forces who is missing or captured in the line of duty. We must remember the words of the Soldiers' Creed and the Warrior Ethos, "I will never leave a fallen comrade."

This past year, on June 6th, as I am sure you know, was the 69th anniversary of the D-Day invasion. On that date in 1944, 160,000 Allied

Troops landed along a 50-mile stretch of heavily fortified French coastland in a surprise attack against the forces of Nazi Germany. The costs of the Normandy invasion was high indeed, more than 9,000 Allied soldiers were killed or wounded that day. But it was the beginning of the successful conclusion of the war.

On the 69th anniversary D-Day, I met with a distinguished group of Kentuckian World War II veterans. They were able to make the trip, thanks to an admirable program that serves veterans called "Honor Flight." My good friend, Brian Duffy, is the leader of Honor Flights Bluegrass Chapter, which has brought over 2,000 veterans to the nation's capital to see the World War II Memorial that celebrates their service. The World War II Memorial is more than just granite and steel. For many Americans, it is a memorial for the service of long lost friends and family members. It is for these heroes and it is for my family as well, because my father served in World War II.

He fought in the European Theater, and one of the most prized possessions is the flag which draped his coffin in his honor of service.

It was a privilege that June the 6th to shake hands with my father's contemporaries. The truly meaningful experiences, to hear them and to have an opportunity to thank them for their service. I remember in particular the veteran from Owensboro, who said he was on Utah Beach that day. I said, "You realize it was 69 years ago this very day." He said, "Yeah, it was a tough day. I lost a lot of friends."

It is wonderful that we have had the opportunity through Honor Flight to bring these living World War II heroes to Washington to see the Memorial finally built and to honor their service.

As World War II recedes further into the past, sadly, we are losing more and more of these living legends. The passage of time makes it all the more important that we thank these heroes for their service before it is too late. In fact, it is never too early to say thank you to a veteran.

As such, I want to thank you all for your service. Thank you to your families for bearing the burdens of absence when your country needed you, and thank you for answering the call to sacrifice on behalf of your community, your country, and the cause of freedom around the world. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, for the opportunity to be here this morning. Have a great convention. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE GREG FISCHER, MAYOR, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I am pleased to introduce our next guest, the Mayor of Louisville, the Honorable Greg Fischer. Mayor Fischer has an impressive and successful background as a businessman and a generous patron and benefactor. He was elected Louisville's 50th Mayor on November 2, 2010. During his tenure, he has committed his administration to growing jobs and creating a culture of innovation and business in Louisville.

His top three goals include making Louisville a city of lifelong learning, making Louisville a much healthier city and working to make Louisville an even more compassionate community. As a businessman, he

brings a data-driven approach to city government with a goal of making it more efficient and accessible.

Mr. Mayor, we thank you for the warm hospitality and the warm friendship your city has provided all of us. Please join me in welcoming the Mayor of the Gateway to the South, the Honorable Greg Fischer. (Applause)

GREETINGS BY THE HONORABLE GREG FISCHER, MAYOR,
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

MAYOR FISCHER: Well, good morning, everybody, and I hope you have enjoyed your stay in Louisville. We definitely appreciate you-all deciding to come here and spend all your time with us, and I must say, as I have driven around town this past couple of days and see you-all and say thank you. Again, we can't thank you enough for your service. You hear that all the time. I hope you don't get tired of it.

I became Mayor about two and a half years ago, and we have received a lot of recognition since then. We were named the Top Travel Destination for all America for 2013. I hope you are feeling that while you are here. We were named one of the foodiest cities in the world. We hope you have had good food and discovered good local food as well.

We have had the fourth fastest-growing metro region in jobs last year. We were named the number two Manufacturing Boom Town in America. But most of all, and I can see there are a lot of subscribers in here to Gentlemen's Quarterly Magazine. We were named the Manliest City in North America last year.

So, I hope you are feeling that, too, while you are here. But as much as those things help build the city, I have got to say the single most meaningful and poignant act that we have done in my administration is bring the Veterans Day Parade back to Main Street here in our city. (Applause)

For some reason, the Veterans Day Parade had not been going on for decades here and that was unfathomable to me, so we re-launched the parade on November 11, 2011, at 11:00 a.m., and people all over the region came and marched down Main Street as well as folks that came to Main Street just to say thank you.

You-all can imagine what an emotional moment that was as we celebrated the core values of our country, but it was particularly meaningful to the veterans of the Vietnam War. They had not been welcomed home in any type of appropriate fashion since that conflict ended. So, to see the Vietnam vets walking down Main Street, tears flowing from their eyes, and their friends and family for the first time being able to cheer them on and thank them in an appropriate way, has been the highlight of my administration. (Applause)

It is one thing to celebrate and say thank you when any of our veterans come home, but in today's world, especially with the way the economy is, the national challenge is how do we reintegrate our veterans into our work force as well? I believe the country is making progress in this area and it should, because at one point in time the veterans' unemployment rate was 12.7 percent in our country, against the national

employment rate when the recession was in its worst, of about 11.4 percent.

Obviously, both of these numbers are challenges. But it is ridiculous when veterans in particular are at 12.7 percent, because you-all know that the preparation that someone serving in our armed forces has these days. These folks are ready to get home and get back to work when they come back to the United States of America.

They clearly know about leadership, they clearly know about teamwork, work ethics second to none, trained in solving problems. Not only do they have the skills, but we need them as a country to help accelerate our economy here and beat our global competition.

So, our city immobilized to help. Humana, which is one of the country's largest insurance firms, their corporate headquarters is just two blocks from here, worked to become a national leader on this front. They publicly committed to hiring a thousand veterans in three years. They met that goal in 18 months, and are now underway to their second commitment for another thousand veterans. (Applause)

The University of Louisville has also made the issue a top priority. For four years in a row, U of L has been named a "Military Friendly School", meaning they are in the top 15 percent of all universities when it comes to supporting veterans who want to go back to school. Then last fall, we held a summit called the Kentucky-Indiana Exchange, which people from the entire region came together to develop strategies on how we could re-integrate veterans and how we can become a national leader.

My saying is we are not going to be the biggest city in the country, but we should be the best in everything that we do, and helping veterans is at the top of the list. So, we are in the process of creating a national model right now so that we can seemingly bring veterans back into our work force. This is not only a great opportunity, but just another appropriate way to say thank you and to give us competitive advantages for companies here in Louisville.

Now, we have some assets here that are of tremendous assistance. Fort Knox, as you-all know, is 30 minutes from downtown Louisville. More than 130,000 soldiers will come through their Army Career Alumni Program that is based at Fort Knox. So, we are actively recruiting those soldiers, and not just the Army but all military branches, to see Louisville is a great place to start their career and raise their family.

So, we are in the process of matching soldiers with job openings in an ad hoc "manual" way. We are working on launching a comprehensive system that is a more powerful way that includes an on-line platform for small and mid-size companies that have openings to start to proactively recruiting these soon-to-be veterans before they leave the military.

We are also introducing a career and education counseling component so we can help set up the returning soldiers with mentors to help them pave their way back into civilian life. So, now, what's happening? Good news. Unemployment rate for veterans has dropped for almost five years. It is right below the national point of 7.5 percent, so part of that obviously is because of the recovering economy, but we know we have a much tighter system now in terms of matching soldiers, sailors, airmen with the needs of our workforce as well. So, we will continue to make more progress in that area.

But I wanted to share with you that action. I think it is important. It is also important that these folks get good jobs and can start their next career when they exit the military. So, we know here that obviously we have got the greatest country probably in the history of man, and it is work in progress. That is really the secret of America.

We respond, we react, we think and then we are proactive quicker than any country on the face of the earth, and we do it with the ensuring values that we have all come to love, primarily around freedom. But we know that freedom isn't free. In fact, there are other people that feel like we are on the wrong side of this equation. It is amazing to see how our country masses together, the 300 million of us, regardless of where we come from, what we look like and what ethnicity we are, to fight for that value every day.

You-all are the models. So, on behalf of the entire City of Louisville, one, I hope you are having a good time, and, two, I hope you are spending a lot of money while you are here, but then on behalf of all of us here in Louisville, we just want to say thank you very, very much for all of your service.

If there is anything I can do, please let me know. Thank you very much. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE RAND PAUL, UNITED STATES SENATOR

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Our next guest has been representing the State of Kentucky in the United States Senate since 2010.

Senator Rand Paul serves on the Foreign Relations, Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, Homeland Security and Government Affairs, and Small Business Committees.

He believes that the primary constitutional function of the federal government is national defense, bar none. He is a staunch opponent of government over-reach. He also believes the founding fathers understood the seriousness of war and the decision to wage war should not be made lightly, but when we must go to war, we must fight to win.

Please join me in welcoming Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky. (Applause)

GREETINGS – THE HONORABLE PAUL RAND, UNITED STATES SENATOR

SENATOR PAUL: Thank you. Good morning. I had to come by boat this morning. It is raining cats and dogs out there, but we made it. I came up from Bowling Green, about a two-hour drive.

It is a humbling experience to be here with you today. I am honored to speak before soldiers who put everything on the line for our country. We welcome you to Kentucky. In Kentucky, we are proud to host our brave young men at Fort Campbell and Fort Knox, and we are proud to host the Veterans of Foreign Wars today.

Senators are like soldiers, take an oath to defend the Constitution against our enemies. I consider it the primary and foremost duty of the

Federal Government to defend America, to defend our Bill of Rights and to defend our God-given liberties. (Applause)

For inspiration and guidance, I often look towards America's great military leaders. Some of the best observations on war and diplomacy come from the President, who also was one of the most decorated generals, Dwight Eisenhower. Author David Nicholls writes that, "Ike believed, with good reason, that once the violence begins, everything changes and you can throw your plans in the trash." It is too bad more in Washington don't heed Ike's advice today.

There is no greater priority for the federal government, though, than the defense of the Constitution and the defense of the nation. Sometimes I think that our defense is weakened by over-eagerness to be involved in every civil war in the planet.

In Egypt, the administration insists on sending F-16s and Abrams tanks to the new military junta. Before that, we sent arms and billions in aid to Morsi's radical Islamic government. And before that, we sent F-16s, tanks and \$60 billion, over three decades, to Hosni Mubarak, a dictator who we called our ally.

Common sense tells us that we probably should not be sending our aid to military dictators, or to the Muslim Brotherhood. (Applause) Common sense tells us that we probably shouldn't be delivering advanced weaponry into unstable situations, where the outcome is completely unpredictable. Common sense tells us that we should not be sending foreign aid to nations that burn our flag. (Applause)

I have tried to stop the continuous flow of your money to the countries that hate us and also hate Israel. I have warned that someday these arms that we paid for, may be used against us or may be used to attack Israel.

In 2012, I introduced an amendment in the Senate halting the transport of all weapons to Egypt, Pakistan and Libya, and when I did, what kind of response did I get? This amendment would have prevented the shipment of weapons to the Muslim Brotherhood. What kind of response did I get? Over 75 percent of the American people are against arming the Muslim Brotherhood, but over 75 percent of the U.S. Senate voted to continue arming the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic radicals.

In Egypt, the regimes keep changing, but foreign aid still stays the same. It is unbelievable. Unlike Eisenhower and earlier generations, we often don't think before we act. I think many in Washington do things in our foreign policy to accomplish short-term goals, but that ultimately hurt our long-term national interests.

As we continue to aid and arm despotic regimes in Egypt, we are also about to send weapons to Islamic rebels in Syria. This is problematic on multiple levels.

The Assad regime is no friend to freedom or the United States. But this does not mean that the enemy of our enemy is our friend. There are currently 17 different rebel groups in Syria, including the largest group, al-Nusra. Al-Nusra fighters are radical, anti-American Jihadists, and they are affiliated with al-Qaeda. But your politicians in Washington are eager to send weapons. "They promise, oh, these weapons won't get in the hands of the enemy." I don't believe it. Does anyone believe that?

We have trouble telling friends from foe in Afghanistan, which is much more stable. Syria is a thousand times more chaotic. Even our Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, warns it is becoming increasingly difficult to tell friend from foe in Syria.

Would Eisenhower, who believed small wars could lead to big wars, would he buy into this nonsense? Even if you believe that we should arm Islamic fighters in Syria, shouldn't we at the very least have Congress vote on the matter? The Constitution is very clear, Congress is to declare war, not the President. (Applause)

Nevertheless, President Obama is moving ahead with plans to get involved in the Syrian Civil War without the authorization of Congress. How can we ask our brave young men and women to fight against al-Qaeda in some, and with Al-Qaeda in other countries. Last week I was told by the administration, you know, what this goal is in Syria is to fight to stalemate.

I have told them I am not sending my kids, or your kids, or any American soldier to fight for stalemate. (Applause) When we fight, we fight to win, we fight for American principles, we fight under the American flag, and we come home after we win. (Applause)

A great irony is that these weapons they want to send to Syria may well be used against the two million Christians who believe in Syria. They are protected by the Assad regime. I, for one, will fight with every ounce of my energy to prevent arms, American arms, that you paid for, from being used against Christians.

If our policies in Egypt and Syria are not bad enough, look at Pakistan. When we finally caught Bin Laden, he was in Pakistan, and it was due in small part to help from a man named Dr. Shakil Afridi. Now, Pakistan has imprisoned Dr. Afridi, likely for the rest of his life for the supposed high crime of helping us catch Bin Laden. How does President Obama respond? Does he do anything to tell Pakistan he is unhappy? No, he continues to send Pakistan billions of dollars in aid.

Last year I introduced legislation that would have made aid to Pakistan contingent upon the release of Dr. Afridi. If we want human intelligence, if we want people to help America, we have to defend them after they help us. (Applause)

While the American public overwhelmingly supports limiting foreign aid, the Senate once again votes against any conditions on that aid. Why do we arm dictators and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt? Why do we arm affiliates of al-Qaeda and endanger Christians in Syria? Why do we reward Pakistan with our tax dollars as they continue to imprison the man who helped us to catch Bin Laden?

The first and primary function of our government is a strong national defense. But so much of what Washington does today is more like an irrational offense. How does sending foreign aid to Egypt, Syria and Pakistan help our national security?

In Egypt and Pakistan, they riot and burn our flag. I say not one penny more to any nation that burns our flag. (Applause)

In Libya, our politicians also are playing both sides. Reagan, rightfully, called the dictator Muammer Gaddafi, "The mad dog of the middle East." Gaddafi was responsible for the Pan Am bombing over Lockerbie,

Scotland, which killed hundreds of civilians and included American children.

After Reagan, though, some genius in our government decided to begin sending aid to Gaddafi. Members of the U.S. Senate, and some are still there, actually traveled to visit Gaddafi and offered to send him arms. Within a year, though, these exact same Senators flip-flopped and now they have begun supporting weapons to the Islamic rebels who overthrew Gaddafi. Which is it? They are either for Gaddafi before or they are against Gaddafi.

Our Ambassador to Libya and other diplomats were murdered on the streets of Benghazi. To this day, not one terrorist has been caught or captured or held responsible. Ambassador Stevens pleaded for more security before the attack, and the Secretary of State ignored his pleas.

The Marines from Tripoli were ordered to stand down. Who made that order? Marines are famous for risking their lives to rescue their wounded, and sometimes even risked their lives to rescue their dead. Who ordered the Marines to stand down? Did a politician intervene to cause our Marines to stand down? Democrats and Republicans can disagree on many issues, but one thing we should agree on as Americans: No politician should ever, ever, stand in the way of American soldiers doing their job! (Applause) And no politician should remain in office who refuses to defend our diplomats!

No politician should lead this country who denies our armed services the weapons and the technology to defend our great nation! (Applause)

America has never backed down from a fight, but we should never be a nation that is eager to get involved in civil wars that don't affect our national security.

President Eisenhower said, "I have one yardstick by which I test every major problem, and that yardstick is: is it good for America?"

Is our current foreign policy, is it good for America? Is our involvement in Egypt, Syria and Pakistan to our benefit or our detriment? We must have the strongest military on earth, not because we are eager to use it, but so that no one would ever dare challenge us. (Applause)

I believe Ronald Reagan got it right when he said, "As for the enemies of freedom, those who are our potential adversaries, they will be reminded that peace is the highest aspiration of the American people. We will negotiate for it, sacrifice for it, but we will not surrender for it now or ever." (Applause)

Reagan went on to say, "Our forbearance, though, should never be misunderstood. Our reluctance for conflict should not be misjudged as a failure of will. When action is required to preserve our national security, we will act. We will maintain sufficient strength to prevail if need be. Knowing that if we do so, we have the best chance of never having to use that strength."

For our country's sake, certainly for our soldiers' sake and for the sake of every veteran who has ever donned the uniform and fought for this country, America's mission should always be to keep the peace, not to police the world.

An America that did not seek to become involved in every conflict of the world could take better care of our nation's greatest resources, our

soldiers, including improving a broken VA system and better overall health care for those who served. (Applause)

My wife and I work together to help build homes for wounded veterans through helpingahero.org. Our commitment to our brave young men and women doesn't end when they come home from war, it is just the beginning.

A strong national defense is a constitutional priority. A lifelong commitment to our veterans is an obligation, and it is our obligation. As a physician, when I visited Walter Reed, I was profoundly impacted by our wounded men and women, many of them were not much older than my kids. It reinforced my view on the needs to prevent conflicts, unless they are absolutely necessary. War is the last resort, not the first. Soldiers injured in Iraq and Afghanistan will require a lifetime of care. It is our sacred duty to provide and protect those who have protected us. (Applause)

We must be more prudent, though, in our foreign policy. Eisenhower was right to observe that little wars often become big wars. Reagan was right that America's purpose is to promote peace through strength. Those of you here today, veterans of foreign wars, did your duty and we honor your service to protect the peace, and we pay our respect to you here today.

We thank you for your service and we also pay our respect to those who are not with us today, those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Ronald Reagan once said, "Above all we must realize that no arsenal or no weapon in the arsenals of the world, is so formidable as the will and moral courage of the free men and women. It is a weapon that our adversaries in today's world do not have." America has also been a beacon of freedom to the world, due in no small part to the brave sacrifice and noble service of the members of the United States military.

Today, I salute you and offer your nation's gratitude for a job well done. Thank you and God bless America. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICK KICKLIGHTER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Our next guest, retired Army Lieutenant General Claude "Mick" Kicklighter, was selected to oversee the Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemoration Program. The program has five objectives:

To thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as POWs or listed as MIA, for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor their families.

To highlight the service of the armed forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the armed forces.

To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War.

To highlight the advances in technology, science and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War.

To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War.

Lieutenant General Kicklighter served 35 years in the United States Army and retired in 1991. He had two tours of duty in Vietnam: from February 1966-February 1967, with the 1st Logistical Command, and from August 1970 to August 1971 as Assistant Chief of Staff (G-4) for the 101st Airborne Division.

He has commanded at all levels through Division Command. He served as the Commander, U.S. Army Pacific; Commander, 25th Infantry Division; and the Commander of the U.S. Army Security Assistance Command. He also served as the Director of the Army staff.

Lieutenant General Kicklighter's military awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, and the Bronze Star Medal.

Since retiring from active military service, Lieutenant General Kicklighter has continued to serve the nation in a number of senior positions with the Departments of Defense, State and Veteran Affairs. He has received the Presidential Citizens Medal, the Eisenhower Liberation Medal, Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service, and is a two-time recipient of the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service.

Most recently, he served as the Director for the Center for Infrastructure Protection and Homeland Security at George Mason University.

Lieutenant General Kicklighter also served as the Executive Director of the 50th Anniversary of the World War II Commemoration Committee, and also provided oversight for the writing of the plan for the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Korean War.

Comrades and Sisters, please give a warm welcome to an outstanding leader and fellow VFW Life Member, Lieutenant General "Mick" Kicklighter. (Applause)

REMARKS – LIEUTENANT GENERAL "MICK" KICKLIGHTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION

GENERAL KICKLIGHTER: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief Hamilton. I can't tell you what an honor and privilege it is to be with so many of my fellow VFW members from all across this nation and the Auxiliary. What a great honor it is for me to also have an opportunity to provide a very brief update on our nation's program to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War.

I would like to begin this presentation with a short video that captures why it is important that we commemorate this anniversary.

(Whereupon, the video is shown at this time.)

Congress passed the law that authorized the DoD to organize, recruit and support events all across America, to assist the grateful nation in thanking and honoring our Vietnam veterans and their families, especially families who lost loved ones during that war, our Gold Star Families.

The central piece of this commemoration will be the Vietnam veterans and their families. But in each event, we want to make sure that we thank and honor all veterans and their families, especially the World War II veterans who are disappearing all too fast.

The Korean War veterans, Desert Storm veterans, but especially the men and women who are coming off today's battlefields from Iraq and Afghanistan. I just don't know the right words to say what a magnificent job and how much we owe those men and women today.

To accomplish this, we are recruiting commemorative partners all across this great land, from towns, cities, states, corporations, associations, schools, military installations, active Guard, Reserve Units, and especially veterans service organizations like the VFW and the Auxiliary.

With your help and leadership, we want to thank and honor our Vietnam veterans where they live in their hometowns, and with our VFW Posts and our Ladies Auxiliaries we can do that. The Vietnam War was a long war. Consequently, this commemoration will be long.

We will execute it in three phases. Phase one will be from now until the end of 2014. This is our preparation phase. We are recruiting, organizing and supporting commemorative partners and already supporting events all across America. During this phase, we are doing much, much more.

During phase two is the execution phase. This is 2015 to 2017. We want to kick this phase off with a joint meeting of Congress, and then we are asking our commemorative partners to conduct two events in each hometown each year for this period. We want to light up America and we want no Vietnam veteran not to be properly thanked and honored by their hometown.

We are requesting each major military unit that participated in the war to invite all their veterans and their families to come back home to their units during this period. We are asking each military installation to conduct an open house each year and involve all the communities around that installation. We are asking all the Guard and Reserve Units to recruit and support the hometowns where they are located.

Then we move into the sustainment phase that runs from 2018 to 2025. We will continue to support the commemorative partners and events. We will continue to emphasize education and history, but we want to make sure that before we close this commemoration out we have the legacy properly reflected of this great generation.

As you may recall, Memorial Day 2012, at a ceremony hosted by the Secretary of Defense at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, we announced to our nation the program to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War. In attendance was our Commander-in-Chief, President Obama, who was our keynote speaker, and Mrs. Obama, Vice-President and Dr. Biden, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, almost the entire senior change of command was there.

Senator Hagel was the Advisory Committee Chairman at that time, and now our Secretary, introduced our President. Bob Wallace and his wife were there and so was Fred Burns.

The VPs that day were the Vietnam veterans and their families, especially families who lost loved ones, and families who have loved ones that are still missing and unaccounted for from that war. But the Gold Star family members laid the wreaths and were escorted by our senior leaders.

Let me quote from a few lines from our Commander-in-Chief's remarks that day, which kind of captures the message of this commemoration.

“And one of the most painful chapters in our history was Vietnam, most particularly how we treated our troops who served there. You are often blamed for a war you didn’t start, when you should have been commended for serving your country with valor.

“You were sometimes blamed for the misdeeds of a few, when the honorable service of the many should have been praised. You came home and sometimes times were denigrated, when you should have been celebrated.

“It was a national shame, a disgrace that should have never happened. That’s why here today we resolve that it will not happen again.”

Let me add one additional quote by General Fred Weyand, who served in World War II in the China-Burma-India theater. He commanded an infantry battalion of some of the toughest fighting in the Korean War. He commanded and led the 25th Division into Vietnam, and was promoted and commanded two field forces. He was promoted and was our last Four Star Commander in Vietnam, and he was selected as our 27th Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army.

General Weyand had this to say: “What particularly haunts me, what I think is one of the saddest legacies of the Vietnam war is the cruel misperception that the American fighting men there did not measure up to their predecessors in World War II and Korea. Nothing could be further from the truth.”

During the past eight months, we have been recruiting commemorative partners, and as of today we have more than 4,700 that have joined this effort. This is a good start, and it is ahead of schedule, but we need your help to keep this list growing. We are encouraging all of our 7,400 plus VFW Posts and more than 4,200 Ladies Auxiliaries to become commemorative partners and to help recruit, organize and lead events in our hometowns so that we can thank and honor every Vietnam veteran and their families where they live.

It costs nothing to become a commemorative partner, and the application blank is online, and you can go online to apply or you can stop by our booth and we will assist you. Once you become a commemorative partner, you will receive a certificate authorizing you to be an integral part of this, signed by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. You will also receive a Presidential Proclamation signed by our President.

You will receive the congressional objectives that you heard the Commander-in-Chief read earlier, and also you will receive something very special, and that’s our commemorative flag. We want this flag all across America, and when our veterans see this flag and their families, they will know that a grateful nation does remember and honors their service, sacrifice and valor. Together we have the opportunity to turn back the pages of history, and right or wrong, that should not have occurred 50 years ago.

Now, as I close I would like to present a Certificate of Service to a great American patriot, and a friend of longstanding. I will read this in part.

“This Certificate of Service is presented to Mr. Allen “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America in recognition of more than 40 years of tireless devotion to supporting the needs of veterans and their families.

"In 1968, with ten years of military service, which included the tour of duty in Vietnam, "Gunner" started working with veterans while still on active duty with the Marine Corps, by joining VFW Post 2811 in Gainesville, Florida.

"Since his retirement from the military in 1982, "Gunner" has continued serving his fellow veterans and their families in such posts as VFW National Commander in 1994 to 1995, where he and the VFW played a major role in supporting this nation in commemorating the 50th Anniversary of World War II. He later served as the Veterans Service Organization's liaison in the Department of Veterans Affairs, and many other key positions in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Mr. Kent and the VFW have provided unwavering support to the United States of America's Vietnam War Commemoration by assisting our nation, a grateful nation, in thanking and honoring our Vietnam veterans and their families, for which we are truly grateful."

God bless all of you veterans, God bless our men and women serving on today's battlefields. God bless America. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE ARMED FORCES AWARD TO UNITED STATES NAVY SEALS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The first national award of our 114th National Convention is the VFW Armed Forces Award, which this year is being presented to the United States Navy Special Warfare Command, who are more commonly known as SEALs.

With roots tracing back to World War II, the story of the SEALs is a combination of myth, legend and fact, primarily because they never talk about where they have been or what they have done.

North Africa, Normandy, Iwo Jima, Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq, theirs is a history of being the first in. The SEALs represent the very best of U.S. Special Operations, and I am damn glad they are on our side. (Applause)

Previous recipients of the VFW Armed Forces Award include former American Prisoners of War, general officers, non-commissioned officers, and Medal of Honor recipients. It has been presented annually since 1964 to military members and organizations to recognize extraordinary achievement to the Armed Forces of the United States, the nation and to our national security.

At our 106th National Convention in Salt Lake City, we presented the award to U.S. Special Operations Command, and this year I am very proud to present it to the SEALs.

Accepting on behalf of the SEAL community is Rear Admiral Scott Moore, the Deputy Commander of the Naval Special Warfare Command, which is based in San Diego.

The Admiral hails from Colorado Springs, and though he graduated from the Air Force Academy, he chose the Navy instead, and graduated from BUDs Class in January 1984.

He has commanded at every level of Naval Special Warfare, to include a Joint Special Operations Task Force in Afghanistan.

Before I present the award, I would like to ask any comrade who has earned the SEAL Trident to also stand and share in the presentation of this award. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Armed Forces Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to U.S. Navy Special Warfare Command Navy SEALs.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation of decades of faithful service to ensure the safety and security of the United States of America. The U.S. Navy Special Warfare Command, or SEALs, represent the very best of the U.S. Special Operations community.

"From World War II, Korea and Vietnam, to Grenada, Panama, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and places not yet publicized, their service, sacrifice and dedication to the mission accomplishment is true to the ideals, traditions and values 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 22nd day of July 2013."

This has been approved by the National Council of Administration and signed by John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

REMARKS – REAR ADMIRAL SCOTT MOORE, DEPUTY COMMANDER, NAVY SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

REAR ADMIRAL MOORE: Good morning. Commander-in-Chief, General "Mick" Kicklighter, General Chiarelli, Admiral Pat Papp, Distinguished Guests and members of the VFW: My dad graduated from Annapolis and crossed over to the Air Force, so somebody had to fix the family mistake. That is actually true.

We are incredibly honored today. I have probably never felt more at home in any crowd in my life. I want to tell you just a little bit real quick who is today's Navy SEAL. First of all, he's probably not as good looking as those darn movies that are out there now, but his average age is about 28.

Eighty percent of that force has been in combat. Our force is loaded with veterans. The majority of the guys have on the average of 100 missions, some 200, and I would suspect up to 100 have over 400 missions.

Even right now at 9:45 here, guys are mounting their night vision goggles and helmets, because it is just after dark in Afghanistan for the routine. This is a force that has earned posthumously just in the last 12 years, a small force, 2,500, three medals of honor, and we have seven Navy Crosses, several hundred Silver Stars and several thousand Bronze Stars, and thousands of Purple Hearts.

These are average guys. They are simply ordinary guys just like you, but they are called to do extraordinary things. They are trained and outfitted and led to do that.

A lot of that is based upon the backbone of the foundation that the VFW supports. A majority of them are married, and the impact is high, obviously. Many guys have over ten deployments in the last 12 years. If you ask them, they are probably doing exactly what they want to do. We

have enough Gold Star wives to make a SEAL team, and a lot of the Gold Star kids. But the force is thriving.

There is wear and tear, that is just the nature of what we do. We have injuries, and it is rare to know a guy that is not injured or has not been wounded. But once again, we are thriving.

So I am incredibly honored to receive this award on behalf of our whole community. Our community is actually 90-percent enlisted.

So, I brought along one of my best friends, my sidekick, Brit Labinsky. Just one note, he is a Navy Cross recipient, and he has five Bronze Stars with Valor, Master Chief Brit Labinsky. (Applause)

REMARKS BY MASTER CHIEF BRIT LABINSKY

MASTER CHIEF LABINSKY: Thank you. Now that everyone has gotten a brief on the Navy Special Warfare Command, I am sorry to say that no one can leave the building. (Laughter)

I am very humbled to receive this distinguished award on behalf of the Navy Special Warfare Command. I thank you all for that and thank you for inviting us here.

More importantly, I want to thank all of you for participating in this convention. You look around and you meet each other, and I thank all of you for your continued service to our great nation.

I would like to tell you that your continued service does not go unrecognized by our current warriors. What it does, what your service allows us to do, is to continue on the great legacy that you have handed to us. So, I thank all of you for your service, for what you do for us, for the nation and for each other. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTMENT OF THE AMERICANISM AWARD TO GENERAL PETER W. CHIARELLI, U.S. ARMY RETIRED

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It is now an honor and a privilege to introduce the recipient of this year's VFW Americanism Award, Retired Army General Peter W. Chiarelli.

The General served his nation in uniform for almost 40 years, and rose through the ranks to command at every level, from a platoon to leading his first Calvary Division in Iraq, and then returning again as Commander of the Multi-National Force-Iraq.

From August 2008 until his military retirement in January 2012, he would serve as the Vice Chief of Staff of the United States Army, where he challenged bureaucratic backlogs and inefficiencies.

He drove the medical community to improve the methods used to treat soldiers and veterans, especially those with brain injuries. He championed a better environment for female soldiers, and advocated that leaders build better partnerships with other organizations.

He also worked tirelessly to reduce the Army's suicide rate, and to eliminate the stigma attached to seeking mental help.

As a civilian, the General returned to his hometown of Seattle to become the Chief Executive Officer of One Mind for Research, a non-profit organization dedicated to the research, funding and public awareness of mental illness and brain injury.

Leading troops into battle is an honor and responsibility very few can claim, but pushing the status quo to properly care for them when they return home is even more unique and courageous.

Comrades and Sisters, I present to you the recipient of this year's VFW National Americanism Award, General Peter Chiarelli.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Americanism Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to General Peter Chiarelli, USA Army Retired.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation of nearly 40 years of faithful and dedicated service to the United States of America, its Army, and most especially to the soldiers under his command during peacetime and war.

"As the Army Vice Chief of Staff, he worked tirelessly to reduce the Army's suicide rate, to eliminate the stigma attached to seeking mental health, and to improve traumatic brain injury prevention, identification and treatment. He now leads a non-profit civilian organization dedicated to the research, funding and public awareness of mental illness and brain injury for the benefit of all Americans.

"This commitment to continue serving his nation is true to the ideals, traditions and values 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 22nd day of July, 2013. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – GENERAL PETER CHIARELLI, AMERICANISM AWARD RECIPIENT

GENERAL CHIARELLI: Well, I am honored. I only spent 24 months in Iraq, and quite frankly if somebody had asked me what traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress was at that time, I would not have been able to tell you. I knew that my football coach told me if I got bumped on my head, I was supposed to shake it off and get back in the game, and I knew enough that when I had a platoon that lost soldiers to send and use aviation assets to send combat stress teams to help them through that process.

But it wasn't until I became Vice Chief of Staff and on the fourth day I was at work, when the Army Medical Command came in to brief me, and they had a single chart that laid out those soldiers with a single disqualifying injury of 30 percent or greater. I was sure that those who had been wounded by bullet or shrapnel, or loss of an arm and a leg would be at the far left of that chart. But that wasn't the case. In 2008, two percent of the soldiers had spinal cord injuries; four percent had been seriously burned; ten percent had lost a single arm or a leg, or multiple limbs.

But at that time 36 percent had traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress.

When I left as vice in 2012, that number had grown to 67 percent, 67 percent, and the number in legs and arms held steady at ten percent. I challenged my doctors for the next four years and asked them to teach me everything they could.

I am a tanker, I spent 40 years as an armor officer, but I know today we just don't know enough about the brain. I know today that these are problems that we have had when we have fought every single war.

I know today that one in every three soldiers, who was evacuated in World War II back to the states suffered from something that was called battle fatigue at the time. I know today that Audie Murphy suffered from battle fatigue and spent the latter part of his life going around to veterans organizations talking to them about getting in and getting help for that. I know today that it is not how much money we spend to get at these diseases, it is how we do it.

What we need to do is we need to change the culture. We need to change the culture of medical research to one of sharing data, intellectual property rules that don't stop us from sharing data, so we can unlock the mysteries of the brain.

There is not a single drug that is prescribed today for someone with post-traumatic stress. It was brought to market to treat post-traumatic stress, not a single one. They are all 30 to 40-year-old antidepressants. They are off-labeled written by doctors. They work on some and others they have no effect, and on others, after studying Army suicide rates, I know they have horrible effects.

We have got to demand that we unlock the secrets of the brain through research, big science and the sharing of data. That's what my organization is all about, because we know today the traumatic brain injury shares certain commonalities with diseases like Parkinson's, ALS, dementia, Alzheimer's. Some people even think MS.

So, I ask you to do everything you can to ensure that this generation of warriors gets the treatment they need, the diagnostics and the treatments that can help them with the cognitive data and other issues they have for those suffering from traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress, because not only does it affect them, but it affects their families.

You honor me with this award. I thank you very much. God bless you all. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF HANS SONG, DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL, VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION, REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It is now my privilege to introduce Deputy Secretary General Hans Song of the Veterans Affairs Commission from the Republic of China on Taiwan.

The VFW has a very special relationship with the Veterans Affairs Commission that goes back more than three decades, and their new Deputy Secretary General is one of the primary reasons for that.

Hans has risen within the VAC from a Secretary to the Minister to become the Deputy, and then Director of their overseas Liaison Department.

He has also been trying to retire for the past three years. In fact, we gave him the VFW Gold Medal of Merit back in 2010 to thank him for all the great work he has done for the VFW over the years.

But instead of retiring, the Veterans Affairs Commission promoted him again, this time to Deputy Secretary General. When his nation calls, he continues to answer.

Hans, bless you for what you do for your country, and please extend my personal appreciation to Minister Sing and President Ma for their support of the VFW.

Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to Deputy Secretary General Hans Song.

GREETINGS – HANS SONG, DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL, VAC,
REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL SONG: Thank you and good morning. It is very kind for Commander-in-Chief Hamilton to say so many good words about me. I hope that I can deserve that. This morning, I feel especially honored to address you on behalf of the Minister of Veterans Affairs in Taiwan. I see so many good friends from the past 25 years I served the veterans in Taiwan.

This morning I especially come here to thank the VFW for all your support in providing all the assistance for the Republic of China on Taiwan to acquire the necessary defensive weapons from the United States. I remember the Congressman just mentioned, we soldiers do not want to wage wars, but we have to keep ourselves strong to maintain ourselves in a position so that we will not be threatened.

In the past, well, more than 30 years, three decades, the Republic of China has been under threats continuously until the past five years when President Ma, the Marine man, was elected for the first time, and then last year he got re-elected to the presidency.

In the past five years, he has been working very hard on two things at least. Number one is improving our foreign relationship with the United States. In the past 60 years, we have considered the United States our very good friend, and we pledge to remain very loyal and very faithful to this friendship with you. (Applause)

The second thing he is working on is to improve the relationship between us, the Republic of China in Taiwan, and also the other side across the Taiwan Strait. Everybody calls that China, but I will call that Communist China. Yes, they are China, but now we are trying to improve the relationship with them so that we do not have to spend so much money on the military, because in one way if we can improve our relationship with them, we will face less threats from them.

This is some strategy and we are seeing grateful results from it, because now the communication between the two individuals, the trade between the two sides and the people are seeing each other, accept the government officials.

This is a good sign, and for this we appreciate the support of the United States. Because of you, we are not a victim. Because of you, we get more and more opportunities to face international communities. This we appreciate and we hope we can get your continuous support.

Today, I really want to show appreciation on behalf of my country, the Republic of China on Taiwan, to share their gratefulness to you, and we hope that we will have your continued support.

Before I leave the podium, I will present a medal on behalf of the President of my country, President Ma, in which he asked me to read a citation, Certificate Accompanying the Award of the Order of Resplendent.

It reads, "Mr. John E. Hamilton, 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 on Taiwan.

"In appreciation of his meritorious assistance, Commander-in-Chief John E. Hamilton is presented the Medal of Order of Resplendent Banner with Cravat, numbered 3690, by the government of the Republic of China on Taiwan, in accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Declaration Regulations."

This has been signed by President Ma Ying-jeou, Premier Jiang Yi-Hauh, and the Minister of National Defense. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you. I can read the Chinese but the English gives me a little trouble. (Laughter)

DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL SONG: Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF THE DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER AWARD TO ADMIRAL ROBERT J. PAPP, JR.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It is now my honor and privilege to introduce the recipient of this year's Dwight D. Eisenhower Award, the Commandant of the United States Coast Guard, Admiral Robert J. Papp, Jr.

The Admiral hails from Norwich, Connecticut, just a few miles up the road from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, where he would graduate from in 1975. He also holds two Master's Degrees, one of them from the Naval War College.

He assumed the duties of the 24th Commandant of the United States Coast Guard in May 2010. He has also commanded Coast Guard Atlantic, and the Great Lakes/Northern Border.

He was Task Force Commander of Operation Able Manner in 1994 to halt the mass illegal immigration of Haitians to the U.S. and supported Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti later that year.

Plus he has served on six Coast Guard cutters, and commanded four of them, to include that magnificent three-mast sailing Barque, the Eagle.

The Admiral leads our nation's fifth military service, with almost 90,000 active-duty Coast Guard men and women, reservists, civilians and volunteer auxiliary.

The Coast Guard is the largest component within the Department of Homeland Security. It blends with military requirements, law enforcement and border security, with humanitarian search-and-rescue and natural disaster assistance.

The Admiral is ultimately responsible for the safety and security of America's oceans, lakes, rivers and ports. He does so in an era that requires doing the same, or more, with fewer resources, because of sequestration, hiring freezes and civilian furloughs.

He also does so fully knowing that there will be no reduction in demand on the services provided by the United States Coast Guard, to include possibly adding the Arctic to his area of responsibility and all counter-narcotic operations.

In a Washington Post interview last year, the Admiral said the Coast Guard is going to be limited in these years of austerity, and will have to make more judgment calls, but that people are his most important resource. He said the Coast Guard has a culture of doing more with less. He called it a great strength, but also a great weakness, because it ends up wearing out people, ships and aircraft.

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. It has been presented annually since 1970 to one individual for his or her contributions to American security, unity and world peace.

Comrades, Sisters and Distinguished Guests, please welcome the recipient of this year's Dwight D. Eisenhower Award, the Commandant of the United States Coast Guard, Admiral Bob Papp. (Applause)

"Dwight D. Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award, Gold Medal and Citation, presented to Admiral Robert J. Papp, Jr., Commandant U.S. Coast Guard.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation of his leadership and commitment to the safety and security of the United States of America. As Commandant of our nation's fifth military service, he must ensure the Coast Guard meets and exceeds its military, law enforcement and border security requirements, as well as continues to provide humanitarian search-and-rescue and natural disaster assistance. His dedication to Mission Accomplishment, and to those who carry out his orders, is true to the ideals, traditions and values 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 22nd day of July, 2013. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – ADMIRAL ROBERT J. PAPP, DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER AWARD

ADMIRAL PAPP: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am tremendously humble but also very proud to accept this award this morning on behalf of all of the men and women in the United States Coast Guard who have been serving this country both at home and abroad for over 223 years.

I know my father, who was a Marine veteran, who served in Korea during the winter of 1951 to 1952, and my grandfather who was a career Coast Guardsman, who served in multiple convoy escorts in the North Atlantic in World War II, would be very, very proud today.

I can't help but feel like I did during an incident about ten years ago. I was the brand new District Commander of the 9th Coast Guard District up in the Great Lakes region. I was out on a trip visiting my units. My Master and Chief Officer and I stopped at a rest stop on the highway on the turnpike. I was waiting for the Master Chief, and looked across the food court, and there I saw it. I knew it was coming. It was an older gentleman

with a young child, looked like his grandson, and he had the look. All of you understand the look.

I knew he was going to make a beeline across the food court and over to me. As he approached me, and I am standing there in my uniform, he stuck out his hand and said, "Thank you for your service." So, of course, I thanked him and I told him it was a privilege to serve, but also I wanted to check it. I said, "You know, I am not in the Air Force, right?" He became indignant. "Of course, I know." He says, "I am a Retired Navy Chief Petty Officer and I recognize the Coast Guard uniform, and I know all those things you have done in the past and that your service is doing now."

So, I don't know how many of you have had that same or similar experience, but it is always nice to get that appreciation. So, on behalf of all the Coast Guard men and women, I would like to thank you for this wonderful award and for all the terrific work that the Veterans of Foreign Wars does in caring and advocating for our American veterans.

A special thanks to your Commander-in-Chief, John E. Hamilton. This is a tremendous privilege, and I heard that membership thing, so one of the things I have to do today is submit my membership. In fact, I have my check right here. (Applause) But it goes to the Virginia State Commander, Margo Sheridan, also a member of the Coast Guard who helped to recruit me.

So, there is really no higher calling in the work that you have done caring for our nation's veterans. I sometimes fear that many in our country has lost that personal connection with what it means to be a veteran and what it means to leave loved ones behind when you answered the nation's call. Most of you can appreciate this.

If you look back almost 70 years ago to the end of World War II, we had about 130 million people in our country with almost 16 million people in uniform. Today, we have over 300 million people in the United States but only about two million in uniform. So, let me put it in a different way. At the end of World War II, if you walked into a neighborhood and started knocking on doors, on every eighth door you would find a family with a member in the armed services. If you do the same thing today, you would have to walk to 150 doors before you come to a home that has a service member.

That makes the work you do even more important, and to express my appreciation to you I have done something that was long overdue, and that is that membership. But just two months ago, I had the honor of presiding at a re-dedication of the Coast Guard War Memorial at the Arlington National Cemetery, which honors the members of the Coast Guard, who gave their lives fighting in the First World War.

Decades of weather had deteriorated our monument, but the Chief Petty Officers Association took it upon themselves to restore the monument to the beauty it had when it was first commissioned 85 years ago to honor the sacrifice of our Coast Guardsmen who had gone before us.

This memorial honors the crew members of the Tampa, a Coast Guard cutter that did 18 combat patrols, escorting 350 ships during World War I, but was torpedoed by a German submarine and sunk with the loss of all hands, 111 Coast Guardsmen.

Last month, the Coast Guard said farewell to one of our iconic figures, Commander Ray Evans, who served in World War II. Now, a couple of the

names I am going to mention you might have heard. Ray Evans, during the Battle of Guadalcanal was a Signaller First Class. He wanted a Higgins boat to go in to the beach to recover some of Chesty Puller's Marines, who became surrounded on the beach by the Japanese. His Higgins boat was providing cover so that the Marines can get off the beach.

Then his boat coxswain was shot and mortally wounded. That boat coxswain was Samuel B. Roberts, the same Samuel B. Roberts that the Navy has named three ships after over the years. Ray Evans got Samuel B. Roberts back then to the ship, but he volunteered to go again and he got in another Higgins boat with a friend, a fellow Coast Guardsman, Douglas Monroe. Once again they were in to provide covering fire for the Marines coming off the beach.

Douglas Monroe was killed that day while covering for the Marines and was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

Ray Evans was awarded the Navy Cross and meritoriously promoted to Chief Petty Officer by Admiral Bull Halsey. I have had the pleasure over the past few years of calling Ray on his birthday, and I had a chance to visit his widow in Seattle just a couple of months ago.

I spend a lot of time indoors in my job, so we had a new group of Admirals this year, and I took them out to Arlington Cemetery to see the memorial, but also introduce them to some of our other Coast Guard heroes. One of those was of Lt. Jack Rittichier.

Jack Rittichier was one of our Coast Guard's helicopter pilots, serving with the Air Force during the Vietnam War.

Within a month of arriving in Vietnam, he had won three Distinguished Flying Crosses for his rescue of downed aviators. In his case with the missions he was flying, he deserved every medal he got.

The rescues were all in combat conditions under enemy fire, and then sadly after only two months of being in Vietnam he was called for what would be his last rescue mission.

A Marine Corps fighter pilot had been downed and his aircraft was near a North Vietnamese camp. He suffered a broken arm and leg during his ejection, and he was used by the North Vietnamese as bait to draw in the rescue forces.

The first helicopter on the scene made numerous attempts before being driven off by enemy fire and low fuel.

Despite the continual enemy fire, Rittichier said he was willing to make an attempt. However, as he settled down near the downed aviator, enemy rounds hit the helicopter, and it caught fire and crashed and killed all four onboard.

Before going to Vietnam, Lieutenant Rittichier's brother asked him why he was volunteering for duty that so many others were seeking to avoid. He told his brother, "This is what I do, this is who I am. I am an air rescue pilot and I have got an obligation to save them." That spirit still exists in the men and women in the Coast Guard that I am so privileged to lead.

Just from these few examples, you can see the great work of our Coast Guard fighting for our nation overseas, and it continues to this day.

We currently have 1,700 of our members deployed outside the United States in over 30 different countries and territories, including Afghanistan, Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. This past Thanksgiving,

and again this coming Thanksgiving, I will spend it with our patrol boats squadron in Bahrain, men and women who are stationed in the Middle East providing security for the waters in the Northern Arabian Gulf.

This work is not without peril, and these men and women are never far from my thoughts.

I was reminded of them and the dangerous work they do last February when I presided over the dedication of Bruckenthal Hall, named in honor of Damage Controllman Third Class Nathan Bruckenthal. Petty Officer Bruckenthal was killed by a terrorist bomber in 2004 while serving his second tour in the Arabian Gulf as a member of a Joint Coast Guard Navy boarding team.

I really love being able to recognize our Coast Guard men and women for the brave work they do, just like I have the opportunity this morning to accept this award on their behalf and tell you about other Coast Guard men and women, both past and present, and their service to our great nation.

It makes me also think once again about that gentleman at that rest stop on the Ohio turnpike, because over the thousands of people that have reached out their hand to thank me for my service, it seems to be happening less nowadays. That's why we need people like you to remind our citizens of the service and sacrifice of those people who stepped forward to wear the uniforms.

It also made me think about the summer of 1970, when I entered the Coast Guard Academy. Those of you who have served in Vietnam will remember it was a very different time then. If you were standing in a rest stop on the Ohio turnpike in uniform back then, you were likely to have a very different experience than the one I had and or what the many men and women in uniform have today.

I understand that fully, and I think every time someone approaches me and they say, "Thank you for your service," as people still do, I tell them, "It is my privilege to serve," or I will tell them, "I am going to pass along to the folks who really get the job done." That's what I do when I talk to my Coast Guard men and women, I pass it on to those young men and women, but that's why it is a great opportunity for me to come here today and pass it on to all of you as well.

So, thank you for your service, thank you for your service, thank you for your service, and thank you once again for this great honor and privilege of being here today and for this very prestigious award. Thanks. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF GENERAL RUSLAN AUSHEV, PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR WARRIOR INTERNATIONALISTS

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

General Aushev is a combat-wounded veteran of Afghanistan who received the Gold Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union. After the war, he was elected to the Soviet Parliament and was a member of the Upper Committee Council of Military Affairs.

In February 1993, he was elected as President of the Russian Republic of Ingushetia, a position he held through 2001.

In September 2004, in the Russian town of Beslan, the General made worldwide news by successfully negotiating the safe release of 26 nursing women and their children before Chechen terrorists detonated explosives that killed more than 300 hostages.

The VFW has traveled to Moscow since 2004 to meet with the General and his committee to discuss POW/MIA issues that are vitally important to American families from World War II forward, as well as to Russian families who have missing loved ones from their war in Afghanistan.

Central to our full accounting mission is access to Russia's military archives, where U.S. researchers had been banned for almost four years, but thanks to the General, we now enjoy new support from the Commission.

We are very pleased that he and his fellow committee members, plus a representative from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, can join us here in Louisville.

They are helping to break down barriers to aid our full accounting mission, and for that, the VFW is eternally grateful.

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

GREETINGS – GENERAL RUSLAN AUSHEV, COMMITTEE FOR WAR VETERANS

GENERAL AUSHEV: In the name of the War Veterans Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, I sincerely welcome all of the delegates to the convention and wish the participants successful and productive work.

Our delegation brought a letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ian Lavrov, and I will read it, a small part of it, a small part of it now.

"I cordially welcome the delegates of the 114th VFW National Convention. We highly value your contributions to the work of the U.S.-Russian Joint Commission on POW/MIAs. Close collaboration of the veterans organizations of our nations yield practical terms in many areas.

"I wish you successful and fruitful work, and I wish all veterans health and prosperity."

Appearances before your great assembly has become a tradition and bear witness to the high level of confidence, mutual understanding and cooperation between our organizations.

Our veterans welcome such development of relations, and we will understand that it serves as a means of strengthening the veterans movement and also aids in the resolution of concrete issues.

I would like to direct the attention of the respective participants in this convention to the appearance of a completely new phenomenon in our relationships. By this, I mean that there is now a large group of veterans of Afghanistan in the United States. Because of this, it seems to me that it would be useful to organize medians of Russian and U.S. veterans who over the years took part in events in Afghanistan.

I am sure that dialogue among participants and military operations would be interesting, and substantive. Esteemed delegates, a priority in the cooperation between our veterans organizations is the search for POW/MIAs, the clarification of their fates and also gathering information about burial sites of military personnel who perished on foreign soil.

The basic inter-governmental organ for working on these issues is the U.S.-Russian Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, which you are familiar with. It is precisely through this Commission that the Commission strives to find answers on the fates of POW/MIAs in foreign wars.

One of my deputies is a Commissioner of the Russian side, and a number of other members of our Committee participate. Presently, we are undertaking steps to strengthen the U.S.-Russian Commission and are working for the appointment of the Russia co-chair.

The Minister of Defense, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and our Committee has always endorsed the draft decree for the government of Russia to review to confirm the Committee and appoint new Russian members.

During recent years, representatives of our War Veterans Committee have worked closely with officials in the Moscow office of the U.S. side of the Commission, and we have helped in every way possible in the compilation of lists of Soviet veterans of the wars in Korea and Vietnam who might have information on U.S. POWs and MIAs from these conflicts.

We have already organized a number of meetings with these veterans in Russia, and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Quite recently, the U.S. site sent another request, and the Committee is actively searching out Korean veterans.

In the near future, we hope to give the Moscow office a list of such veterans. Just recently, we received another request and the Committee is actively searching out Korean War veterans, and we hope to provide this list to the office in Moscow of such veterans.

Of interest to us in turn is the period we had a limited contingent of Soviet forces fought in Afghanistan. Our War Veterans Committee is continuing to search for 264 MIAs in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1999, and in 2012 we succeeded in identifying the remains of three soldiers from Afghanistan. All of them were buried with military honors in their native towns in Russia and Kazakhstan.

Members of the Committee who have conducted such operations over many years have long been convinced that the idea of returning POW/MIAs, dead or alive, home is a universal desire, and in a humanitarian sense is understood by everyone and is close to all of our hearts. This is precisely why we immediately pass on to the American side information we received recently about the U.S. service member who is being held by the Taliban. We hope this information will help to secure his release.

We are prepared to provide support in organizing meetings between delegates of American veterans and both houses of the Russian Parliament, and establishing contact with the leaders of government agencies of Russia and other CIS nations.

I am confident that these visits will further strengthen cooperation and help to further POW/MIA search efforts.

I want to note that the many speeches presented by your representatives in the meetings and the Committees of both chambers of the Russian Parliament have had a positive impact and promoted a broader understanding of veterans' issues and the Russian legislature.

I would like to take the opportunity from this platform to express the desire to hold regular meetings with veterans of other countries. The main goal is to carry out a constant exchange of experiences between combat veterans and veterans organizations on the joint analysis of the consequences of the conduct of military activities. For example, in Afghanistan, on the issues of rehabilitation and overcoming the negative health effects for those who participated in local wars and arms conflicts, and also the exchange of knowledge on the patriotic education of citizens and armed forces personnel, I would like to direct your attention to one symbolic coincidence.

Next year, in 2014, the United States is set to withdraw its main military contention from the international security and assistance forces in Afghanistan. In the same year, we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from that country. Direct participant in those events from the entire Commonwealth of Independent States believe that they fully carried out their orders and performed all of the assigned tasks.

I want to wish all American veterans of Afghanistan events that same realization of duty performed and the acknowledgement of their service from both the government and from the common citizens. I wish all veterans of the United States of America and their families sound health, long life, prosperity and success.

I wish the people of both of our nations peace, friendship and mutual understanding. Thank you for your attention. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF DANIELLE HAYES, 1st PLACE VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: For more than 65 years, the VFW National Voice of Democracy program has been in place.

This program provides students far and wide the opportunity to speak clearly about their values and give voice to how they perceive our nation and the many liberties afforded to them.

No one has a greater interest in this country than someone who has defended it on foreign battlefields and seen good friends die for it.

What is reflected in this program is an extension of America's values and its ideals. This premier scholarship program helps ensure our nation's heritage will never be lost.

Student interest is what keeps the program going, and in time, that interest will be manifested in the form of leadership, and that leadership will help guide our nation for future generations to come.

Education and knowledge are the best weapons against any type of tyranny, and these young people are well-armed to face the challenges of America's future. They won't be sitting around rewriting America's history; they will be out there making it.

Of all of our VFW programs, none provides a better perspective of what the future holds than the submissions made to the program by our

nation's young people, all communicating pride, patriotism and love of country.

Miss Danielle Hayes' outstanding entry based on the selected theme, "Is Our Constitution Still Relevant?" correctly earned her the esteemed title of the 2012-2013 National Voice of Democracy Winner.

Danielle will enter her junior year at Mercy High School in San Francisco, California, this fall. Danielle is representative of the many thousands of young people who participate in the scholarship program annually.

She and her peer group are the future of our country. What they are today, America will be tomorrow.

Please join me in welcoming and celebrating Danielle Hayes' achievement as the 2012-2013 Voice of Democracy Winner. (Applause)

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER PRESENTATION

MS. HAYES: Good morning. To the officers and the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary, I am honored to be your special guest at the 114th VFW National Convention. I feel privileged to be here today, to share my winning speech.

I really want to thank the VFW organization for the generous college scholarship you have given me and for the opportunities to travel to Washington, D.C., Freedom Foundation at Valley Forge, and now Louisville, Kentucky.

My week in Washington, D.C., was amazing. From D.C., I had the chance to meet the other 53 state winners, bright and incredibly talented students who I am proud to call my friends.

Last month, I saw these same students again at the Freedom Foundation in Valley Forge. We were able to catch up and get to know each other better while learning about civics, leadership and government, all values that the Voice of Democracy Program worked hard to instill in its participants.

This year, the topic was "Is Our Constitution Still Relevant?"

Yesterday, on my way to the grocery store, I ran into Mr. Cons T. Tution. He was wearing running shorts and a T-shirt and was in remarkably good shape for a man well over 200 years old. Despite his good health, however, he was crying. Salty, wet tears were streaming down his cheeks.

I tapped him on the shoulder. He turned to face me. "What's wrong, Mr. Tution?" I asked.

"I've been hearing rumors that – that I'm just not relevant anymore! That I'm too old, too outdated and out of touch!"

I squeezed Mr. Cons T. Tution's hand. "You are still relevant. You're a walking piece of history!" Pointing to his left arm, I said, "Look at those huge scars. You got this one when voting for Senators changed to a popular vote, while that one came when slavery was abolished. The scar on your neck happened when women got the right to vote. Your surgeries all document our nation's history."

Sighing, he said, "But those events are all things of the past. How relevant am I now?" "Very relevant. I always read about you in the news. You continue to protect people's rights in many different ways. Hey, do you remember Len Audaer?"

Mr. Cons T. Tution smiled a little then. "Good old Len! I remember that he went to the Syracuse College of Law. When he wrote a satiric blog about his school, the administration was offended by it and threatened to expel him."

"But it didn't end right there, did it, Mr. T?" "No, I worked with that foundation the uh—"The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education – FIRE?"

"Yes, FIRE. I helped them work to safeguard rights such as free speech, freedom of religion, and due process of law. They sent letters to the school administrators to ask them to drop the charges. They eventually dropped them after being listed as one of the twelve worst colleges for free speech."

"And it's all because you gave the rights they are defending to this country!" Mr. T. laughed. "Yes, I can take credit for that!" Just then, Mr. T.'s cell phone rang. "Hello, Senator Kyl! How is your Free Press Act of 2012 coming along? Not passed yet? I'll keep my fingers crossed." He hung up and said, "This was Senator John Kyl of Arizona. In August of this year he introduced the Free Press Act to help journalists fight lawsuits which try to silence their reports. Although it hasn't yet passed, I'm still working with him."

I pressed my palm to my forehead and shook my head. "Mr. T.!! And you say you're not relevant? First, Audaer and now Kyl, are working hard to make sure that the Bill of Rights you have displayed there on your chest is carried out."

Mr. T. stared off into the distance and contemplated my words. "You've got a point," he admitted. "The rights found in me are often in the spotlight of modern court cases. Why, in May, 2004, Brandon Mayfield, a Portland attorney, was held in federal prison for two weeks, even though his fingerprints did not match those of the person suspected in the terrorist bombing. His home was searched without his knowledge, too."

"How did Mr. Mayfield respond?" "He's filed several lawsuits against the federal government for obviously infringing upon his right to due process, and his right to be protected from illegal search and seizure. This demonstrates that Americans are still fighting to protect themselves with me, Mr. Cons T. Tution, and my Bill of Rights."

"Yes, that's it. See, we do still need you! We need you to be involved in all such incidents so that no one can trample our Constitutional rights!"

The smile on Mr. Cons T. Tution's face grew much wider. "Wow, I guess I am needed, after all. Without the United States, I am nothing; without me, however, the United States is nothing. Now, I must run on to see where else I'm still needed."

He ran off, and I happily resumed my day, confident that Mr. Cons T. Tution was still very much on the job. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF VICE ADMIRAL JOHN BIRD, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, USAA MILITARY AFFAIRS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The VFW is fortunate to have a relationship with a truly outstanding company, the United Services Automobile Association, or perhaps better known as USAA. USAA has

been a friend to our veterans, service members and their families from its beginning in 1922.

Through our partnership, USAA provides banking and financial advice to VFW members, and they have supported numerous VFW endeavors and programs over the years.

Vice Admiral John Bird, Senior Vice President of Military Affairs for USAA, joined the company this past February. He and his team are responsible for planning and directing the Military Affairs and Membership Development programs that serve as the face of USAA for purposeful outreach and relationship building.

John's team delivers unique access that opens doors to key influencers who advocate for the military, USAA and its members.

Prior to joining USAA, he served 35 years in the Navy before retiring in October 2012 as Vice Admiral, Director of Navy Staff. Earlier assignments included: Commander, United States 7th Fleet; Director, Operations, Plans and Logistics at United States Joint Forces; Commander, Submarine Group 7; and Commanding Officer of USS Scranton SSN 756.

In 1977, he graduated from the United States Naval Academy with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. He holds a Master of Science in Engineering Management from the Catholic University of America, and has completed the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Seminar 21 in Foreign Affairs, International Relations and National Security.

Comrades, please give a warm VFW welcome to our esteemed guest, Vice Admiral John Bird. (Applause)

REMARKS BY VICE ADMIRAL JOHN M. BIRD

VICE ADMIRAL BIRD: There is no finer calling than serving one's country. Good morning, all.

Thank you, Commander Hamilton, esteemed members of the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary. As a proud new member of the VFW it is a real pleasure to be here with you at my first National Convention. It is a distinct privilege and a great honor to address you at this very impressive event.

I bring warm greetings from our CEO, Josue Robles, himself a strong member and a supporter of the VFW and the 25,000 employees of the USAA team who come to work every day to serve the military community; our military, our veterans and their families.

Now, my opening quote is certainly one we all associate with. Those are words that are properly engraved on the wall of USAA Headquarters in San Antonio, and serve as a strong reminder of the quality of people that we serve, people that have served us and our country, people like all of you.

At USAA we believe every day is Veteran's Day. (Applause) More than two years ago, USAA and the VFW joined in a like-minded alliance of common purpose. Since then we have been happy to welcome thousands of additional VFW members to the USAA family. Among the hosts of products and services we are working to deliver personalized financial advice to VFW members.

The VFW-USAA relationship has been strong, productive, and is firmly based on shared beliefs, values and goals. One excellent example of

the shared goal is veterans hiring. Together the VFW and the USAA work with the Chambers of Commerce, hiring our heroes, and the administration's joining forces to reduce veteran unemployment.

As we all know, finding employment for veterans has its challenges, particularly when it comes to translating military skills and jargon into the private sector. I recently heard a humorous story of a retired Marine veteran who was having such difficulty during job interviews.

When asked by a personnel manager, "What is your greatest weakness", the old Marine veteran answered, "Honesty."

"I don't think that is a weakness," said the personnel manager. The Marine looked him straight in the eye and quickly replied, "I don't give a damn what you think."

I am very proud of my military service, and I did my duty to the best of my ability. I cannot say that my career involved a great deal of sacrifice. I had wonderful adventures, life-defining experiences, and overwhelming fulfillment. More than my fair share, I admit. But many of our veterans have sacrificed immeasurably. One only has to visit Walter Reed or stroll through Arlington Cemetery to understand real sacrifice.

It goes without saying that we owe them a debt of gratitude that we can never fully pay. But not just gratitude, we owe them action, to care for our veterans when they return to civilian life.

Proud history of our national leaders have extolled the needs and obligations to take care of our veterans.

In 1863, with the end of the Civil War only weeks away, President Abraham Lincoln gave his second Inaugural Address, which became the basis of the Veterans Administration's model.

He said, "Let us strive to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wound, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."

Teddy Roosevelt, who at the turn of the last century, recruited some of his Rough Riders in the USAA hometown of San Antonio, echoed this sentiment when he said, "A man good enough to shed his blood for the country is good enough to be given a square deal."

Even more recently, John F. Kennedy tied our care for veterans to our very national character stating, "A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produced, but also the men it honors, the men it remembers."

I think that is exactly right. The extent to which a nation honors and cares for its veterans is a clear character indicator of its national values and belief in higher ideals.

Today, our engagements in Southwest Asia are winding down; our troops, many of whom have seen combat, are coming home and leaving the service.

Between 2014 and 2016, more than one million service members will transition to civilian life. They will be making big adjustments to that civilian life, including looking for jobs.

Two years ago, General Kevin Bergner from USAA was at your convention to call for a national mobilization to hire veterans. He wasn't alone. Leaders from the private and public sectors, including veterans organizations like the VFW, also share this vision.

An initiative like the Chambers Hiring Our Heroes and the White House joins forces have brought thousands of employers to the table. Your

2013 national priorities and online job board, jobs.com are other examples.

So, what has been the result of this mobilization? Consider the progress we have made just in the past six months. At the end of last year about ten percent of the post-911 veterans were unemployed. One in five, the youngest vets, were without jobs. Nearly midway through this year, unemployment among these veterans has declined from ten percent to just over seven percent.

However, it is important to remember while these numbers are encouraging, they don't reflect what many experts say is chronic under-employment among veterans.

In other words, transitioning vets often take a job, any job to make ends meet. Many go through two or three jobs before they find the right one. Still, the national mobilization for veteran and military spouse hiring is having a real impact. More veterans are finding meaningful employment.

Now comes the hard part. We have to keep the momentum going. We tend to focus on the big issues in the U.S., but just for a time. Then we are on to the next crisis. However, our returning veterans need a long-term commitment with long-term support and solutions.

After all, they face a number of challenges unique to their military service.

When it comes to finding new jobs, new veterans are often not sure how to translate leadership skills they have honed in the military into civilian life. This is primarily a communications problem.

You and I know that veterans make great employees. At USAA, we benefit from this every single day. In the past few years, one out of every four new employees we hired at USAA was a veteran or a spouse of a veteran.

This year with so many veterans coming home, our CEO decided to update the ante. Our goal is now 30 percent of new employees be veterans or military spouses. Of course, employment issues don't stop at the service member. Military spouses face their own obstacles, because they have to move every two to three years with their active spouses.

Keeping a career going can be problematic. We must support their employment efforts. Let's face it, helping veterans is more times than not a family issue. Hiring a veteran or military spouse is great, but it is just the first big step. Helping them to adjust to the civilian workplace and getting the most out of their skills and talents also has to be a priority for employers.

At USAA we have a few training classes that are made up entirely of veterans, so they have a ready support system of their peers in the class. We also connect veterans to veteran mentors who have already traveled down this road.

Across the country many veterans enter the workplace with wounds that are both visible and invisible. They have a variety of challenges. Now, some employers have to make accommodations, like giving them time off for rehabilitation and counseling.

Look, I know I am preaching to the choir by talking about these long-term commitments the VFW has been advocating for veterans since the end of the Spanish American War.

It's not the VFW I am concerned about or other veterans organizations. In the public and private sectors, we simply have to keep veteran care at the forefront of our national priorities as you have so strongly and consistently done. Thank you. Let's make sure that the veteran and hiring transition doesn't come to just one more priority that gets moved to the back burner. Let's keep that momentum going. It's the best way to demonstrate our national character and to honor those that have gone above and beyond, and who know the real meaning of sacrifice.

May God bless you, the VFW, our veterans and the United States of America. Thank you very much. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE CHUCK HAGEL, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It is now my honor and a privilege to introduce a fellow Vietnam veteran, a fellow grunt and VFW Life Member, who on February 27, 2013, became the first enlisted combat veteran to lead the Department of Defense, Secretary Chuck Hagel, who is joined here today by his lovely wife Lilibet and son, Ziller.

Secretary Chuck Hagel joined the United States Army and volunteered to go to Vietnam, rising to the rank of Sergeant while serving as an Infantry Squad Leader in 1968 alongside his brother, Tom, in the 9th Infantry Division.

Following Vietnam, he would use his G.I. Bill to graduate from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, then enter the world of politics as Chief of Staff to Nebraska Congressman John McCollister.

He would be nominated by President Reagan to serve as Deputy Administrator of the Veterans Administration, where he helped pioneer electronic health record keeping and pushed for increased benefits for Vietnam veterans suffering from Agent Orange.

He would go on to create a cellular network company, lead the USO, the G-7 Summit of Industrialized Nations, the World's Fair, and an Omaha-based investment bank.

He was elected to the United States Senate in 1996, where among the many key pieces of legislation he supported and sponsored was his unwavering support of the post-9/11 GI Bill that President Bush signed into law in June 2008.

Within days of becoming Secretary, he sat down with VA Secretary Eric Shinseki to discuss how DoD can help the VA better take care of veterans. He continues these face-to-face meetings on a regular basis.

He has also already met twice with the veterans and military service organizations to open a dialogue and give us a voice inside the Department of Defense.

He knows that we don't agree with some of his policies, but we also know he inherited virtually all of them, and the budget and mandatory sequester just makes matters worse, and his decisions even more difficult.

One thing the VFW knows is that his heart will always be there for our troops and their families, bringing a ground-pounder point-of-view to the sometimes questionable proposals we have heard from the Pentagon in the past.

Comrades, Sisters and Distinguished Guests, it give me great pleasure to present to you a fellow Vietnam veteran, a double Purple Heart recipient and Life Member of VFW Post 3704 in Columbus, Nebraska, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel. (Applause)

REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CHUCK HAGEL

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE HAGEL: Good morning. Commander Hamilton, thank you and thanks to all of your officers and leaders of the VFW. I'm not only grateful for the introduction but what you do for this institution, for our country, for our families, and for our active-duty military and their families. I would like to also congratulate Bill Thien and Mrs. Thien and wish them every success as he takes over as the new incoming Commander of the VFW.

As the Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW nears its 100th Anniversary, I want to thank National President Leanne Lemley and the Auxiliary members for the work you all do to honor our veterans and their families. And also congratulations to Sissy Borel for following in Leanne's footsteps as the National President.

It is a privilege to be with all of you here in Louisville. This is a remarkable convention, a convention that always has an impact on our country and on our leaders. And I also want to acknowledge the fact that as you all know, it wouldn't be possible without the hard work of your Executive Director, my long-time friend Bob Wallace and his entire team here, and also to Mrs. Wallace for enduring living with you, Bob.

So, to all of the team and the organization, thank you, and to the City of Louisville for their always extraordinary hospitality, we thank you.

I bring you greeting from your commander-in-chief, President Obama, who asked me to thank you and to extend his greetings and let you know that he is aware of the work that you do on behalf of our veterans and their families, as well as our active duty military and their families.

As you all know, this week is the 60th anniversary of the armistice that ended the Korean War. So, I would like to begin my remarks this morning by asking our Korean War veterans with us today to rise. If we could once again acknowledge our Korean War veterans here with us this morning. (Applause) Thank you for your extraordinary service.

The upcoming observance of the 60th anniversary is an opportunity for this country to fully express its profound gratitude for your service and your sacrifices and the contributions you've made.

Later this week I will join President Obama and secretary Shinseki, who I know will be with you tomorrow and we will take part in a special ceremony honoring our Korean War veterans in Washington, D.C.

The Korean War veterans here today, and all those across the country, should know that your fellow citizens are proud of what you accomplished, and what your generation has contributed to our security and our prosperity here in this country, and certainly in Asia.

I grew up in little towns in Nebraska where life revolved around the VFW and American Legion clubs. As Commander Hamilton mentioned, I am a proud Life Member of VFW Post 3704 in Columbus, Nebraska. My father, a World War II veteran of the South Pacific, who would be 90 years old today, was an active VFW member, as is my brother Tom, who

Commander Hamilton noted, served with me in Vietnam. I have been a member for 45 years, since I returned home from Vietnam in December 1968. To my home state Commander, wherever you are out there, Harold Schlender, and Donna Fenske, President of the State VFW Auxiliary, and all my fellow Nebraskans who are here today, thank you for your support and good work and we are very proud of what you do in Nebraska. And, at this point, I am obliged to say, "Go Huskers." (Applause)

Forgive that parochial comment. I know that now that we have joined the Big Ten, all you Ohio State, Michigan people question that. But I do have the microphone. Thank you all for your service to my friends in Nebraska.

It's often said that no one does more for veterans than the VFW. You are also a great friend to those who wear the uniform today. In my first couple of weeks in this office, as Commander Hamilton noted, I convened a roundtable with the VFW and other veterans organizations to let them know they had a strong supporter and a friend at the Pentagon. I will continue to reach out to veterans organizations like the VFW and listen to your concerns and seek your advice.

All of us at the Pentagon and across this administration, value your perspective, your experience and your devotion to our military men and women. And as I'll explain this morning, we will need your help and partnership as we manage through a very significant period of historic transition and change.

The United States is emerging from the largest period of sustained combat in our history, having unwound from the war in Iraq and continuing to wind down the war in Afghanistan. The world is complicated and it is dangerous. At the same time, we are confronting stark new fiscal challenges, including the imposition of steep and abrupt budget cuts under the mechanism of sequestration.

We have gone through periods of realignment and redefinition after every major conflict in America's history. They always have enormous ramifications and consequences for our entire defense enterprise in terms of our national security, in terms of our priorities, available resources, and the needs of our men and women in uniform and their families.

America must always have a strong, capable and ready military, a military that is always prepared to defend national interests. But fulfilling that obligation now and in the future we will require us to fundamentally reshape defense institutions that were designed for different strategic and budgetary realities and times.

Today I want to describe the four principles that will guide these efforts to realign and reshape our military.

First, prioritizing DoD's missions and capabilities around our core responsibility of defending our country.

Second, maximizing the military's combat power.

Third, preserving and strengthening America's military readiness.

Fourth, honoring the service and sacrifice of our people.

I am laying out these principles today, before the VFW, because all of you in this audience helped build our military into the strongest, most capable, and most respected on earth. You understand that these principles are essential to keeping it that way. And if we are to succeed in this effort, we will need your continued engagement and your continued partnership.

First, prioritizing core missions and capabilities. The Department of Defense must set clear strategic priorities to implement the President's Defense Strategic Guidance within the framework of a new fiscal reality of fewer resources.

With \$37 billion in mandated budget cuts that began on March 1st under sequestration, we are witnessing the largest single-year reduction in the defense budget since the draw-down after Korea. Unless the law changes, the Department will have to absorb \$52 billion in cuts next year, and a total of \$500 billion in cuts over the next decade. This is in addition to the \$487 billion in reductions over ten years that we are already implementing under the Budget Control Act of 2011.

Sequestration is an irresponsible process, and it is terribly damaging. I hope that our leaders in Washington will eventually come to policy resolution, a resolution that stops sequestration. But all of us who have the responsibility of leading our Defense Department cannot lead the Department of Defense based on hope, based on "we think," based on "maybe." We have to prepare our institution for whatever comes. To that end, these cuts are forcing us to make tough but necessary decisions to prioritize missions and capabilities around our core responsibility, which is the security of our country.

The reality is that many DoD missions and capabilities are essential to defending the nation and our interests, but some are not.

Going forward, informed by the Strategic Choices and Management Review that I initiated four months ago, the Department will prioritize how we match missions to resources. The President must be assured that the options we present to him, the options he has to protect our country, and defend our national interests are ready and real.

Second, maximizing the military's combat power. To protect our country in an era of reduced resources, we will have to maximize our military's fighting strength. Preserving combat power means the Department is going to have to deal with deep structural imbalances in our budget, particularly supporting infrastructure that has grown in size and expense.

An organization of the Department's size and complexity will always require a back-office. But every dollar we spend on large staffs, large headquarters and overhead of facilities that we don't need, is a dollar that we don't have available to spend on readiness, training and equipment for our troops, or on sustaining other vital programs that help to support our people and their families.

In any budget environment the Department of Defense should always be looking to find more efficient and affordable ways to do business. For several years we have been paring back overhead, making our operations more effective, and putting more emphasis and focus on deeper accountability and more savings, all of this in all of our departments, and in particular in our acquisition and procurement programs. But if we are to preserve our decisive military edge, technological superiority, and our world-class professional personnel in the face of current reductions, we must find savings everywhere in our budget.

Earlier this month, I directed a 20-percent reduction in the budget for my own organization, the Office of the Secretary of Defense. General Martin Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, offered a similar

reduction in the Joint Staff, and we expect each military service to make comparable reductions in their headquarters budgets. I expect these cuts to not only save us significant money, but also to result in organizations that are more effective and efficient as well as more agile and versatile.

However, DoD will not be able to meet its budgetary savings requirements just through more efficient operations and headquarters reductions. It will require far more.

Third, preserving and strengthening military readiness to implement the steep and abrupt reductions that have been required under sequestration, we have had to make very difficult decisions to reduce, stop and defer many activities and programs that keep our military prepared to fight, including training, maintenance and modernization investments.

Readiness cuts aren't always visible, but these cuts are having and will continue to have very damaging effects. During a visit to Fort Bragg last week, I heard from infantrymen whose units were short on training rounds for their weapons. Each of the services have curtailed activities; flying hours have been reduced, ships are not sailing, and Army training has been halted. These kinds of gaps and shortages can lead to a force that is inadequately trained, ill-equipped and unable to fulfill required missions.

Going forward, preserving and strengthening our readiness must be a key priority. Unfortunately, when compared to other areas in DoD's budget, military readiness does not always have a vocal constituency. You cannot buy back readiness.

You all have fought and put your lives on the line for this country. You did so with the expectation that you would be given the equipment, training and support you needed to succeed. Many of you, especially those veterans of the Korean War, have seen the costs, measured in precious American lives that come with sending a hollow force into battle.

We cannot repeat the mistakes of the past. To avoid a prolonged readiness crisis and the lasting damage it would inflict on our defense enterprise, I have given clear guidance to the services, guidance that they should not retain more people, equipment and infrastructure than they can support, than they can afford to keep trained and ready.

This will require careful balancing. Professional and quality individuals are the foundation of a ready force. They are the foundation of any institution. But strengthening readiness will ultimately demand that we address unsustainable growth in personnel costs, which represent half of the Defense Department's budget right now, and crowds out vital spending on training and modernization. If trends continue, we could ultimately be left with a much smaller force that is well-compensated but poorly-trained and equipped. This would be unacceptable.

Opposing for political reasons or any other reason every reform or cost-savings measure that DoD presents to Capitol Hill is short-sighted and irresponsible and it does not help our men and women in uniform, especially when these savings can be used to fund readiness and modernization. This will require Congress joining DoD in a partnership of difficult choices, priorities, and decisions. It will not be easy, it will take some courage.

As we work to achieve the right balance, our men and women must always be assured that they will be fairly compensated, including earned

benefits, given the best training and equipment, and treated as the professional they are. And they must be always certain their families will always be taken care of.

Fourth, honoring the service and sacrifice of our people, this brings me to another guiding principle that will inform all DoD efforts to reshape our defense enterprise, recognizing the service and sacrifice of our people. DoD is not a corporation and it cannot be run like one. The costs of our decisions are measured now in how they affect the financial bottom line, but in how they affect human lives.

Making the right decisions about our future depends on our application of the sacrifices our people and their families make for our country. We must continue to pay close attention to their needs and our commitments to them, including everything from family support programs to the resolute and painstaking work of POW/MIA recovery efforts.

Our people are strong and resilient after 12 years of war, but they are under stress, and so are the institutions that support them. Last week at Fort Bragg's Soldier and Family Assistance Center, I met a 1st Sergeant who told me that in Afghanistan, he froze up and became overwhelmed by anxiety. He couldn't command. He had lost his ability to command. I asked him how many deployments he had. He told me he was on his fifth consecutive combat tour when this happened.

When you push human beings this hard, they break, and our people have been pushed close to the breaking point, some have been pushed beyond the breaking point. As the wars wind down, we are also dealing with debilitating, insidious and destructive challenges such as alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Our military leaders do everything possible to protect our men and woman on the battlefield. We must make this same commitment to our people here at home.

I have made clear to DoD's senior leaders that the scourge of sexual assault in the military must be stamped out. It is a stain on the honor of millions of military men and women, and it is a threat to the discipline and the cohesion of our force. I meet weekly with the department's senior leadership team to personally review sexual assault prevention and response efforts, and ensure that the directives and programs we've initiated to stop sexual assault in the military are being implemented now. We are all accountable. We will fix this problem, and we will fix it together.

As I mentioned, ensuring the well-being of our people will require continued partnership with Congress. It also requires our consistent cooperation and close coordination with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Secretary Shinseki and I have a long-standing, strong, very close relationship. He and I meet on a regular basis and are working with our departments to collaborate even more closely on resolving veterans' problems and issues. I have the highest regard personally and professionally for Secretary Shinseki and the work that he and his team are doing for our veterans.

This is difficult. It's imperfect. The transition of our service members and their records leaving active duty into the care of Veterans Affairs should be smooth. It should be seamless and efficient. And we are committed to breaking down the barriers that inhibit this transition.

I want to thank the VFW and other veterans' organizations for what they do to assist in this effort. Their continual focus and their cooperation and their push and their assistance is vital, and we appreciate that.

Among several actions, I've directed to partner with the VA, DoD is assisting VA's efforts to process the backlog of veterans claims by sending teams of DoD experts to work with their VA colleagues in the Veterans Benefits Administration. Most backlogged VA claims today are those veterans who served prior to Iraq and Afghanistan. In the vast majority of cases, DoD has provided all the information available to the VA. Still, we remain committed, absolutely committed, to continuing to help reduce VA's backlog, as we have a responsibility to work closely together on these issues. DoD and the VA are building a seamless system to ensure that future veterans never encounter some of the problems we are working to fix today.

A centerpiece of this effort is DoD's revised Transition Assistance Program, which President Obama announced at last year's VFW convention. This has since been implemented. It's working well. It will go a long way toward ensuring that veterans have the health care, counseling and support they need, and that they have the opportunity to find a good job, start a business or pursue an education.

As a former VA Deputy Administrator, U.S. Senator, and veteran, I have been involved in these issues for many years, so I have some understanding and appreciation for the complications and difficulties involved in getting these two large bureaucracies to work closely together. There is a lot more that needs to be done, but we are making good progress. We are committed to do it.

Chairman Dempsey has correctly observed that the country is now at a defining time in our relationship with our newest generation of veterans. He is correct. Despite the many challenges facing our defense enterprise, we will get through this together and be stronger in the end, but only if we are prepared and willing to make wise and difficult decisions and be much more disciplined about setting our priorities.

As I look out across this audience, I see thousands of veterans whose lives have been committed to helping our service members, their families, and our veterans and their families, helping them to ensure and succeed that this country honors their legacy with policies that are worthy of their sacrifice.

All of you and the roughly 22 million veterans across this nation have an important role to play in the debate over our country's future national security priorities. All of you and the roughly 22 million veterans across this nation have an important role to play in the debate over our country's future national security priorities. Not one American should ever be ordered into battle without our leaders being as sure as they can be that their decision is worthy of the sacrifices that will be made by our sons and our daughters.

Thank you. God bless you and all the men and women who serve our great nation. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Mr. Secretary, thank you. He is on vacation and he took his time because he wanted to be with us, so we certainly appreciate that.

We appreciate the communications back and forth with you very much. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF MR. MATT CAPOZZOLI,
VICE PRESIDENT UNITED PARCEL SERVICE AIRLINES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: UPS is a global leader in logistics, offering a broad range of solutions for the transportation of packages and freight, the facilitation of international trade, and the deployment of advanced technology to efficiently manage the word of business. UPS services more than 220 countries and territories worldwide.

Headquartered right here in Louisville, UPS Airlines is one of the world's largest airlines, with more than 500 owned and chartered aircraft that fly over 1,800 flight segments a day.

Louisville is also home to the company's all-points international hub called Worldport. At 5.2 million square feet, Worldport is the largest fully automated packaging processing facility in the world. The massive operation is run by 8,000 employees, who help turn over 130 aircraft and process 1.6 million packages a day.

UPS is this area's largest employer and has shared a wonderful partnership with the City of Louisville over the years, as the company has steadily grown its airline and logistics operations here for three decades.

Many of you may have received a cookie jar along with a cookbook when you arrived at the Convention Center. We have UPS to thank for shipping those outstanding items here to Louisville.

Here to represent UPS today is Matt Capozzoli. As Vice President of Flight Operations for one of the world's largest airlines, Matt brings more than three decades of management experience in his role managing the day-to-day operations of UPS global air network.

As a district manager and UPS veteran, Matt has garnered a wealth of experience ranging from package operations to corporate and district legal and labor relations.

A native of Philadelphia, Matt began his UPS career in 1977 as a package handler in the metro Philadelphia district. He was promoted to part-time supervisor in 1982, and after a stint as a package car driver, was promoted to hub supervisor in 1987.

Following assignments in Operations, Health and Safety and Human Resources, Matt was promoted to attorney in 1991 in UPS's corporate office in Atlanta. He worked in the Air Group Legal Department in Louisville in 1998, where he supported Legal and Regulatory Affairs.

He was named Corporate Legal Coordinator two years later and was promoted to Corporate Legal Department Manager in 2004. The following year, he was named Atlantic District Manager in Baltimore. Matt returned to Atlanta in 2006 to work with Corporate Labor Relations. He assumed his current position in 2011.

Matt earned his law degree from Temple University in Philadelphia. He is a member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association and the Kentucky Bar Association. Matt is also a member of the Cargo Airline Association's Board of Directors.

In step with UPS's commitment to its communities, Matt serves on the Board of Directors for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Kentuckiana. He also

served on the Board of Directors for Central Maryland's Metro United Way.

Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to Matt Capozzoli. (Applause)

REMARKS – MATT CAPOZZOLI, VICE PRESIDENT, UPS AIRLINES

MR. MATT CAPOZZOLI: I think that the introduction will be longer than my speech.

On behalf of the 20,000 Louisville area UPSers, I would like to thank you, Commander Hamilton, President Lemley, and the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary membership for allowing UPS the opportunity to be a part of this morning's event.

I also would like to congratulate the Ladies Auxiliary on your 100 years of service. To all of you, thank you for what you have done and continue to do for this great nation.

UPS's supporting veterans goes back over 100 years, going back to our founder, George Casey. George served in the Navy during World War I as a Petty Officer 3rd Class, and his job title was store keeper.

Today, maybe not so ironically, that role is known as a Logistics Specialist. In addition to George, three former UPS CEOs are veterans.

Today, there is a good chance that a UPS colleague is a veteran National Guard or Reserve member as they make up 7.5 percent of the UPS U.S.'s workforce.

I am proud to say as Vice-President of Flight Operations, we have 1,070 veterans on our team and ten percent of our pilots are actively serving in the Guard or Reserves.

Since our early days, UPS has remained committed to our servicemen and women. We will continue that support. In fact, you may know this, in March UPS announced our commitment to veterans with a pledge to hire more than 25,000 veterans over the next five years, and perform more than 25,000 employee service hours to help veterans and veterans services. (Applause)

This commitment is an important and natural extension of UPS's outward reach and visible support of the brave men and women who serve in the military. That means UPS will further enhance its commitment by helping veterans transition into the civilian workforce through increased networking opportunities, including forming new alliances with VSOs working through outreach government efforts to veterans, and by establishing veterans business source search groups to ensure critical resources are available to enhance career opportunities for veterans at UPS.

We believe folks that have spent time in the military understand how important it is to work as a team to be successful. They bring skills and experience that can benefit any job at UPS.

I believe that commitment demonstrates that UPS is serious about hiring veterans and I am proud of what we are doing. I am equally proud of our recent contribution to assist veterans.

UPS just presented the first installment of a \$1 million donation to the Paving Access for Veterans Employment Program or PAVE. PAVE seeks to

work through private partnerships to address the high veteran unemployment rate.

As you can see, UPS is an organization committed to our military servicemen and women. So, again, I thank you for all you have done and what you will continue to do so we can enjoy the freedoms of this great nation.

I hope you will enjoy your visit to Louisville and this outstanding convention. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS TO 2013 ALL AMERICAN DEPARTMENT,
DISTRICT AND POST COMMANDERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Certainly, the most prestigious recognition earned as a Commander in the Veterans of Foreign Wars is to be named a member of the All American team. We have 20 Department Commanders, 40 District Commanders and 204 Post Commanders who have earned that distinguished title and most are with us today.

I will now be joined by Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Bill Thien and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Stroud to present the All American Commander Awards as the Adjutant General Allen "Gunner" Kent announces this elite group.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Please line up.

Alabama

Department:

Valentin R. Obregon, Post 3568

District:

Robert D. Fischer, Post 3128

Jerry H. Anger, Post 6173

Timothy P. Wallace, Post 924

Post:

Robert D. Fischer, Post 3128

Walter G. Dempster, Post 6226

Fred J. Smith, Post 4850

Billy Johnson, Post 6173

John J. Elliott, Post 4572

Rayburn M. Hill, Post 3016

Alaska

Department:

Johnathan R. Hackett, Post 9365

Post:

David A. Lemelin, Post 10029

Arizona

Department:

Michael K. Ferguson, Post 7968

Post:

Fred R. Nelson, Post 10227

John K. Roulstone, Post 6310

Tom A. Judd, Post 9907

Derek J. Tramondo, Post 7968

Robert R. Stark, Post 9399

Arkansas

Department:

Terry G. Callahan, Post 2256

Post:

Jerry T. Tobey, Post 3031
James H. Lee, Post 2259
David S. Bramlett, Post 4764
Michael E. McCune, Post 2256
William W. Beams, Jr., Post 2278
Michael R. Griffin, Post 8671
Lewie R. Brown, II, Post 4455
Justin C. Farrar, Post 4548

California

Post:

Clay W. Cowgill, Post 3935
Michael J. King, Post 1985
Michael T. Pierson, Post 3699
Michael A. Keppel, Post 1351

Colorado

Department:

Bruce R. Dolan, Post 7945

District:

Ronald K. Johnson, Post 5061
David L. Stone, Post 3917

Post:

Ronald J. Lattin, Post 5061
Ronald W. Davies, Post 9644

Europe

Department:

Anthony V. Classe, Jr., 10708

District:

Anthony Wallent, Post 27

Florida

Department:

Wayne E. Carrignan, Post 5625

District:

Mark A. Alvarez, Post 3308
Karen L. Nigara, Post 1689

Post:

Mark A. Alvarez, Post 3308
Robert Williams, Post 1689
Douglas GD Bagdasarian, Post 3270
William X. Hanson, Post 5968
Glenn M. Wright, Post 7909
Steven H. Schneider, Post 8255
Gordon L. Bruens, Sr., Post 9528
Michael B. Wells, Post 8154
Anthony W. Gardner, Post 10140
Douglas R. Pattelena, Posts 4287
Roland W. Bernier, Jr., Post 4305

Georgia

Post:

Danny L. Gardner, Post 2681
Marty J. Estes, Post 5408
Charles A. Dobbins, Post 5080
John A. Veverka, Post 5255
Paul B. Murray, Post 2785
Gary W. Nelms, Post 5978

Idaho

Department:

Richard H. Cesler, Post 1173

Illinois

District:

Phillip L. Maughan, Post 3873

Post:

Donald Meeks, Post 2024
Adam G. Abdul, Post 9759
Ernest R. Mercer, Post 311
George F. Foy, Jr., Post 5917
Dennis M. Geiseman, Post 2801
Nina L. Petru, Post 3873

Indiana

District:

Paul V. Whitenack, Post 1152

Post:

James L. McClure, Post 2749
Kenneth A. Fisher, Post 1152
Norman C. Baker, Post 7081

Iowa

Post:

Jacob B. Gruber, Post 738

Kansas

District:

Andrew L. Olson, Post 1650

Post:

James C. Lilleston, Post 846
David J. Cuba, Post 6654

Louisiana

Post:

Elvin R. Bass, Post 3337

Maine

Department:

David D. Williams, Post 1641

Maryland

Post:

John L. Adams, Jr. Post 2678

Massachusetts

Post:

Manuel J. Raymond, Jr., Post 1011

Minnesota

Post:

Scott A. Bill, Post 3915

Mississippi

Department:

James L. Chapman, Post 10567

Post:

Jerry J. Ellis, Post 2434

Edward Corker, Post 5393

Missouri

Department:

Phillip A. Pippins, Post 2593

District:

Clifford W. Mitchem, Post 6274

Post:

John S. Bugg, Post 7356

Michael C. Poland, Post 10906

Edward J. Daly, Post 3944

Rolan C. Harroun, Post 4223

Montana

Post:

Ken R. Utter, Post 6786

Gary L. Race, Post 4725

Nebraska

Post:

Gary E. Bush, Sr., Post 3755

Nevada

Department:

Joe D. Rigsby, Post 2350

Post:

Gerald L. Peterson, Post 5

New Mexico

Department:

Vernon L. Luce, Post 3280

Post:

Danny C. Evans, 5890

North Carolina

Department:

Ted H. Briggs, Post 9010

District:

Jessie L. Bellflowers, Post 10630

Post:

George E. Balch, Post 10

Thomas L. Person, Post 6018

Ohio

Post:

Norman J. Cerny, Post 9520

Mark G. Tobias, Post 1060

Oregon

District:

Thomas G. Laing, Post 9448

Post:

Richard L. Eubank, Post 3965
Rick L. Higgins, 4039
Kenneth L. Kraft, Post 1324

Pacific Areas

Department:

Ashley D. Combs, Post 12109

Post:

Kenneth P. Swierzewski, Post 12109

Pennsylvania

District:

Sandra L. Showalter, Post 43

Post:

John D. Rowles, Post 1785
George P. Fletcher, Post 7043

South Carolina

Department:

Augustus Singleton, Post 4262

District:

Matthew D. Gooden, Post 4262

Post:

Hugh Gunter, Post 8738
Dentist B. Harvin, Post 6500
Harry L. McFadden, Post 4262

Tennessee

Post:

Richard E. Lee, Post 2120
Eugene K. McDuffie, Post 11333

Texas

Department:

Lazaro Velasquez, Jr., Post 2397

District:

Joseph H. McDaniel, Post 7873
David L. Adams, Post 3413
Allen R. Freeman, Post 3892
Peyton P. Lumpkin, Post 9182
Edward C. Torres, Post 4815

Post:

Larry G. Harding, Post 2772
Jerry Hinton, Post 7873
Charles T. Samford, Post 7843
Jay W. Sanders, Post 912
Rene Guerrero, Post 5619
Cecil F. McConnell, Jr., Post 12075
David L. Adams, 3413
Glenn W. Giggs, Post 6441
Marvin L. Brietzke, Post 7110
Charles S. Duncan, 3892
Dennis R. Batten, Post 4008
John Velasquez, Post 4692
Gary C. Bridges, Post 4709

Lewis D. Brasell, Jr., Post 9182
Herminia Whitzel, Post 10802
Gilbert R. Uriegas, Post 1533
Leonard A. Layman, Post 9174
Larry L. Sanders, Post 12041
John A. Lunkwicz, Post 10454
Ernest P. Rodriguez, Post 8925
John R. Gear, Post 12117

Vermont

Post:

Edmond J. Daudelin, Post 6689

Virginia

Department:

Margo D. Sheridan, Post 3150

District:

Stanley A. Dixon, Post 1177

Post:

Kathleen A. Goodall, Post 4809
Charles T. Ferguson, Post 2239
John F. Worley, Post 8046
Phillip C. Rusciolelli, Post 1177
Ralph E. Steinway, Post 1503

West Virginia

Department:

James R. Talerico, Post 573

District:

Terry Z. Scarbro, Post 4469

Post:

Todd C. Kingsbury, Post 3522
Milford M. Mowrey, Post 9926
William G. Cusson, Post 4326

Wisconsin

Post:

Donald G. Bolton, Post 1621
Randolph w. Strickland, Post 7308
Michele A. Rathke, Post 1638
Kimberly T. Kamps, Post 2778
David G. Green, Post 10818

Wyoming

Post:

Donnell E. Nichols, Post 7756

PRESENTATION OF ALL AMERICAN TRIPLE CROWN AWARDS

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: The term "Triple Crown Winner" is universally applied for an extraordinarily exceptional accomplishment.

Winning all three major thoroughbred horse races, the Kentucky Derby, held right here at Churchill Downs in Louisville, the Preakness Stakes and the Belmont Stakes, is considered the greatest accomplishment of a race horse, and on the very infrequent occasion it occurs, it was last

accomplished in 1978, by the race horse “Affirmed.” The thoroughbred is thus known as the “Triple Crown Winner.”

In major league baseball, a player earns the Triple Crown when he leads a league in three specific statistical categories. For batters, a player must lead the league in homeruns, runs batted in and batting average; pitchers much lead the league in wins, strikeouts and earned run average.

Again, this is a very rare occurrence. Although the Detroit Tigers’ Miguel Cabrera accomplished this feat in 2012 by hitting 44 home runs, batting .330 and amassing 139 RBIs, he is the first Triple Crown Winner since 1967!

The VFW has its own class of elite Triple Crown Winners as a result of their distinctive membership recruiting achievements at the Department, District and Post levels.

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure in recognizing this year’s select group of VFW’s Triple Crown Winners:

From the Department of Colorado is Ronald Lattin.

Next is Raul Sanchez from the Department of New Mexico.

And Ashley Combs from the Department of the Pacific Areas.

Commanders, congratulations for attaining such a notable record of accomplishment and thank you for your hard work and dedication this year. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFIED NATIONAL RECRUITER OF THE YEAR AWARD

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

This year, before announcing the Certified National Recruiter of the Year, I would like to take a moment to recognize three outstanding recruiters, each of whom recruited more than 250 new or reinstated members.

Paul Nigara, from the Department of Florida, had 252 recruits.

Jack Turner, from the Department of California, had 252 recruits.

And from the Department of Europe, Stephen Ward, had 282 recruits. Job well done, gentlemen. (Applause)

I also want to recognize the VFW National Recruiter of the Year, though unfortunately he could not be here with us today. Ronald Reynolds, from Post 8862 in the Department of Europe, recruited a phenomenal 515 new or reinstated members. Let’s all give him a hand for a job well done. (Applause)

Now, I have the pleasure of presenting the Certified National Recruiter of the Year Award to an individual who is no stranger to performing this vital VFW mission. This year, he has recruited an impressive 313 new or reinstated members. By any measure of recruiting success in recent memory, this is an outstanding accomplishment and fully deserves to be well-recognized by all of us.

From Post 2866, located in St. Charles in the Department of Missouri, comrades, please welcome Dennis Flynn, the Certified National Recruiter of the Year. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Certified National Recruiter of the Year Award 2012-2013 presented to Dennis F. Flynn, Department of Missouri.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation for your exceptional efforts in recruiter training, as well as recruiting new or reinstated members for this membership year, thereby placing you among the Veterans of Foreign Wars' most distinguished Certified National Recruiters.

"You are commended for your professional achievements and recognized for your dedication to the goals of the "A Lifetime Commitment" team.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands as National Officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States."

This has been signed by John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

ANNOUNCEMENT OF LEGACY LIFE MEMBERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The VFW's Legacy Life Membership provides an opportunity for Life Members to leave their mark on the nation's largest combat veterans' organization. Membership in this fraternity of distinguished and committed VFW members not only offers expanded and exclusive benefits, but it also helps ensure that the VFW's good work will continue for generations to come.

This is accordingly, the true meaning of the word "Legacy" in this most notable and important program.

The winners of the Commander-in-Chief's Legacy Life Contest deserves to be fully congratulated for their efforts and achievements, and they are:

Paul Edwards, Commander of Post 5839 in Kentucky.

John Gilbert, Commander of Post 2485 in the Pacific Areas.

Deborah Johnson, Commander of Post 1468 in California.

Val Shawl, Commander of Post 180 in Oregon.

Michael Wiersma, Commander of Post 7564 in North Dakota.

And John Underwood, Commander of Post 8242 in Arizona.

Comrades, please stand and be recognized. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF "CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP CITATION"

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: People say there are two things you can count on in life: death and taxes. Well, I am adding a third: the Department of Arizona increasing their VFW membership. For a remarkable 46 years, the members of the Department of Arizona have come together as a team to consecutively increase VFW membership throughout the state.

What this department has accomplished is truly amazing. I commend each and every member of the Department of Arizona for their years of devotion and tireless efforts that have gone into reaching this momentous achievement.

Now, in honor of their hard work and dedication, I would like to call on Mike Ferguson, Immediate Past Commander of Arizona, to accept this "Consecutive Years of Membership Growth" citation.

Congratulations to all in the great Department of Arizona. (Applause)
ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Certification of Commendation awarded to Department of Arizona.

"In recognition of the remarkable achievement of 46 consecutive years of continuous membership sustained by a department 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 22nd day of July, 2013."

This has been signed by John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

At this time, comrades, we will recess until 1:30 and the Business Session will start for the VFW at that time.

(Whereupon, the meeting was recessed at 12:30 o'clock p.m., to reconvene at 1:30 o'clock p.m.)



FIRST BUSINESS SESSION
MONDAY AFTERNOON, JULY 22, 2013

(The First Business Session of the 114th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, was called to order in the Kentucky International Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, at 1:30 o'clock p.m., by Commander-in-Chief Hamilton.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We will now call the afternoon session to order. Please take your seats.

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO THE 113th
NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It is now my distinct pleasure to present a Certification of Appreciation to the 113th National Convention Committee for their work in planning and conducting last year's very successful National Convention in Reno.

Here to accept the award on behalf of the Committee is Jack McMIndes, the Convention Committee Chairman for the 113th National Convention.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Certificate of Appreciation presented to the 113th National Convention Committee.

"In extraordinary appreciation and eminent recognition of its outstanding dedication and persistent drive to ensure the success of the 113th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States held in Reno, Nevada, July 21-25, 2012.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 22nd day of July, 2013."

This has been signed by John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – COMRADE JACK McMINDES, CONVENTION CHAIRMAN

COMRADE JACK McMINDES: On behalf of the Department of Nevada and the City of Reno, thank you for letting us host the 113th National Convention. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF FRED C. HALL MEMORIAL OUTSTANDING POST
SPECIAL PROJECT AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The VFW has a rich tradition of community service, as evidenced by our members' eight million-plus hours of volunteerism each year. Those hours are spent in a variety of ways, covering everything from maintaining Veterans Memorials to teaching a classroom of children proper flag etiquette. Our work instills a sense of patriotism and pride in our communities.

Community service is a founding VFW tenet, benefitting education, the environment, health sciences, civic projects and the military. Today, I want to tell you about Murray, Kentucky, VFW Post 6291's project and honor them for their hard work and dedication.

In 2010, members of Post 6291 began work on a Memorial dedicated to every veteran who has ever served in the armed forces. Regardless of branch of service or whether they served in a time of war or peace, this Memorial would serve to honor all who wore a uniform.

The Memorial pays tribute to World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the war on terrorism veterans with five pods with large granite stones. A sixth pod holds a dedication stone for all veterans. The main part of the Memorial flies the United States Flag, Kentucky State Flag and the POW/MIA Flag, along with displaying five granite stones with bronze plaques recognizing the five branches of service. There is also a bronze statue of a bald eagle, symbolizing the United States, standing guard over the Memorial.

It took over two years to complete, and when the unveiling ceremony took place in November of 2012, the Committee was there to embrace the Memorial, and the members of Post 6291 finally saw their many hours of planning and hard work spring to life. Members of the Post say there is almost always someone walking through the Memorial.

This Memorial is a superb tribute to our nation's heroes. It serves as an ideal place for the community to reflect on the sacrifices our veterans have made and bask in the many freedoms they have secured for us.

Comrades, please join me in presenting the Fred C. Hall Memorial Outstanding Post Special Project Award to Murray, Kentucky, Post 6291. Accepting the award on behalf of the Post is Comrade Vernon Warner. (Applause)

RESPONSE – VERNON S. WARNER, COMMANDER

COMRADE VERNON WARNER (Post 6291 – Kentucky): We are very proud of this award to Murray. We are a small community. It has been completely built with donations and volunteer labor. Like many other functions that we do in the organization, it wasn't supported by state tax or anything like that.

We do have bricks that are available at this time. Any member of any military organization that wishes to be a part of it, we welcome it. Anybody that is traveling, Murray is a good community to come through on vacation. This is a great part of the community. Thank you. (Applause)

REPORT ON CONVENTION CREDENTIALS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Now, I request that Betty Gripp give us the initial Credentials Report. Betty.

COMRADE BETTY GRIPP (Post 10188 - Arizona): Good afternoon, Commander-in-Chief, Council members and delegates: The opening Credentials Report for the 114th National Convention at the close of business 4:00 p.m. yesterday, July 21st, 2013, the total delegates who registered their credentials are:

Total delegates, 13,882.

Total Department Commanders, 49.
Total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 28.
Total National Officers, 55.

That is for a grand total of 14,014. The total registered for the 114th Convention is 2,152. That's my report, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, ma'am.

We will now have the report on Convention Rules by Chairman Jack Carney.

REPORT ON CONVENTION RULES

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Our Committee met yesterday, July 21, 2013, and I would like to thank the Vice-Chairman George Cramer, Past Commander-in-Chief, and certainly Kevin Jones, the staff member, for their assistance.

We agreed on the following recommendations, which I am respectfully submitting for your consideration.

1. That, in accordance and conjunction with the National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure, and with any exceptions noted here, Demeter's Manual shall be recognized as parliamentary authority for this Convention.

2. That when a registered delegate desires to make a motion or address the Convention, he or she shall rise, address the Chair as "Comrade Commander-in-Chief," and after being recognized, shall state his name, Post number and Department before proceeding.

3. A registered delegate shall be permitted to speak but twice on any one subject, or any pending resolution for a period not to exceed five 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.

4. 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, July 23, 2013, and must be accompanied by a written explanation as to why the resolution was not presented to the Department Convention for consideration.

5. All resolutions offered on the floor at the Convention, shall initially be in writing, and shall automatically and without reading, be referred to the Adjutant General for assignment to the proper committee.

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

7. This Convention will not consider any resolution dealing with race, creed or religion, or endorse anyone for public office. No resolution will be considered on the expenditure or appropriation of organizational funds.

8. The 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 members of 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 the 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. 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 allowed voting privileges.

12. On roll calls, the Department Commander of each delegation shall poll his delegation's registered delegates on the floor and shall announce the vote of his delegation.

13. Registered delegates of a delegation may arrive at a vote in any manner, 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, or adjourned, 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. In accordance with Section 621 of the National By-laws, voting shall be by acclamation, except when a roll call be demanded by ten registered delegates representing Posts in ten separate Departments, or by order of the Commander-in-Chief.

17. Nominating speeches for the National Officers shall be limited to five minutes each. The time allocated to encompass all seconding speeches shall be limited to four minutes total. Nomination and election of National Officers will be held according to the Congressional Charter, By-Laws, and Section 617 of the National 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. The Commander-in-Chief may, as may be necessary and appropriate to informing the membership of the activities of this

Convention, authorize that all or parts of the Convention be streamed through the website of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

20. Consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the Convention present is necessary for suspension of the rules of this Convention.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move that these rules be accepted by this Convention at this time.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Commander. I have a motion to accept the rules of the Convention. Do I have a second?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE CRAMER: I am George Cramer, a delegate from VFW Post 3873 in Naperville, Illinois, and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, George. I have a motion and a second to accept the Convention rules. All in favor will signify by the usual manner of "aye"; those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

Next we will have the report of the Committee on National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual by Chairman 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. My comrades, I am pleased to report that the Committee on National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual met yesterday afternoon for about two and a half hours and thoroughly discussed the items before the Committee.

The Proposed By-laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual Amendments are contained in the booklet that you had at registration, plus each member of the Committee got an additional booklet. I think there are a few other booklets around in case you want to see some of the specifics.

Commander-in-Chief, the Committee recommends for approval, and I will read these slowly so if you are following you can mark them off.

The Committee recommended for approval B-1, M-1, B-2, B-3, B-4, M-2, B-5, M-3, B-6, B-7, M-5, B-8, B-10, M-7, B-11, B-12, M-9, B-13, M-11, B-14, M-12, B-17, B-18, M-13, B-19, M-14, and R-2.

Accordingly, Commander-in-Chief, I move adoption of those changes.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GLEN GARDNER: I am Glen Gardner, a delegate from VFW Post 3359, Texas, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have a motion and a second to accept as read.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RUSSELL CANEVARI (Post 5544 - Pennsylvania): I am Russell Canevari, Department of Pennsylvania, State Commander. I move to set aside B-14.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I am sorry. I can't hear you, and you will have to speak in the microphone. You want to do what?

COMRADE RUSSELL CANEVARI (Post 5544 - Pennsylvania): I move to set aside B-14, B-12 and M-1.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: All right. Do we need a motion?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: No.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I will set aside B-12 and B-14, and M-1, is that correct, comrade?

COMRADE RUSSELL CANEVARI (Post 5544 - Pennsylvania): Yes, B-12, B-14 and M-1.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: M-1, are we correct now?

COMRADE RUSSELL CANEVARI (Post 5544 - Pennsylvania): Yes, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: They are set aside.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA (Post 9083 - Department of Maryland): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Victor Fuentealba, from Post 9083 in Maryland. I request that B-7 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: B-7 is set aside.

I recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN HOLLAND (Post 1 – Colorado): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Holland, Post 1, Denver, Colorado. I ask to set aside R-3.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It hasn't been read yet. We are not there yet. R-3 was not recommended for approval, I am sorry. We can do it after this, John.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RICK TANNER (Post 3787 – California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Rick Tanner, Post 3787, a delegate from the Department of California. I would like to set aside B-14. I believe the first numbers were wrong that were presented to you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have already done that. B-14?

COMRADE RICK TANNER (Post 3787 – California): Yes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: And M-12?

COMRADE RICK TANNER (Post 3787 – California): Yes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have done that. Is there any discussion? If not, we will vote on those that were not set aside. All in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. By rule, I am just completing the report of the Committee. The Committee opted for rejection of C-1, M-4, M-6, B-9, M-8. The Committee took no action, and recommended rejection of C-1, M-4, M-6, B-9, M-8, M-10, B-15, B-16, M-15, R-1 and R-3.

Commander, that completes the report of the Committee, and we are prepared to move to the set asides.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Now is the time. Where is John?

I recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN HOLLAND (Post 1 – Colorado): I move to set aside R-3.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: You have to move for adoption, John, if that is where you are.

COMRADE JOHN HOLLAND (Post 1 – Colorado): I move for adoption.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: That is on what?

COMRADE JOHN HOLLAND (Post 1 – Colorado): R-3.

3. COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I have a motion to approve R-

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JIM WAINSCOAT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Jim Wainscoat from Post 628, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. I want to move for adoption of Resolution 306, but I don't have the alternate number.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We are dealing with his motion first.

COMRADE JIM WAINSCOAT (Post 628 – South Dakota): Oh, I am sorry.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: That is all right.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE STEVE RYLANT (Post 41 – Colorado): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Steve Rylant, Post 41, Loveland, Colorado. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: You second the motion for approval of R-3?

COMRADE STEVE RYLANT (Post 41, Colorado): Yes, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Any discussion on the motion? Let's read the recommendation.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief. It did not recommend approval of R-3, and the reason is, it was ruled out of order because there is no Men's Auxiliary structure beyond the Post level. This particular amendment would amend the Memorial Service under National President of the Auxiliary by adding the comma, and it would add a roll for the National Chaplain and also the Men's Auxiliary member in our Ritual. Since there is no structure past the Post level, we ruled that out of order.

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

COMRADE JOHN HOLLAND (Post 1 – Colorado): Comrade Commander, I would like to ask Comrade Rivers, could the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary correct that?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: John, I am sorry. We are having trouble hearing you up here.

COMRADE JOHN HOLLAND (Post 1 – Colorado): Would changing that to the Ladies Auxiliary change that, would that make it proper?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: It would be out of order because we couldn't amend the by-laws. They have to be 15 days and then debated as printed. What I would suggest you might want to do, John, is to get with Kevin and the other folks and see what we have got to do to try to accomplish what you are trying, in a way that can come before the body.

COMRADE JOHN HOLLAND (Post 1 – Colorado): Very well. Chief, I am going to take away my motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you very much. The motion is withdrawn. Any other motions on set asides?

COMRADE STEVE RYLANT (Post 41 – Colorado): The seconder is withdrawing as well.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Any other motions? Are there any other motions?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ED CROUCHER (Post 6786 – Montana): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ed Croucher from Post 6786, Department of Montana. I would like to move approval of B-9.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The motion is to approve B-9. Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GARY RACE (Post 4725 – Montana): Commander-in-Chief, I am Gary Race, Commander of Post 4725 in Montana. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I have a motion and a second to approve B-9.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Comrades, the Committee felt that we shouldn't recommend B-9, because we would create smaller Districts. There is nothing to suggest that the current by-law is broken. It is worth mentioning as it relates to this proposed amendment that there had been no Districts created by any Department over the past three years.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Any other discussion on the motion? Any other discussion?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ED CROUCHER (Post 6786 – Montana): This is a thing that does affect many of us rural sites. We are large states with rural population, to where we would like to re-District. We would have better control. We currently have to cover 300 miles, and that is what we have to do in some places to cover. I know there are other Departments that have similar situations, but we would be able to establish better control and command if we were allowed to go ahead and reduce the requirements, get rid of the requirement to maintain 750 members.

In responding to the comments from the Committee regarding this, there has been no re-districting request. Part of that is because of that 750-member requirement. We rural states would request re-districting and allow us to better control and administer over the Districts in our Departments.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GLEN GARDNER: Commander-in-Chief, Comrades, I think there is some confusion here as to what this by-law would do. Section 401 has to do with the establishment of a brand new District. If your Department had four Districts and you want to have five, you have got to have 750 members and ten Posts to start the fifth District. But you don't have to have 750 to maintain a District.

If your Department wants to re-district and turn those four into six, there is no requirement that those other two Districts have to have 750 members. It is only if you are establishing more Districts than you presently have without splitting or the re-districting of a Department. That's what 401 covers at the present time.

If we pass the by-law the way you want to do it, then the Department could start a District with ten Posts and 100 members. I think that would be inappropriate for the organization to get to a point where you had Districts with not enough members to sustain the activities that the District should sustain.

So, I think there is nothing at all wrong. As the staff said, no new Districts have been formed for several years. There have been some Departments that have re-districted, and they have fewer Districts than

they had, or they split a District, but there are no brand new Districts that have been formed for several years in the organization.

COMRADE ED CROUCHER (Post 6786 – Montana): Could I redirect, Commander-in-Chief?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Yes, sir.

COMRADE ED CROUCHER (Post 6786 – Montana): To be completely fair, I do appreciate your comments, and we understand exactly that. What we are trying to do in reverse is to establish more Districts. I hate to get into the details, but we are seven Districts and our largest Districts are in the neighborhood of 2,000 members. We need to go ahead and decrease the size of the geographic areas. That is what we are trying to do. We have this same problem with some that don't have 750 members when we re-district by county.

This would allow us to re-district and establish more of a control and a better possibility for the District to perform their job. That is the intention of the motion, comrade, to give us an option to go ahead and do a better job than what we do. We are not going to try to create multiple Districts everywhere and in every state. These larger rural states need some help to redress this question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir. Any other discussion? If not, we will vote in the usual manner. If you vote "aye", you are voting to approve. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The motion fails.

Any other questions or discussions? If not, we will deal with the set asides.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Thank you, Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I am sorry.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE BUFORD MAPLES (Post 5985 – California): I move the approval of B-16.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have a motion to adopt B-16; is that correct?

COMRADE BUFORD MAPLES (Post 5985 – California): That is correct.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I need a second. Is there a second? Is there a second? The motion is dead.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE RUSSELL CANEVARI (Post 5544 - Pennsylvania): I move to reject M-1, M-14 and M-12.

COMRADE GARY SMITH (Post 6241 - Pennsylvania): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: There are no motions to reject. You have a motion to accept. They are set aside, and we will debate it, but you can't make a motion to reject. There is no negative rejection. It is out of order, the motion to reject. That is a negative motion. We are on the set asides.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE RUSSELL CANEVARI (Post 5544 - Pennsylvania): Commander-in-Chief, it is my understanding we have already set them aside?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Yes.

COMRADE RUSSELL CANEVARI (Post 5544 - Pennsylvania): Then we debate them?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: They will be debated, yes. Larry.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: I thank you. Commander-in-Chief, why don't we begin with the set asides B-14 and M-12. Let's take those jointly because they both deal with the same issue. I will read B-14, since it is the one of importance probably to this convention.

B-14 was recommended by the National By-Laws Study Group and proposed by the Commander-in-Chief.

Article VI – National, Section 606 – National Dues.

Amend Section 606 – National Dues. National By-Laws by replacing the entire section with the following:

“The National Organization dues shall be \$21.50 for every member (except Life Members) of a Post in good standing, which includes an annual subscription to the VFW Magazine.

“When collected, \$18.50 of the National dues will be retained by the National Organization, \$1.00 will be rebated back to the Department to which the member belongs and \$2.00 distributed as outlined in Section 606 of the Manual of Procedure.”

M-12, in connection with that, recommended by the National By-Laws Study Group and proposed by the Commander-in-Chief.

Article VI – National, Section 606 – National Dues.

Amend Section 606 – National Dues, Manual of Procedure, by replacing the first sentence with the following:

“Nineteen dollars and fifty cents of the \$21.50 National Dues will be distributed as set forth in Section 606 of the By-Laws.”

That concludes B-14 and M-12.

Commander-in-Chief, there was some confusion in the Committee about the actual distribution of the receipts, and with the Chief's permission I would like to ask the Quartermaster General Bob Greene to come forward and explain the distribution that will be carried out if this amendment passes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Very well. Bob.

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL GREENE: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I have often said the dues structure in the VFW is the most complicated dues in the membership business, and this is indicative of that. Right now, the dues for National Headquarters is eleven dollars and fifty cents. Two dollars of that eleven dollars and fifty cents is allocated to Veterans Service. Then one dollar goes back to the Departments. National nets eight dollars and fifty cents.

Under the ten-dollar dues increase proposal, six dollars additional will go to the Veterans Service. One dollar additional will go back to the Departments, and three dollars of the ten dollars will be allocated per the budget and per the National Council of Administration as they deem necessary. That results in a total of eight dollars of the National dues going to Veterans Service. Two dollars is going back to the Department, and eleven dollars is going to the National budget.

If I could add one more clarification. Over the past year, of course, we have heard many objections about the dues increase, but one that is consistent is that National needs to cut their budget. Comrades, National

has been cutting the budget since 2004. We had 233 employees on the payroll in 2004. Today we have 191. We have cut 43 people, 5 of which are Director level and above. We have made numerous other cuts that total \$8 million.

I addressed the Council on Saturday and said, "Folks, we are about out of ideas to cut without impacting our service to members."

So, I challenge the Council to come to the meeting in August with some ideas where we can cut, because, folks, we are about at our wit's end where we can cut. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Quartermaster General. We are open for discussion just one more time. Any discussion on B-14 and M-12?

Microphone No. 1 I think was up first.

COMRADE RUSSELL CANEVARI (Post 5544 - Pennsylvania): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, delegates to our National Convention, my name is Russell Canevari, Department of Pennsylvania Commander. I have talked in numerous places and numerous people and no one is denying that there should be an increase, but what they are saying is it is too much in one lump sum. Therefore, I stand to reject B-14 and M-12. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Microphone No. 2, I think he was next.

COMRADE MIKE MUSGROVE (Post 2350 – Nevada): I am Mike Musgrove, a delegate from Post 2350, Nevada. I rise in opposition to the dues increase. I do believe along with the other comrades it is too much too quick. I come from a relatively small Post. We are a little less than 300 members. It is an old Post. We are over 80 years old.

We live in a small community, so we just don't have a lot of people to go out and get. We have annual members that for some reason do not want to go Life at any time, and we have got about 25 of them. If we don't knock on their door in December, we don't see them. We go knock on their door and they hand us a check.

I feel if this were phased in over a three or four-year area, it might even go to 12 bucks if it were phased in to where these annual members who don't want to go Life could take this burden a little at a time instead of all at once. Thank you, sir.

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

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF "GUNNER" KENT: I am "Gunner" Kent, a delegate from Post 9972, Sierra Vista, Arizona.

Comrades, a ten-dollar increase is not going to hurt any of our members. We say we are the best veterans organization, the best service organization, and if we are going to be that, we have to pay for it. Comrades, we have 590,000 A, B and C Life Members out of 1.3 million. Of those 590,000 the Quartermaster General receives three dollars and fifty cents per year for their membership. It costs the Quartermaster General over eight dollars a year to send those veterans their magazine.

A few years ago, we raised the new members that wanted to become a Life Member's dues, and everybody said, "Oh, if we do that nobody will join Life." Well, guess what? They sure did join Life.

The comrade says \$40.00 is too much. We have people, comrades, that go to the Costco and Sam's Club and pay \$50.00 so they can get peanut butter cheaper. We are saying we are not going to have our

members pay \$10.00 more so that we can provide the best service work for the veterans of this country? We have to be very, very serious about this. If you want a Cadillac organization, you can't have a Ford budget. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Microphone No. 2, and then we will work back to No. 1.

As you know, comrades, I am John Hamilton, a member of Post 7909, Department of Florida and also the Commander-in-Chief. I rise to come to speak on a subject near and dear to my heart. You know, this organization was founded in 1899 to do service work for the military, veterans and their families. That's why we were founded, that's why we are here.

You know, I belong to an organization where my dues are \$100.00 a year, and they are voting this week to go to \$150.00. The Elk's Lodge in my town is \$75.00. The Moose Lodge is \$200.00. Nowhere in the world do we get the services that you get from this organization for the money we pay. Our average dues is \$34.00, \$35.00 a year. How much? I am sorry, but \$26.88 is our average dues. No one in this room can convince me that \$10.00 is going to run anybody out the back door.

If we go up \$10.00 and become \$40.00 a year or \$36.00 a year, or \$50.00 a year, we are still the cheapest guys in town. We have sold ourselves too cheaply for too long.

We need this money to start a positive cash flow required to take care of service work. If you walk the halls of Congress, my good comrades, and talk to the Senators and Legislators, they will tell you we have the most active, best veterans legislative office in the country. It has to be funded. That office in Washington exists for one reason, and one reason alone. That is to take care of veterans, military and veterans' families legislation.

If you can convince me of anybody that can't afford \$10.00 more to belong, then you should take care of them out of your Relief Fund. That is what you have it for. If they are that hard up, help them. But I can tell you rank and file ten bucks is not going to make any difference.

For Christ's sake, guys and gals, let's put our money where our mouth is and provide for the future, and let's take care of America's heroes.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GARY SMITH (Post 6241 - Pennsylvania): I move to second the motion to reject B-14 and M-12.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: That is out of order. We are still under discussion.

Microphone No. 3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BOB WALLACE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Bob Wallace, a delegate from Post 9503, Bayville, New Jersey. The sign in front of us, I think, says it all. "No One Does More For Veterans; No One Does More For Veterans." No one does more for veterans than the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Over 100,000 veterans and their families were helped by our service officers throughout the country, and they recouped over \$3 billion for America's veterans. Who else can they go to? They come to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Who did they go to on the 16 military bases? They go to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Who does Secretary Hagel, announced this morning, and said thank you for the work that you are doing in helping

and transitioning service members in filing their claims, the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I am sure the Secretary of Veterans Affairs will say the same thing. We have an excellent program. We have to keep it going. Now, six dollars of this ten dollars goes to the Veterans Service Fund. That pays for our training, annual training. That is 80 hours of training for every accredited service officer in a regional office. That is 80 hours of training. Some of them get even more if they need it. That is 80 hours a year of training. It costs money. In addition to that, we give grants out of that fund. Many Departments in this room are beneficiaries of that fund.

If this resolution passes, all the Departments will be beneficiaries of that fund. Now, \$3.00 for the National Organization that will be budgeted by the Council of Administration. You know that every state has a representative on that Council. There is no reason that somebody can say, well, that person doesn't represent me. They do. They approve the budget. Then, \$1.00 goes back to the Department. My comrades, we are the best; we want to stay the best.

I was at a Department Convention a couple of weeks ago, and a fellow came up to me and he said, "I am against this dues increase. I can't afford \$10.00. That is crazy." I tried to talk to him. He said, "That is too much money for me. I have other priorities in my life to pay \$10.00 more." I said, "I understand."

About two hours later, I stopped at the bar and lo and behold who was sitting next to me but that individual. He had ordered two beers. It cost him \$9.50. I said to him, "How is your beer?" He said, "Good and cold."

My comrades, something is wrong with that picture when a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars joined this organization because you wanted to take care of your fellow veterans and make sure somebody takes care of you in your time of need. We can't cut our way to success. It just can't happen. We found that out on a National level.

All the economists said you have to have a balanced approach, and that is what ended up being how the Congress of the United States had a balanced approach. My comrades, we have cut and we have cut, and we have cut. We need to put money into the treasury.

I stand in support of this by-law change. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Bob.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE RON LATTIN (Post 5061 – Colorado): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ron Lattin, Post 5061, Department of Colorado. I stand in favor of B-14 and M-12. Comrades, we have to pass this motion. I will tell you why. How many have sons and daughters and grandchildren in harm's way today? How many are going to come back here and won't have legs, won't have arms, they don't know how to get their benefits that we have fought hard to get? We need these service officers to take care of this. That's one of the ways we are going to take care of it.

We cannot go out to the military person today in harm's way if we are not helping them. Our job is to help every veteran out there. Not only that, there is a lot of Departments in here right now that are going to lose service officers if we don't get this job done. So, we need to pass this motion. Like

I said, these are for our kids, that we fought for all these programs. Thank you, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, comrade.
Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GARY MARQUARDT (Post 5166 – Iowa): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Gary Marquardt, Post 5166, Department Commander of Iowa. I rise in favor of the dues increase. I would like to put this in perspective. Everybody is speaking about \$10.00. How many of you people went out yesterday and had a bill that was \$1.97, and you told them to keep the change?

People, this dues increase is less than three cents a day. That is three cents a day. There is not one person in this audience, excuse my French, who doesn't piss away three cents a day. I think you can say that for all the other members. We throw enough away to cover this dues increase for our elderly, our people in nursing homes, our people overseas. We can cover it easily.

If you want to keep the backbone of this organization alive, it is serving veterans. If three cents a day in your conviction is too much to give to keep serving our veterans, then you are in the wrong organization. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Commander.
Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE KEVIN STUART (Post 2571 – Vermont): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am the Department Service Officer. I cover not only Vermont for all of Canada. I am against this. I come from a state where there is a small population, an old population who doesn't have a lot of extra money. They can't afford this. I believe that cuts could be made in other parts of this budget. I believe that we can go out and find money and other resources to fund the Service Officers because my office is scheduled to be closed, so people will probably say you are nuts for doing this. I really feel this is the wrong thing to do at this time. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, comrade.
Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JOHN HOLLAND (Post 1 - Colorado): I rise in favor of B-14 and M-12. That is for two reasons. One, our Service Officers bring money to our states, and they bring money to our states because it helps our Service Officers, it helps veterans. They help veterans and they need the money they are going to receive, and that money goes into the communities.

Item number two, no one does more for veterans. If we don't pay for this now, when will we pay for it? Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, comrade.
Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RUSSELL CANEVARI (Post 5544 - Pennsylvania): I will agree no one does more for veterans than the VFW. I will take offense to the association of the VFW with Costco's and Walmart. I will tell you at this time I don't know what other states pay for the American Legion and the DAV, which I happen to be members of. They are not in line with the increase that we have right now.

I, like myself and the gentleman or comrade that spoke before from Vermont, solicited 24 Districts in the Department of Pennsylvania. I will

tell you this: I paid very good attention to our last debates between the Republican candidate and the Democratic candidate. One thing I did learn, whether you are a Republican or a Democrat, that the Department of Pennsylvania per capita has the oldest people collectively in the United States.

I traveled to 24 Districts, and they were telling me right now if this happens they are done, plain and simple. When I contacted members that I knew up there, I came with an alternative plan. Why can't we raise this two dollars this year, and two dollars next year, and two dollars the next year? Tighten the belts a little now and you will be rewarded later. It wouldn't be the animosity, it wouldn't be all these comrades in line.

No one disagrees that there should be an increase, but \$10.00 with the sequestration and everything else that is going on in the United States, \$10.00 is a hard pill to swallow, and especially I take no pride in coming here standing and arguing with people that I care about, but I am telling you I am representing 95,000 people, comrades, in the Department of Pennsylvania, and this is the message. Thank you for your time, thank you for indulging me. Vote your conscience. That is all I can tell you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Commander.
Microphone No. 3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GLEN GARDNER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Glen Gardner, a delegate from VFW Post 3359, Department of Texas. We had some discussion in the Committee yesterday, and we have had some on the floor today. Comrades, I came to my first National Convention of Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1978, and I have been to every convention since then.

In 1978, I also bought my Life Membership in this organization for \$125.00. I would venture to guess that less than ten percent of the people in this room are annual dues paying members. The organization has 76 percent of our membership that are Life Members. We are up here debating an issue that concerns 24 percent of the membership. I don't know how any comrades in the Department can get up and say I represent 95,000 members that are against this due increase, when only 33,000 of that 95,000 would even be affected.

I think the real honest truth is what will the money be used for? Service Officer work is a key to the success and the future of this organization. Our Service Officers, whether on a Post, District, or Department level, are the face of the Veterans of Foreign Wars to most veterans in the field. That's what they know about the organization. They go to the VA or they go to a Service Officer for help and assistance, and they need to be there. Every Department Commander has a piece of paper that was passed out before this meeting. I believe everybody needs to look at it.

Somebody at the Committee meeting yesterday said we need a plan of what we are going to do with this money before we pass it. Comrades, there is a plan. The Departments will receive, if this passes, \$930,000 from now on based on last year's membership. That is almost \$1 million a year that will go to the Departments of this organization for their Service Officer work, if this passes.

If it doesn't pass, several of the smaller Departments, as has been brought up already, based on the subsidies that will be paid out in 2014

will lose their Service Officer on the Department level altogether, and they are the Departments that don't have the ways and means to raise that fund.

I have heard comrades say, "Let's do this two dollars at a time." Comrades, like a lot of you in this room, I have been involved, as I have said, in every discussion that had to do with dues increases over the years, and it didn't matter if it was two dollars or ten dollars, if we brought up two dollars somebody would be on the microphone saying we ought to do it fifty cents a year.

Now, ten dollars is not going to hurt any of our dues paying members. Most of our members-at-large are dues paying members and most of them support this organization better than any of the other members of the organization.

I stand in favor of this proposal. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

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

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE ED CROUCHER (Post 6786 – Montana): I am one of those small states, and everything that has been said is true. However, I want to tell you without being known that we went out and we passed this resolution in our Department Convention 100 percent. There was not a dissenting vote on the thing, even though the previous Council of Administration was very contentious. We are one of the small states that are affected.

Beyond that, this is something we have to do. As an organization that professes to want to go out and take care of our veterans and the veterans' population is, by the way, younger, the ones we want to reach out to, we need to do this. They are the ones that need this service. The Service Officer Program will be impacted if we do not pass this. I stand in favor of this and urge all my comrades to support this for those young veterans. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

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

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GERALD WARD (Post 5713 – Ohio): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Gerald Ward, Post 5713, Ohio. I rise in support of this By-Law change and Manual of Procedure. At no time does the VFW need an increase in dues like it does right now. Some of you comrades heard the Quartermaster General's report. Only about 40 percent of our National budget is raised through dues. Comrades, we need this money, we need the income into the National Organization for our Veterans Service work.

We need to pay our Veterans Service Officers. They need a wage increase, just like anyone else does. We train them, we give them the experience, and they move on to other veterans organizations, because the VFW simply doesn't pay them enough money. We need to walk the walk, comrades, no one does more for veterans, and a difference between ten dollars a year dues is not going to make a difference. These younger veterans don't make any difference whether they are paying \$30.00 or \$45.00 a year for their dues. They are going to stay on board and they are going to use that money.

The people that are going to benefit, our comrades, are the younger veterans. We need to help them. We definitely need this dues increase. Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DON CROUCH (Post 3150 – Virginia): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Don Crouch, a delegate from Post 3150, Virginia. I stand in opposition to this dues increase. I speak for the comrades who can't afford to come to the Department Convention, much less the National Convention. This is a 33-percent increase in dues. The cost of living index went up 1.8 percent.

If you don't live in a large city, if you don't live in a large town, if you don't have job security and you want to be a member of the VFW, more than likely you are not going to be able to afford all of this. You can afford to feed a family of four on what we are asking them to pay up front. I am talking about a family of four for a week. That is if you tweak it for a week.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: For a week, is that what you said, ten dollars a week?

COMRADE DON CROUCH (Post 3150 – Virginia): You are not asking for \$10.00 up front, you are asking for about \$40.00 up front, when you add it all together, between National and the Department per capita, and the Post dues. We are not paying over a course of a year, we are not paying three cents a day, we are not paying eighty-three cents a month. We are paying it all up front.

We do need a dues increase. I don't think anybody will say anything different. We need to support our Service Officers, but I think this is a little bit too much, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you for your comments.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE GLEN TILLEY (Post 2391 – Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I rise in favor of this, and I want to dispel what I call negative fantasies. Many people have negative fantasies in that, well, people won't renew because we raised the dues. I anticipated a dues increase two years at my home Post, and we raised our dues from \$35.00 to \$50.00 in anticipation of an annual dues raise.

Following that raise that we did, our membership increased, and our Life Membership increased. This immediate past year, my home Post increased by 211 members. We went from 739 to 950, at \$50 for annual dues. So, please, let this dispel the negative fantasies. We need this and it is for our veterans. Thank you.

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

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE JIMMY WALLACE (Post 11079 – South Carolina): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Jimmy Wallace, a delegate of Post 11079 with the Department of South Carolina, also a former National Veterans Service employee, and a past Service Officer with experience for the last 26 years, and I stand against this motion.

I think it is a little backwards the way you have got it figured out. I understand six dollars to National Veterans Service, three dollars to the Council and one dollar back to the Department for service work. That is backwards. It should be six dollars back to the state. In my particular state, we can only afford X number of dollars to have a Service Officer, and it is

not very much, and I can tell you \$25,000, because we don't have the money to do it.

The other thing I am looking at, I am the Immediate Past Post Commander with a Post with 142 members. I have already had members tell me if we raise these dues they are walking. It is too much, and more of it has to come back to the state. That is where the real work is, in the state, in the trenches, taking care of veterans, their dependents and surviving spouses every day. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE KELLY GODDARD (Post 4484 – West Virginia): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Kelly Goddard. I looked at everybody lined up here at these microphones, and if we take all of them we will probably be here until midnight, Chief. So, I call for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I need a second.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK: I am John Gwizdak, a delegate from Post 5080, Department of Georgia, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: All those in favor of the question will say "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

Now, we will vote on B-14 and M-12. All in favor, please say "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE VALENTIN OBREGON (Post 3568 - Alabama): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Valentin Obregon, Commander of the State of Alabama. We request a roll-call vote.

FROM THE FLOOR: I second it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: That is not how it works. You have to have ten members of ten different Departments requesting a roll-call vote. You have Alabama so far. Come to the microphone and identify yourself.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RUSSELL CANEVARI (Post 5544 - Pennsylvania): The Department of Pennsylvania, Russell Canevari.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: You do it as an individual. The Department doesn't do it. You do it.

COMRADE RUSSELL CANEVARI (Post 5544 - Pennsylvania): Russell Canevari, the Department of Pennsylvania.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have two.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE GARY WELLESLEY (Post 3031 - Arkansas): Gary Wellesley, Department of Arkansas, let's do it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: That is three.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RONALD SMITH (Post 8892 - Massachusetts): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Ronald Smith, Department Commander from Massachusetts, I call for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: That is four.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JASON CARROLL (Post 3973 - Oregon): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Jason Carroll, Department of Oregon, and I call for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have five.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE KEVIN STUART (Post 2571 - Vermont): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Kevin Stuart, Department of Vermont, I call for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: That is six.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DONALD RULE (Post 5065 – Michigan): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Donald Rule, Post 5065, Sheridan, Michigan. I call for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: That is seven.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DAVID OLSON (Post 6859 - Maine): Commander-in-Chief, I am Dave Olson, Commander of the Department of Maine, and I call for a roll-call vote.

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

COMRADE MICHAEL PASCAL (Post 9486 - New York): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, my name is Michael Pascal, Post 9486, Department of New York, I call for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: That is nine.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RODNEY BURNE (Post 3477 – South Carolina): Commander-in-Chief, I am Rodney Burne, Post 3477, State Commander of South Carolina, I call for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: That is ten. That's all we need.

The Adjutant General.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades, we are going to start the roll call in five minutes. The Chief says three minutes, comrades. The roll call will start with the National Officers and then go to the National Council members, and then the Past Commanders-in-Chief, and then the Departments will then be last.

The Parliamentarian will read the rules of the By-Law on casting the votes. Please, all Department Commanders listen to what is in the By-Laws Manual.

THE PARLIAMENTARIAN: I just want to remind everybody of a couple of things as far as the delegate strength is concerned. Under our By-Laws, Section 621, the delegates -- well, let me back up a step. Under our By-Laws, each delegate is entitled to his vote and he is not bound by any unit rule. That was right in the Convention Rules that we just read.

Secondly, the Department Commander shall be vested and directed to cast the entire voting strength of the Department. That means he votes whatever votes there are, subject to the will of the delegation present. So, the Department Commander casts his votes subject to the will of those delegates that are actually here in this hall voting. Thank you.

(As Adjutant General Kent called the roll, the following votes were cast:)

NATIONAL OFFICERS

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Commander-in-Chief, John E. Hamilton	X	
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, William A. Thien	X	
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, John W. Stroud	X	
Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent	X	
Quartermaster General, Robert B. Greene	X	
Judge Advocate General, David B. Norris	X	
Surgeon General, Dr. James R. "Doc" Tuorila	X	
National Chaplain, Rev. William J. Bleiler	X	
National Chief of Staff, William R. Kirsop	X	
Inspector General, Carl J. Kaelin	X	

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Alabama, George H. Jones	(Votes with Department)	
Alaska, Robert A. Myles	X	
Arizona, Timothy M. Borland	X	
Arkansas, Michael K. Nuckolls	X	
California, Denis F. Wells	X	
Colorado, Ronald J. Lattin	X	
Connecticut, Stanley W. Borusiewicz, Jr.	X	
Delaware, John R. Morrow	X	
District of Columbia, Herman C. Salley	X	
Europe, Peter J. Mascetti	X	
Florida, Allen E. Hall	X	
Georgia, Dean E. Smith	X	
Hawaii, Norbert E. Enos	X	
Idaho, John R. Crotinger	X	
Illinois, Jules D. Spindler	X	
Indiana, Richard M. Faulk	X	
Iowa, Darrell A. Blasberg	X	
Kansas, J.T. Plummer	X	
Kentucky, Brian J. Duffy	X	
Latin America, Jose A. Claudio		
Louisiana, Federico M. Arends, III	X	
Maine, Thomas R. Lussier	(Votes with Department)	
Maryland, Jack P. Lewis		X
Massachusetts, Roland W. Gendron	(Votes with Post)	
Michigan, Jack H. Pray	X	
Minnesota, Donald W. Nix	X	
Mississippi, Johnnie L. Richard		
Missouri, Jessie L. Jones	X	
Montana, Timothy C. Peters	X	
Nebraska, Dan G. Petersen	X	
Nevada, Herman C. Hagen, Jr.	X	
New Hampshire, David L. Ouellette	X	
New Jersey, Otto A. Gollon	X	
New Mexico, Allan W. Kuchinsky	X	
New York, James F. McNally		X
North Carolina, James C. Goins, Jr.	X	
North Dakota, Dale T. Ronning	X	
Ohio, Richard R. Uzl, Jr.	X	

Oklahoma, Harlan J. Bjorgo	X	
Oregon, Bert W. Key	X	
Pacific Areas, Gerald L. Kraus	(Votes with Department)	
Pennsylvania, Robert E. Eiler		X
Rhode Island, Allen C. Wagonblott, Jr.	X	
South Carolina, Frank M. Fogner	X	
South Dakota, Russel L. Dramstad	(Votes with Post)	
Tennessee, John H. Scott	X	
Texas, Dennis M. Barber	X	
Utah, Brent W. Neilson	X	
Vermont, Malcolm MacAskill		X
Virginia, James K. Martin	X	
Washington, Jerry W. Herker	X	
West Virginia, Charles E. Haney	X	
Wisconsin, Allen W. Kochenderfer	X	
Wyoming, James Pedersen	X	
<u>PAST COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF</u>		
Edward S. Banas, Sr.	X	
Billy Ray Cameron (Excused)		
John M. Carney	X	
George R. Cramer	X	
James R. Currieo (Absent)		
Richard L. DeNoyer	X	
Richard L. Eubank	X	
Arthur J. Fellwock (Absent)		
John Furgess	X	
Glen M. Gardner, Jr.	X	
John F. Gwizdak	X	
Robert E. Hansen (Absent)		
Walter G. Hogan	X	
Allen F. "Gunner" Kent	X	
Gary L. Kurpius	X	
George J. Lisicki	X	
John E. Moon	X	
James R. Mueller	X	
James E. Nier	X	
Clifford G. Olson, Jr.	X	
Thomas A. Pouliot	X	
Larry W. Rivers	X	
John W. Smart	X	
R.D. Smith, Jr.	X	
Paul A. Spera (Not voting)		
Norman G. Staab (Absent)		
John J. Stang (Not voting)		
John S. Staum	X	
Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr.	X	
Robert E. Wallace	(Votes with Post)	
Dr. John Wasylik	X	
<u>DEPARTMENT COMMANDERS</u>		
Alabama, Valentin R. Obregon		234
Alaska, Rodney D. Reno	149	

Arizona, Anthony D. Mangin	381	
Arkansas, Gary W. Wellesley	61	153
California, Edward L. Ford	380	221
Colorado, Kirk R. Rosa	250	
Connecticut, Robert J. Froelick	184	
Delaware, Benjamin P. Chudzik, Jr.	151	5
District of Columbia, Arne Shaw	36	
Europe, James D. Vergott	273	
Florida, Chester H. Pyatt	798	
Georgia, Ronald E. Keller	297	
Hawaii, Joseph F. Bragg	80	
Idaho, Glenn M. Nielsen	96	17
Illinois, Matthew M. Mihelcic	534	63
Indiana, Gregory L. Baker	622	
Iowa, Gary R. Marquardt	124	
Kansas, Lynn W. Rolf, III	175	149
Kentucky, Joe L. Schnitterbaum	261	30
Latin American/Caribbean, Jose A. Claudio	33	
Louisiana, Philip R. Volz	117	29
Maine, David C. Olson		99
Maryland, H. Steve Mason	2	273
Massachusetts, Ronald A. Smith	91	195
Michigan, Ronald L. Devereaux	471	25
Minnesota, Frank E. Presfield	302	64
Mississippi, Billy F. Perkins	114	12
Missouri, Thomas W. Mundell	264	131
Montana, Francis D. Croucher	64	
Nebraska, Harold Schlender		206
Nevada, Robert J. Garlow	108	4
New Hampshire, James J. Golden	74	8
New Jersey, Arthur R. Taylor	255	
New Mexico, Mike A.C. Sing, Jr.	167	
New York, Michael Pascal	88	167
North Carolina, Ernest E. Allis	165	10
North Dakota, Emery C. Fisher	105	
Ohio, Ralph K. Jeffers	659	
Oklahoma, Jeff W. Harris	194	23
Oregon, Jason Carroll	107	23
Pacific Areas, Shawn C. Watson	126	
Pennsylvania, Russell R. Canevari		685
Rhode Island, Gary W. Maddocks	60	
South Carolina, Rodney J. Burne	92	96
South Dakota, Darold D. Couch	216	7
Tennessee, Harry L. Carroll	211	1
Texas, Sylvia C. Sanchez	683	
Utah, Douglas R. Larson	82	
Vermont, Russell W. Bibens	7	89
Virginia, Christopher E. Birch	168	263
Washington, Theodore E. Streete	226	
West Virginia, William L. Lambert	225	
Wisconsin, Renee L. Simpson	252	7

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Commander-in-Chief, that concludes the roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Stand by while we get the count.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades, the roll-call vote is 10,713 yes; 3,292 no. That is a two-thirds majority. It passes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The motion is carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, comrades. There was a little confusion. If you asked for one to be set aside that we don't have, please let us know. According to our records B-7 and M-1 had been asked to be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Is there any discussion on B-7?

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA (Post 9083 – Maryland): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Victor Fuentealba, a delegate from Post 9083, Maryland. I rise in opposition to B-7, and I hope that after I go into my explanation the rest of the delegates will agree. This actually started at last year's convention when there was a recommendation by the National By-Laws study Group to change the structure of every Post so that the Post Advocate, the Post Surgeon would be appointed by the Commander and not elected. That was defeated. It is back before you again this year in a somewhat similar fashion. I want to point out the fact that sometimes the cure is worse than the disease.

In this particular case, this recommendation from the National By-Laws Study Group came, because apparently there were a group of smaller Posts that were having difficulty filling the elective positions.

The resolution that was introduced last year would have made it a voluntary issue on the part of the Post if they decided to elect or appoint the Judge Advocate and the Surgeon, and in that case the Chaplain.

This proposal that is before you today does not give you the option. This would affect every single Post in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It changes the structure of every Post by giving the Commander complete control over his offices because he will be appointing six officers of his group of officers. I don't think that is a good suggestion. I think it is not going to help our Posts.

I think in most cases it is going to affect our Posts adversely, because you are giving the Post Commander too much authority over controlling the activities of the Posts. That is why I say I think that the proposed cure is worse than the disease, because this applies not only to the Posts that are having this problem, but it applies to every single Post in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I urge you to reject this.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I will read the staff's comments concerning B-7.

"Recommend approval. Many Posts have difficulty filling all of their elected positions which are of lesser priority at the Post level to that of the Commander's positions. Making these positions appointed should help this situation."

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

COMRADE ROBERT WEISS: (Post 2406 – Michigan) I am Robert Weiss, a delegate from Post 2406, Michigan. I am in favor of this motion,

and we have to look back at last year. Last year we had the Chaplain, the Surgeon and Judge Advocate as appointed if they wanted to.

This year, what we did was we put the Chaplain back in there. They have to be elected. The Judge Advocate, the Surgeon General can then be appointed. They don't have a separate vote on the Post level. You go up to the District and the Department levels where you have your favorite people in there and they vote. At the Post level, the Post floor votes. So, I am in favor of this.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Comrade.
Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GARY RACE (Post 4725 - Montana): I encourage you to pass this by-law change. In Montana, over 50 percent of our Posts have less than 50 members, many, many of them in the teens and twenties scattered all over the State. These Posts are fighting for survival. Let's give them something that is going to help them to survive instead of giving them a set of By-Laws that they can't live with and then we go in and suspend or pull their charters. That is not the way to improve our organization. Let's help them.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, comrade.
Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE MIKE MUSGROVE (Post 2350 - Nevada): I rise in opposition to this. We have been hearing for the last hour of how enthusiastic our membership is, that they are going to jump right out here and take this extra dues increase. If they are that enthusiastic, if our membership is that enthusiastic, there is not any reason why any Post in this country or in the world can't get enough members at a meeting to elect the positions that should be elected officers. So, I rise in opposition to this. I don't believe in appointing officers, other than the guard and Committee members. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.
Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 – Florida): Commander-in-Chief, I am Benny Bachand, a delegate from Post 4287, Orlando, Florida, and a member of the National By-Laws Study Group. One of our responsibilities as an organization is to continue to look at the structure of our organization to make it more feasible for us to operate as a Post, a District and Department at the National level. Certainly, that is what this Committee has done.

We have listened to the delegates last year who said to us that they wanted to make sure that the Chaplain was included as an elected position because of the responsibilities. All we are doing here is to modernize our organization, to make it easier for a Post to operate. I agree with Rob Weiss when he said this doesn't alter the voting strength on the Post level and it doesn't control the Post Commander any more than where it presently is. This allows us to be more flexible, allows our Posts to eliminate two positions from our elected position, and gives us more people to serve on Committees and do other things that benefits the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

If we truly are modernizing, and by the vote of our dues increase, 10,000 of our members said let's move forward. This is another way for the organization to move forward. Thank you, Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Benny.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE CHARINE ZSALUDKO: (Post 7609 – Ohio) I am Charine Zsaludko, a delegate from Post 7609, Ohio. We have Posts and Auxiliaries, big, large, in between. Those Posts that are small, all we will be doing is adding them longer time to linger. They need to either go out and work, or partner with another Post that will help them work. We need to maintain those votes. We need to maintain the vote, that is what democracy is all about. You keep letting people get appointed, the same people are in there all the time. There is no new blood. I thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you. Any more discussion?

Microphone No. 1. This is the last time.

COMRADE JAMES GOINS (Post 9811 - North Carolina): I am James Goins, National Council member and also a member of the By-Laws Committee. Yesterday we talked about it and I heard a gentleman earlier saying we are giving the Commander too much power. In no way do we give a Commander too much power, such as the Chief. The floor can change anything.

So, when you sit there and are saying you are giving the Commander too much power, the Commander actually holds your meetings and keeps everything in order, but the body is what controls is. With that said in closing, I call for a vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: That is all right. You are the last speaker anyway, comrade. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of “aye”; those opposed. The “ayes” have it. The motion is carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Thank you, Commander. We had a request that M-1 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of “aye”; those opposed. The “ayes” have it. The motion is carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I think some people got mixed up on some of these. We also had a request that B-12 be set aside. B-12, you have in the book. B-12, basically all it does is change the name of the appointed Committee to handle a Post that is in trouble from Trustees to Administrative Committee.

The reason that we did that, that section along with some other sections, is because some Trustees have run into problems with the law in some states, because they were Trustees. Even though they weren't Trustees of the Post, our By-Laws said they were Trustees and the State law says as a Trustee you are responsible for the fiscal responsibility of that Post. So, some our poor Trustees, we may have a couple here, have been sued by banks and other entities because they were supposed to be handling the default Post, and they actually had nothing to do with the expenditure of their funds, but they were sued because of this.

B-12, did anybody set aside B-12? If not, B-12 is on the floor, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have B-12. A motion to approve B-12, you will signify by the usual sign of “aye”; those opposed. The motion is carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RIVERS: Commander-in-Chief, that concludes the work of the National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and

Ritual Committee. Thank you very much to the Committee and to the National By-Laws Study Group, who were so helpful, and to Adjutant General Kent and his staff, to Kevin and his staff, and the Quartermaster General, and to all the members of the Committee that worked so hard to present this report to the Convention floor.

Commander-in-Chief, thank you very much for the appointment as Chairman. It has been a real pleasure working with you this year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The Convention Rules Committee, also the By-Laws Committee, at this time you are discharged, and to both of you thank you so much for your hard work.

At this time we will have the report of the Committee on Finance and Internal Organization by Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Commander-in-Chief, the Committee on Finance and Internal Organization met on Sunday, July 21st, 2013. Vice-Chairman was Past Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas.

The meeting opened by myself at 1400 hours. We had a Salute to the Flag and I welcomed all in attendance. Vice-Chairman Ed Banas read the thank you letter from the Commanders-in-Chief, and I asked all Past Commanders-in-Chief be recognized, followed by applause, and introduced the VFW staff member, Pat Botbyl, who conducted roll call. The roll call was as follows:

Present 45, absent 3, 4 excused.

We had two Resolutions to consider. I read Resolution 201 along with the National recommendation to reject. A motion was moved and properly seconded to approve the motion. After a brief discussion by several members, a vote was taken to approve. The motion was defeated. Resolution 201 is rejected.

Also Resolution 202 was read, and I explained that in accordance with the National directive the motion is out of order, therefore, there was no action to be taken.

Would you like me to read the Resolutions?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Yes.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Resolution 201: "The Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States honors the service and sacrifice of all military service members, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or gender; and

"WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States recognizes the sacrifice made by the dependents of our military service members, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or gender; and

"WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States appreciates the significant contribution our Ladies and Men's Auxiliaries make to our veterans and their families; and

"WHEREAS, two nationally recognized, but separate auxiliaries has divided our dependents with questions of disparate treatment, and requires significant duplication of administrative effort, resources, and manpower, now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that the Commander-in-Chief sponsor a By-law amendment that will abolish Article XIII, the Men's Auxiliary, amend Article XI, Section 1102, eligibility requirements to include males, and change the organization's name to 'The Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States', to be voted on by the members of the National Convention no later than the close of the 117th National Convention."

This was submitted by the Department of West Virginia.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Resolution 202 is ruled out of order, and 201 is recommended for rejection. The Committee is discharged. Thank you for a wonderful job.

Next is the Report of the Committee on General Resolutions. The Chairman is Past Commander-in-Chief Wally Hogan.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOGAN: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief John. I would like to recognize the Vice-Chairmen that served on my Committee. We were distinguished to have the four heavyweights of the Past Commanders-in-Chief. We had Richard Eubank from Oregon; Richard DeNoyer from Massachusetts; and John Moon from Ohio.

We also were privileged to have a representative of the National Organization, Dan Parker. We were charged with Resolutions R-301 through R-310.

At this time I would like to read those that we approved. They are as follows: R-304, Cold War Service Medal.

R-310, which is Enoura Maru tragedy commemorative marker at the Punchbowl Cemetery.

I would move for adoption of those Resolutions.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I have a motion to approve 304 and 310. Any discussion or question on the motion and the second? If not, we will signify by the usual voting sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOGAN: Commander, it was the recommendation of the Committee to reject the following Resolutions: R-301, R-302, R-303, R-305, R-306, R-307, R-308 and R-309. The Committee's recommendation was to reject.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: You have heard the report of the Committee that those Resolutions be rejected.

COMRADE DEAN WYSE (Post 12043 - Arizona): I make a motion to accept 303.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I have a motion to accept Resolution 303. We now need a second. It dies for the lack of a second.

COMRADE BILL THOMSON (Post 6192 - New Jersey): I will second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: All right. The motion has been made and seconded to accept Resolution 303.

Discussion on the motion.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DEAN WYSE (Post 12043 - Arizona): Resolution 303 was to include the 74 sailors killed on USS Frank E. Evans that was just outside the Vietnam waters, and the misinformation, the reason for the rejection, it was set on the other side of the openings, almost a thousand miles away. That is the reason for the rejection.

I submitted proof or literature and stuff to prove that it was close to the Vietnam waters, or close to the combat zone.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Anybody else on Resolution 303?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOGAN: On 303, this was discussed in detail at our Committee meeting, and as far as the DoD is concerned, that this happening was in excess of 1,200 miles from qualifications for the Vietnam Service Medal.

A few of the members of the Committee met with the representative from the National Organization, and we feel their problem is they have got to get this resolved with the DoD.

If this had been submitted, saying recommend that the National Organization review this with the Department of Defense, and to get that corrected, we would have acted on that. But, unfortunately, it makes no reference to it being set aside or changed, so that it reflects what I just briefly stated.

So, for that reason right now the Department of Defense shows this in excess of 1,200 miles from the Vietnam shores. So, it would not qualify for the Vietnam Service Medal. We feel that the makers of this motion should resubmit next year asking us to take this up with the DoD to see if we can get their records corrected.

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

COMRADE LARRY MAHER (Post 7356 - Missouri): I had the dubious distinction of being an investigator on the Melborne Evans collision. That is correct, it was 1,200 miles from the coast of Vietnam. They were engaged in a company exercise and candidly there was no connection in that exercise with operations in Vietnam.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you. Anybody else on Resolution 303?

Microphone No. 1 for the second time.

COMRADE DEAN WYSE (Post 12043 - Arizona): usnavalawards.com, which is the Chief of Naval Operations website, on that website they determined that the Frank E. Evans, and the various ships that came to the rescue of the Evans, all deserve the Vietnam Service Medal. This is the Chief of navaloperations.com website.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you. Now, any other discussion on 303? If you vote "aye", you are voting to accept 303. All in favor will signify by saying "aye"; those opposed. The motion fails.

Now, we will go to Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JIM WAINSCOAT (Post 628 - South Dakota): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I want to thank you once again for your service this past year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.

COMRADE JIM WAINSCOAT (Post 628 - South Dakota): I would like to move for adoption of Resolution 306. I don't know if that is put in a motion the right way.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: That is correct. We have a motion to accept Resolution 306. Is there a second?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DAROLD COUCH (Post 3442 - South Dakota): I am Darold Couch, the Commander of South Dakota. I second it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have a motion to accept 306. Any discussion on the motion?

COMRADE JIM WAINSCOAT (Post 628 - South Dakota): Once again, this is the first time I have been up here to do this thing. So, I wrote down some things.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It is the first time for me, too. So don't be nervous and go ahead.

COMRADE JIM WAINSCOAT (Post 628 - South Dakota): I rise in support of Resolution 306. Resolution 306 is to release First Lieutenant Michael Behenna. It was rejected by the General Resolutions Committee in saying that the Resolution was going against the military judicial system. All we did in our petition and in our Resolution and in our reading material out there, is state the facts. The facts were never denied, they were always thought to be soundly put as we interpreted them by the judicial system, the military judicial system. Those facts were that there is no jury of one's peers in the military court. These are individuals in this case that were not combat veterans. There is no unanimous verdict, just a simple majority needed for conviction. This is the equivalent of a felony in the civil area.

Also, the prosecution's hiding of evidence. They hid some expert testimony. One of the experts was a forensic scientist who does blood splatters and bullet trajectory.

In the end, they were shown that they did conceal that, but that did not overturn the conviction, which it would have happened had he been tried in a civil court or a federal court, or even an international court. The due process is different in the military.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Comrade, you need to wrap it up now. We have a time deal here.

COMRADE JIM WAINSCOAT (Post 628 - South Dakota): I am sorry. I thought I had ten minutes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Go ahead. You have got a minute.

COMRADE JIM WAINSCOAT (Post 628 - South Dakota): Oh, boy. I am just going to speak from the heart.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: You have another minute. Go ahead.

COMRADE JIM WAINSCOAT (Post 628 - South Dakota): This situation with First Lieutenant Behenna, it is something that we who have been in combat, as we look at it, the rules of engagement, they are so out of whack today. Today, if you go out there, and some places you have to be shot at twice before you can return fire. We are in unconventional warfare territory, conventional warrior history. Unconventional, it is such a fluid situation out there, and only the ones on the ground there can call the shots. You can't micromanage it from the rear with people who have no idea as to what is going on out there.

That is what happened there. He called it to protect his men, he called it to protect the village that he promised to protect, and he knew that the consequences could go south on him. He is willing to sit it out. He has sat out four and a half years in Leavenworth, and he is willing to go the whole route, because he knows he did right by his men.

I think we, as combat veterans, need to look back and realize where we came from, and help these individuals out there who are strapped, who are having men killed that need not be killed. If we release them, they will wind up in war. We will not have these protracted wars anymore. They will do it in short order. Those of us in Vietnam know what it is to be like the --

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Comrade, you are out of time. You have to wrap it up. You are over five minutes.

COMRADE JIM WAINSCOAT (Post 628 - South Dakota): Thank you, Commander. I appreciate it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you very much, sir. We will have Dan Parker on Resolution 306.

COMRADE DAN PARKER: Addressing this, we are simply not in a position to go against the decision of the Military Courts, and the Courts of Appeals or the United States Supreme Court on this issue. We, of course, were not there on the ground in Iraq when this incident took place. If we would become involved in this particular case, that would open us up to having to get involved in every single case that is similar to this, like the massacre that took place in Afghanistan some time ago. We would recommend to reject on this Resolution.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Anyone else on Resolution 306. The motion is to accept 306. If you vote in the affirmative, you are accepting passage of 306. All in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The motion fails.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE BILL THOMSON (Post 6192 - New Jersey): Chief, again, thank you for your service. I am here, sir, to make a motion to approve Resolution 308.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Which number, Bill?

COMRADE BILL THOMSON (Post 6192 - New Jersey): Number 308.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have a motion to accept Resolution 308. Is there a second?

Microphone No. 1 .

COMRADE DAVID CUBA: (Post 6654 - Kansas) Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am David Cuba, Post 6654, Department of Kansas. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Comrade Dave. I have a motion and a second to accept 308. Is there any discussion on the motion?

Microphone No. 3, Bill Thomson.

COMRADE BILL THOMSON (Post 6192 - New Jersey): As the State Legislative Director for the Department of New Jersey, I am proud of the fact that we were able to get the State of New Jersey in the Legislative Assembly to pass this Bill for the State of New Jersey and signed by the Governor. I believe as everybody in this room have a weak spot in our hearts for those Gold Star mothers and families.

It was the Gold Star Mothers and families that requested that we push this legislation in the State of New Jersey and request this as a Resolution at our convention here.

We are doing nothing more, I believe, Chief, than granting and respecting the Gold Star Mothers and their families in their desire to have an honor and remember flag in addition to the flag of the United States of America.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Comrade Bill.
Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DAVID CUBA (Post 6654 – Kansas): Comrades, please listen to these words: honor and remember fallen comrades, Gold Star families; fallen comrades, honor and remember.

The Honor and Remember Flag, what this represents, I feel it is at the core of one of those things, and at the core of what the VFW does and believes in. How could we not recognize the Honor and Remember Flag in support of our Gold Star families?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, comrade. Anyone else on 308?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE LYNN ROLF (Post 56 - Kansas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Lynn Rolf, Kansas State Commander. Comrades, I have presented well over 200 of these flags in the last three years. There are 19 states in our great United States that have adopted this flag. This flag, and we got in this argument last year, this flag does not replace our United States flag.

What happens is years down the road, it is our opportunity as an organization to reach out to these families that lost a loved one, we present them with this flag. It remembers their son, their daughter, their father. It is our opportunity to give back to them and thank them for their service.

Comrades, this is a great chance for us as an organization to get behind this great flag. So, I ask you, comrades, please look deep in your heart and let's get behind this and let's be sure to show our Gold Star families that we really care for them. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.
Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE KEVIN WOODWARD (Post 11553 - Maine): Speaking on a personal note, in dealing with Gold Star Mothers and Gold Star families, I can tell you this: If eligibility in the Veterans of Foreign Wars was open to the Gold Star families and the Gold Star Mothers, this organization would have no better advocate for what we do, because they are doing the same thing for veterans and their families as we are. They are happy about it. I would strongly recommend the approval of this. Thank you, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.
Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GARY GODARD (Post 2093 - Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Gary Godard, VFW Post 2093 in the great state of Florida. I am for this motion completely. Everyone here should know what the Gold Star Mothers stand for. They all lost a son or a daughter in combat. This is another way to honor our Gold Star Mothers and our Gold Star families.

Since I have been involved in the VFW, I have been heavily involved with the Gold Star families and Gold Star Mothers. This is something that will show how much we honor them and how much we appreciate what those families have gone through, and will show how we can support them in all their needs in the loss of their child in combat. I am strongly 100 percent for this, and I encourage all our veterans here to pass this motion. Thank you, Commander.

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

COMRADE DAN PARKER: Good afternoon, comrades. The staff recommendation on this was because this is a separate private organization, and its own 501(c)(3). American service members have always been buried under the covers of our nation since 1776. We have recommended rejection of this Resolution. The Committee debated this extensively yesterday, and ultimately voted 49 to 43 to reject.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you.

Bill, the last word.

COMRADE BILL THOMSON (Post 6192 - New Jersey): Thank you, Commander. The gentleman behind me wants to speak against the Resolution, and I will yield to him. I would like to wrap this discussion up.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We will give you the last word, Bill.

COMRADE FRITZ MIHELICIC: (Post 6504 – Illinois) Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Fritz Mihelcic, a delegate to this convention from Post 6504. I do rise against this, not that it is not a good thing to do. However, this has come up for many years. Over the years, this Resolution has been whittled down to now they want our support. Initially, it was they wanted our support in order to have legislation passed to have this flag flown at all government buildings across the country. Part of that also was flags have to be purchased.

The creators of this flag have not turned over their intellectual property rights, so they make money on this flag, which is not the same as the POW flag. No money is made by the creators of that flag. All of that has been taken out of this Resolution, and now it is a matter of we want to do this, and again I understand the sentiment, but I also feel as was said just a moment ago, I fought for this flag, I want this flag, I don't need another flag.

But I am more concerned that we are, in essence, subsidizing a private entity if we go along with this. Once we go online and say we support this, our support can be bootstrapped into support for this in many different areas, not just that we support it, but it can be used to say we support legislation to promote it, legislation to have these flags purchased at government expense for private gain.

I do not like that part of it. That is why I rise in opposition. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Fritz. Anybody else on 308?

Bill, I will give you the last word. We have one more, and then we will go to Microphone 3 and that will be it.

COMRADE LYNN ROLF (Post 56 - Kansas): I would like to address the copyrighters. The POW flag is not copyrighted, so anyone across this whole world can go and purchase and design a POW flag. This flag, yes, is

copyrighted through one founder that did this because he lost his son. That way he can keep this flag sacred. Yes, it is a 501(c)(3), and it does make money. However, the money goes to the travels for the legislative assistants to go to each state and push the legislation.

Going back to Comrade Parker's comment about being buried under the flag, yes, that is absolutely correct. However, this flag, like I said earlier, comrades, is presented once the family requests this flag. We don't just go out and ask them do you want the flag? The family themselves have to request the flag, and then we, as an organization, a Post, whoever the entity is, will fund raise, provide the funds, purchase the flag and present to the family in a very dignified ceremony. It has got nothing to do with making money for personal gain. It is all about personally taking care of the families across this nation.

By the way, it is not just for fallen soldiers, it is for all of our service members that have decided to take their lives also. There are a lot of families out there grieving and this little simple token from us goes a very long way when you present this flag, whatever the case may be, from suicide to being lost in combat.

Comrades, please, I ask you to look in your heart and let's get behind this. Thank you, Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.

The final word, Comrade Bill.

COMRADE BILL THOMSON (Post 6192 - New Jersey): Comrades, we all fight to represent the Stars and Stripes of the American flag. When they play the Star-Spangled Banner, no one stands taller than veterans in saluting our flag. This is not there to take away from what that American flag stands for. This is not a substitute, but it is something that we can say as an organization that, yes, we do honor and remember your family for the fact that someone has died in the service of this country. This wasn't something that anyone thought up and created and thought it was going to be a good idea, that they were going to make money.

This is not something that we went to the families and said, "We think that this maybe should have been an Honor and Remember Flag." This is something that the families themselves, the families of Gold Star Mothers and Gold Star families requested.

When we say that the VFW, that no one does more for veterans, I can't think of a better way to represent that to our Gold Star families than to approve this Resolution, Chief. Thank you and God bless.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, comrade. All right. We are going to vote. The debate is over. If you vote in the affirmative, you are voting to accept Resolution 308. All in favor of Resolution 308, please say "aye"; those opposed. The motion is defeated.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOGAN: Your Committee will stand on call until we are dismissed at the close of business on Tuesday.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Excuse me.

Did you have something else on General Resolutions, sir?

COMRADE ERNEST ALLIS (Post 9488 - North Carolina): Comrade Commander, I would like to make a motion to accept Resolution 301.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: All right. We have a motion to accept Resolution 301. Do we have a second?

COMRADE JAMES GOINS (Post 9811 - North Carolina): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have a motion to accept 301. Is there any discussion?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HOGAN: The Committee, of course, talked on this in detail, and we are not against the efforts for the Memorial, however, the language is not specific enough at this time to support the Resolution. It does not specify where the Memorial will be located, on the National Mall, the Capitol Hill, et cetera, or if it will be dedicated as a National Desert Shield/Desert Storm Memorial.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I will recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DAN WEST: (Post 3413 – Texas) Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Dan West, delegate from Post 3413, Department of Texas. I can understand that and would find a hard time arguing against not having the details. However, I do believe the verbal support of the Veterans of Foreign Wars would go a long way for when those details are developed. As with many corporations that go out and promote ideals, they tried to garner support before they get all of the details in place.

I do believe that the Veterans of Foreign Wars, no one does more for veterans, should at least show that we support it, and now bring us the details.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Dan.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Comrades, you might remember not too many years ago the Air Force decided to have a Memorial, and they wanted to put the Air Force Memorial pretty much right next to the Marine Corps Iwo Jima Monument Memorial. There was a lot of controversy over that. We are trying to avoid that controversy. What we want to see is the specifics of where they are going to put this, what kind of monument it is going to be, and then it will get the VFW support, I am sure. I hope everybody understands that. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Chief. Anyone else? All right. We are voting on Resolution 301. All those in favor will please say "aye"; all those opposed. It is rejected. Anything before I turn my back and go get this other group? Thank you very much.

Next is the Report of the National Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs. The Chairman is Past Commander-in-Chief John Furgess.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. It is my pleasure to report the Convention Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs.

We met yesterday, Sunday, July 21, 2013, at 2:00 p.m. Instructions were read, roll call was conducted, and action was taken on the Resolutions.

We decided once again to conduct our meeting in conjunction with the POW/MIA Subcommittee. Our guest speakers and the Resolutions that we passed are important to all Committee members.

I would first like to express the Committee's appreciation to the Departments of Michigan and South Carolina for submitting National Security Resolutions to this 114th National Convention. Bottom up involvement is what makes this a great organization. We thank them for their support, wisdom and guidance.

I also want to thank the Vice-Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell from Wisconsin.

The Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee is Past Commander-in-Chief John Gwizdak from Georgia.

The Vice-Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee is Past Commander-in-Chief Tom Pouliot from Montana.

The Committee Advisors Joe Davis from the Washington Office and Debra Anderson from the National Headquarters.

All the members of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, and the POW/MIA Subcommittee, we thank them for their thoughtful deliberations and active participation.

We were also very fortunate to hear from three guest speakers who traveled long distances to attend the VFW National Convention. We heard from Deputy Secretary General Han Song from the Veterans of Foreign Affairs Commission of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

We heard from Retired Lieutenant General Wysong Fu, Vice-President of the Veterans Association of Vietnam, which marked the first time in history that this Association was invited to attend our National Convention.

We heard from Mr. Johnie Webb, long-time Deputy to the Commander of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command in Hawaii, and a Life Member of VFW Post 352 in Hawaii.

Commander-in-Chief, the Committee deliberated each Resolution. We will now move forward with the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee recommendations to this body. 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 the report and have moved for adoption.

I will now read the Resolution numbers and the Committee Recommendations for approval.

401, Support the Troops in their Mission in the War on Terrorism; approved.

Resolution 402, Secure America's Borders; approved.

403, Halt Rogue Weapons of Mass Destructions Programs; approved.

404, Keep Defense Budget Relevant; approved.

405, Ballistic Missile Defense is a National Security Priority; approved.

406, Support the Republic of Korea; approved.

407, Support the Republic of China on Taiwan; approved.

408, Link Military Pay Increases to Private-Sector Increases; approved.

409, Lower Reserve Component Retirement Pay Age to 55; approved.

410, Correct the FY 2008 NDAA Reserve Retirement Pay Provision; approved.

411, Stop the Erosion of Military Pay and Benefits; approved.

412, Provide Full Concurrent Receipt of Military Retirement Pay and VA Disability Compensation; approved.

No. 413, Military Sexual Trauma Incident Reporting and Treatment; approved.

414, Provide DD-214s to all Reserve Component Members; approved.

415, Expand Operation Warfighter Placements; approved.

416, Ensure Department of Defense Compliance with Transitional Assistance Program Mandate; approved.

417, Create a Unified Military Medical Command; approved.

418, Create a Searchable Department of Defense Military Awards Database; approved.

I will ask the Chairman of the Subcommittee to read his Resolutions.

I will make the motion, Commander-in-Chief, that the above Resolutions be approved. We will go ahead in the interest of time and add the POW/MIA Resolutions.

422, approved; 423, approved; 424, approved. I move that they be accepted.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TRADEWELL: I am Tommy Tradewell, Post 6498, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I second the motion to approve 401 through 418 and 422 through 424.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have a motion. You have heard the motion and the second. Any discussion or questions or any set asides?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DAVID CHRISTENSEN: (Post 817 – Iowa) Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am David Christensen, Post 817, Department of Iowa. I move to set aside Resolution 402.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Resolution No. 402 is set aside. We have a motion to accept all those and we have set aside 402. All those in favor will signify by the usual manner of “aye”; those opposed. The motion carried.

We will now debate 402.

COMRADE DAVID CHRISTENSEN (Post 817 – Iowa): It is a very well-worded Resolution. My only problem is, Commander-in-Chief, the very last paragraph of “Be It Further Resolved, that we insist the U.S. Government continue to aggressively identify and deport illegal aliens who commit crime.” I simply want the last three words “who commit crime” be deleted. They committed a crime when they crossed the border to begin with. Thank you.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I don’t have to tell you that is a great national issue. The Veterans of Foreign Wars’ position is to secure America’s borders. We can’t do that, we call on the United States Government to do that, and the American people will approve or disapprove how they proceed to do that. That’s the issue.

We just want it a matter of record that we have approved securing America’s borders. How they do it is up to the American people through Congress and the Department of Defense.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Any other comment on Resolution 402?

COMRADE HERBERT MULLEN: (Post 286 – Indiana) I am Hebert Mullen, Post 286, Wabash, Indiana. If you want to keep this out of the political realm, then you should remove that entire final paragraph,

because you are actually taking sides whether you do it this way or whether you remove those three words that was spoken.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Are you making a motion to amend?

COMRADE HERBERT MULLEN (Post 286 – Indiana): I would make a motion to amend Resolution 402 by removing the entire final paragraph, starting with “Be It Further Resolved.”

COMRADE EUGENE MANFREY: (Post 6827 – Florida) Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Gene Manfrey from Post 6827, a delegate to this convention from the State of Florida. Comrade Commander, did I not hear there was a motion made to approve?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have an amendment.

COMRADE EUGENE MANFREY (Post 6827 – Florida): Prior to this amendment, I thought I heard that the Chairman said we want to make a motion for approval. I was just getting up to second that.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: That is fine, but we have had a motion and a second already. We need now a second to the amendment. We have not got a second to the amendment. It dies for the lack of a second.

Now, we will vote on the motion. All those in favor will signify by the usual manner of “aye”; those opposed. The “ayes” have it. The motion is carried.

We will have the Report of the POW/MIA Subcommittee.

REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON POW-MIA

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK: Comrade-in-Chief, the delegates to this convention, I am pleased to report the POW-MIA Subcommittee met on Sunday, July 21st in a combined meeting with the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee. Your instructions were followed. All members were present or accounted for, and action was taken on the Resolutions assigned to the Committee.

For their support, wisdom and guidance, I want to thank the Vice-Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief Tom Pouliot from Montana, Past Commander-in-Chief John Furgess from Tennessee as Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee. Also the Vice-Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell from Wisconsin.

The Committee advisors were Joe Davis from the Washington Office and Debra Anderson from the National Headquarters.

I want to thank all members of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, and the POW/MIA Subcommittee for their thoughtful deliberation and active participation.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, before I cover the three recommended POW/MIA Resolutions, I want to first thank the comrade from Kansas for bringing up the thought that perhaps in one of our Resolutions we need to mention Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl.

After much consideration and thought, I talked to the Committee Chairman and the Subcommittee Advisors, and we recommend that No. 419 be approved, as amended.

The first “WHEREAS,” would read as follows:

“WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting of 83,000 missing Americans that includes 73,000 from World War II, 7,900 from the Korean War, 1,650 from the Vietnam War, 126 from the Cold War, and 6 from Operation Desert Storm forward, as well as the safe return of the only known American POW Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl.” That would be the portion of the amendment.

Comrades, I will now read the three Resolutions and their numbers that the Committee recommends for approval. If any delegate would want a Resolution set aside for discussion, please so indicate after I have moved for the adoption of the three Resolutions.

Resolution 419, Protect POW/MIA Full Accounting Mission Funding. That was approved as amended.

Resolution 420, Preserve Integrity of U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs; approved.

Resolution 421, Call for More Unilateral POW-MIA Actions by Vietnam. That was recommended for approval by the Committee.

I move that Resolutions 419, 420 and 421 be adopted by this Convention.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF POULIOT: I second the motion that Resolutions 419, 420 and 421 be adopted.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: You have heard the motion and the second to accept Resolution 419, as amended, 420 and 421. Any discussion or question on the motion? If not, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of “aye”; those opposed. The “ayes” have it. The motion carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Commander-in-Chief, that concludes our report. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir. We will discharge that Committee and the Subcommittee. Thank you for your service.

We will next have the Report of the Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions. The Chairman is Jim Nier.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thank you, Chief. Your Convention Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions convened at 2:00 o’clock p.m., Sunday, July 21, 2013. Roll call was taken and preliminary matters were discussed. The Committee was divided into three Subcommittees to carefully deliberate each of the 32 Resolutions that were assigned.

The Subcommittees were established as follows:

Subcommittee I – Health, chaired by Daniel Crocker from Michigan, and the Vice-Chairman was Joy Mikyska from North Dakota. The Staff advisors were James Moss, Assistant Director, Veterans Health Policy, National Veterans Service, and Aleks Morosky, Senior Legislative Associate, National Legislative Service.

Subcommittee II – Benefits. It was chaired by Barry Walters from Illinois. The Vice-Chairman was Denise Estes, Nevada. The staff advisors

were Gerald T. Manar, Deputy Director, National Veterans Service, and Raymond Kelley, Director, National Legislative Service.

Subcommittee III – Economic Opportunity/Other. That Subcommittee was chaired by Kenneth Thie from Florida, and the Vice-Chairman was Anthony Navickas from Maryland. Staff advisors were Ryan Gallucci, Deputy Director of National Legislative Service, and George Burke, Special Assistant, Benefits Policy, National Veterans Service.

Before proceeding to the report, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Bill Bradshaw, Director of National Veterans Service, and Ray Kelley, Director of National Legislative Service, for the valuable technical guidance they and their staff provided to the Committee.

I also want to thank Past Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius from Alaska for serving as Vice-Chairman of this very important Convention Committee, and Dawn Jirak from National Veterans Service Staff, who served as our Committee's Secretary and coordinated the results of our deliberations.

Commander-in-Chief, with your permission, I will begin the Committee report by presenting those Resolutions that the Committee recommends to be approved as written. Then Vice-Chairman Kurpius will report on those Resolutions that were approved as amended. Finally, I will conclude by presenting the Resolutions the Committee recommends for rejection.

If for any reason you or the delegates at this convention would like a Resolution set aside for further discussion, please indicate after we have completed each segment of the report.

I will now proceed by reading the Resolution numbers and titles that the Committee recommends for approval as written.

601, Adequate Department of Veterans Affairs Budget.

602, Consider Treatment for a Presumptive Service Connected Condition as a Claim for VA Compensation.

603, Extending Gulf War Presumptions, Registry and Health Care to Afghanistan Theater Veterans.

604, Oppose VA Pharmaceutical Co-Payment Increases.

605, Nursing Home Eligibility.

606, Traumatic Brain Injury Health Care.

607, Support Veterans Employment and Training Programs.

608, VA Services for Women Veterans.

609, Extend Service Connection Presumption to Blast Survivors.

610, Veteran Entrepreneurship.

611, VA Claims Backlog.

612, Increase the Benefit Level for DEA.

613, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Health Care.

614, Tinnitus and Hearing Loss Presumptive Service Connection.

615, Burial Plot Allowance.

616, Hearing Loss Compensation.

617, Repeal SBP/DIC Offset.

618, Homeless Veterans Priorities

619, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program Eligibility.

620, Veterans Affairs Pension Management Centers.

621, Make VA Fee Basis Payments and CHAMPVA Payments Fair to Providers.

622, Ensure Veteran Success in Education.

623, VA Medicare Subvention.

631, Service Disabled Veterans Entrepreneurship.

Commander-in-Chief, I move to accept the Committee's recommendation to approve these Resolutions.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARY KURPIUS: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I have a motion and a second to approve the Resolutions as presented. Are there any set asides?

COMRADE RICH CESLER (Post 889 - Idaho): I would like to set aside 626.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Resolution 626 has not been moved yet. All right. You are early. I like that. If there are no other set asides, all those in favor will signify by the usual manner. You are moving to accept these now. You will say "aye" if you are in favor; those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KURPIUS: I will read the Resolutions and numbers and titles that the Committee recommended for approval, as amended. The amendments were only for clarification. They certainly did not change the intent of the Resolution at all.

Resolution 624, Headstone and Marker Medallion.

625, Support H.R. Bill 411: Fort McClellan Health Registry Act.

Resolution 626, Medal of Honor Pension Continuation for Medal of Honor spouses.

Resolution 629, Dependency Indemnity Compensation for Survivors of all 100 percent Service Connected Veterans.

632, Inclusion of Veterans Traveling and Residing Abroad All-Inclusive Medical Service Under the Foreign Medical Program.

I move the adoption of these Resolutions, as amended.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir. We have 624, 625, 629 and 632, as amended. Are there any set asides? If not, all in favor will signify by the usual manner of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Commander-in-Chief, I will read the Resolution numbers and the titles that the Committee recommends for rejection.

Resolution 627, Equal VA Benefits for Same Sex Unions/ Marriages.

Resolution 628, Presumptive Hearing Loss.

Resolution 630, Service Disabled Veterans Contracting Goals.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The Committee recommends rejection of 627, 628 and 630.

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DENNIS LYDDY: (Post 1807 – Massachusetts) Commander-in-Chief, I am Dennis Lyddy from Post 1807, Department of Massachusetts. I request set aside of 627. A motion to adopt has to be made on a set aside. I have a motion to adopt.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Do we have a second? The motion to adopt 627 dies for the lack of a second.

COMRADE PAUL FELBAUGH (Department of Texas): I would like to second the motion to adopt 627.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you. We have a motion and a second to adopt Resolution 627. Any discussion on the motion? Any discussion on the motion?

COMRADE DENNIS LYDDY (Post 1807 – Massachusetts): I would like a point of clarification. Can I make an amendment to said Resolution at this time?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Yes.

COMRADE DENNIS LYDDY (Post 1807 – Massachusetts): I would like to offer an amendment to Resolution 627 to replace the third paragraph under “Be It Resolved” with the following:

“BE IT RESOLVED, require VA policies to be changed and updated and expeditiously implemented to deliver earned VA benefits, compensation and disbursement to the veteran, the veterans’ partner and the veterans’ survivors regardless of the legal means of union and other marriage that they are entitled to.”

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have an amendment. Is there a second to the amendment?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE PAUL FELBAUGH (Department of Texas): I second the amendment.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have a second to the amendment on Resolution 627. Any discussion on the amendment?

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DENISE ESTES (Post 10053 - Nevada): I was on the Committee, and the discussion on this was it seems redundant because the Supreme Court has already ruled, and this is sort of like the VA getting on the bandwagon, chasing the bandwagon, and we want to agree with same sex marriage. Well, the Supreme Court has already passed this. That is why we made the motion to reject it in Committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, ma’am.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DENNIS LYDDY (Post 1807 – Massachusetts): I was at that Subcommittee meeting, and I have heard terms like this is a moot point, change it, it is not the time to do this. The Supreme Court has already made a decision on this. This Resolution, comrades, is not about any of that, other than to keep the Veterans Affairs, their feet to the fire and implement the changes that have already been authorized or changed by the legal course of the Supreme Court.

I would submit to you-all that if you really want to represent what the words are behind the Commander-in-Chief, this is one of those philosophical, moral and ethical actions that will make the Veterans of Foreign Wars continue to be the best organization.

I read somewhere where you, Commander-in-Chief, in the current handbook that was given to us as delegates, that every generation of combat veterans have their issues. Your generation had Agent Orange, my generation has PTSD, TBI, and equal benefit for those of us who have had equal risk. We do not want to be in the position of deciding whether or not an individual gets married with another person. It does not matter to us. It is about veterans and their survivors, regardless of their civic union getting the benefits earned due to their risk that they also entailed. Thank you. I am in favor of this amendment and the Resolution.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir. Any other discussion on the amendment?

Jim Nier.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Comrades, there was a proposed amendment put forth in the Committee meeting yesterday, which as the comrade just alluded to a moment ago was rejected. The staff's recommendation, and with the Committee's approval, it was recommended for rejection because it is no longer relevant due to the Supreme Court ruling of the Defensive Marriage Act. The intent of the Resolution has been satisfied, and the VA is already working on the regulations. Thank you, Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir. Any other discussion on the amendment? All those in favor of the amendment will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The amendment fails.

Now, on the motion to accept Resolution 627, all in favor will say "aye"; those opposed. The motion fails.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Commander-in-Chief, this concludes the Report of the Committee on Veterans Service. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir. Your Committee is discharged. Thank you for a job well done.

CLOSING CEREMONIES

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will please perform the Closing Ceremonies for today's business session.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. Comrades, please rise.
National Chaplain.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: O, Lord our God, be with us now as we depart from today's National Assembly. Beneath us to uphold us, before us to direct us, behind us to protect us, and around us that others may feel your presence. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the closing ceremonies have been performed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. We will recess at this time and reconvene at 8:00 o'clock in the morning. Thank you again for your attention and good work.

(Whereupon, the Convention was recessed at 4:15 o'clock p.m., to reconvene on Tuesday, July 23, 2013, at 8:00 o'clock a.m.)

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION
TUESDAY, JULY 23, 2013

(The Second Business Session of the 114th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, meeting in the Kentucky International Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, was called to order at 8:00 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief John E. Hamilton, presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I will now reconvene the 114th VFW National Convention.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will, please, conduct the Opening Ceremonies.

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

Comrades, please rise.

Comrade National Chaplain, the Opening Prayer.

OPENING PRAYER

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: O, sovereign ruler of the universe, we praise and honor Thy guiding presence.

Humbly we beseech Thy blessings that Thou wouldst give growth and value to our works and declarations for the good of our elite organization and for the many people we serve of our great republic.

For Thy internal glory, we pray. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

(Whereupon, Sergeant-at-Arms O'Brien led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance at this time.)

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. Everyone please be seated.

I would now like to call on Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Thien to preside.

(Whereupon, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Bill Thien assumed the chair.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THIEN: At this time I would like Betty Gripp to come up for the Report on the Credentials, please.

COMRADE BETTY GRIPP (Post 10188 - Arizona): Good morning, Commander, Council members and delegates:

At the close of business 4:00 p.m., yesterday, July 22, 2013, the total delegates registering their credentials are:

Total Delegates, 14,561

Total Department Commanders, 49

Total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 28

Total National Officers, 55

The Grand Total is 14,693. Thank you, Commander.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THIEN: Thank you, Betty, so much for that report.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: I will now announce the winners for the drawing for the book, "Battles of the Korean War." They are James G. McDonald, Theodore R. Eaton, Richard Hoium, Edward Walsh, Claude Miller, Walter E. Hahn, Frank E. Lightower, Anthony Albano, Edward Holderness, and Joe Clarkson.

The winners must visit the Publications/Magazine booth, No. 325, in person by 2:00 p.m. today to claim your book. Again, the books must be claimed in person, as we will not mail them to home addresses after the convention.

If there are some comrades that are not here and you know of these comrades, please notify them they have won the book and they need to pick them up by 2:00 o'clock this afternoon. Thank you very much.

PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO STEVE VAN BUSKIRK

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THIEN: I am proud to present our next guest with the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation in recognition of his 19 years of dedicated service to this great organization.

Steve Van Buskirk is someone who has had an immensely positive impact on the Veterans of Foreign Wars for years and who undoubtedly deserves this award.

An integral part of this great organization is its employees, the people who work at National Headquarters doing all they can to provide dedicated support and assistance to our Departments and Posts.

Through the years, Steve has played many important roles within this organization to ensure delivery of these services.

Steve initially joined the VFW as a Communications Specialist for the VFW Magazine in 1990. In December of that year, he became the Assistant Director of Public Affairs and Media, and then Director of Public Affairs and Media in 1994. In 1997, Steve accepted a position as the Director of the VFW Foundation. In 2003, after a four-year break from the VFW, Steve returned as Director of Programs.

His many years of service and the many hats he has worn over those years demonstrate his commitment and dedication to his community, his nation and to this great organization.

This past spring he stepped down as Director of Programs to enjoy what we hope will be a long and enjoyable retirement.

It is now my honor to introduce our friend, Stephen Van Buskirk, and award him with the VFW Distinguished Service Medal and Citation Award.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to Steve Van Buskirk.

"In lasting appreciation and spirited recognition of his notable record of outstanding and stalwart service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. His many successes and accomplishments during his time with the VFW National Headquarters have contributed significantly to the VFW's mandate of service.

“His admirable and steadfast dedication to the VFW and its programs, along with the professionalism 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 hands and the official of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 23rd day of July, 2013.”

This has been signed by John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General.

REMARKS BY COMRADE STEVE VAN BUSKIRK

COMRADE VAN BUSKIRK: Good morning. This is very short, and I hope you will forgive me because if I don’t read it, I may not get through it.

For more than two decades, I have enjoyed something few individuals ever experience. I have had a career of serving my fellow veterans and working with the greatest patriots and the true heroes of our nation. For those privileges, I must thank the late Howard Vander Clute, VFW Magazine publisher, Rich Kolb, the late John Senk, “Gunner” Kent, and my beautiful wife of 42 years, Teresa, and my Heavenly Father. Thank you all for being a part of this great organization.

I look forward to continuing to serve you and seeing you around the events in the future. God bless you and God bless the greatest veterans’ service organization in the world. Thank you. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrades, we will now have a short video before our next guest is introduced.

(Whereupon, the video is played at this time.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THIEN: Comrades, just a short announcement. As you are well aware, the well-needed dues increase did pass. The delegation has spoken. However, I decided to make this increase become effective as of January 1. So, if you heard an October date or a September date, it is January 1. We think that is going to give everybody time to get ready, and we certainly hope those folks will send those dues in before that increase takes place.

INTRODUCTION OF MAJOR GENERAL EDWARD TONINI, ADJUTANT GENERAL, KENTUCKY COMMISSION ON MILITARY AFFAIRS

Our next guest was appointed the 51st Adjutant General by the Commonwealth of Kentucky by Governor Steven L. Beshear on December 11, 2007.

Major General Edward Tonini serves as the Commanding General of both the Kentucky Army and the Air National Guard, and as Executive Director of the Department of Military Affairs.

He is responsible for federal and state missions, assignment of leaders, recruiting, training, equipping, mobilization, facilities and public relations. He also oversees the development and coordination of all policies, plans and programs affecting Army and Air National Guard members in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

General Tonini serves on the Governor's Cabinet and is the principal advisor to the Governor on military matters.

Prior to receiving his commission as an officer in 1970, he served as an enlisted member of the 123rd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing of the Kentucky Air National Guard. It is now my pleasure to introduce to you Major General Edward Tonini. (Applause)

REMARKS BY MAJOR GENERAL EDWARD TONINI

MAJOR GENERAL TONINI: Thank you very much. We just heard a little bit about me and where I came from, but there was one thing that he left out that I am particularly proud of, and that for the past 15 years I have been a Life Member of the VFW. (Applause)

Now, I was recruited by someone that I suspect that some of you know. Does anybody know the name Brian Duffy? Brian made me a very proud member of the Middletown VFW Post here in Kentucky, and I understand that you have got some additional duties for him starting in the near future.

You know, it is just a great, great pleasure to be here today to talk about my very favorite topic, the National Guard. Your National Guard is not the same Guard that I joined over 44 years ago. During my service, I have seen the National Guard change over and over again. At one time annual training meant two weeks of training in the summertime and one weekend drill per month.

Our equipment often consisted of active-duty hand-me-downs from the Korean War and even carry-overs from World War II.

I can tell you that we were certainly not the first string our nation would call into combat. Now, don't get me wrong. When called, we accomplished all the missions very well and very proficiently. Our guardsmen were dedicated, passionate, and proficient.

But the operations tempo and our expectations of being called into service were nothing like they are today.

More than a half million Guard members on duty today have joined since 9/11, with the full knowledge that they were preparing to go in harm's way to do America's work overseas. The Guard that currently serves you is more ready, more reliable and accessible than ever before.

The expectations of our Guardsmen put them on par, and I would contend in many cases above our active-duty counterparts.

Our training stacks up against anything the active-duty Army or Air Force endures, and the standards are, in fact, the same.

We now have road class training facilities for our units. Our equipment comes right off the shelves. We don't get second best anymore.

As all of you know, we now have a Four Star Chief of the National Guard Bureau, who sits as a full member at the Joint Chiefs' table to discuss national security, military force structure and global missions support.

Our Guard Officers and NCOs are highly-skilled in terms of both combat experience and domestic response. I would venture to say today's Guard is the most experienced and combat-ready in our 377-year history, to include World War II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Almost one

million National Guard soldiers and airmen have deployed since September 11, 2001.

Kentucky, alone, has deployed more than 16,000 citizen soldiers and airmen during that time. Many have seen multiple deployments, some as many as six, with members of our Special Forces Unit actually more than ten.

There are just as many combat patches and combat tours of our Guardsmen as the active component and sometimes more.

Service does not come without sacrifice, however. Kentucky has lost 18 soldiers in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Literally, hundreds have received the Purple Heart Medal for injuries sustained during their deployment, but the mission continues.

Today, our National Guard consists of dedicated citizen soldiers who proudly serve our Commonwealth and country. We are ready to answer the Governor's call to activation in the wake of ice storms, floods, hurricane winds or other natural disasters. We are ready to aid Haiti with humanitarian relief, air traffic control and support. We stand ready to deploy anywhere in the world to do anything our President asks of us. We are a reliable force for our Governor and President. We continue to be an accessible force.

The President signs the order and we go. The Governor signs an order, and again we go. The Guard's domestic response capability allow us to stand ready to serve here on the home front as the first military responders, whether it is in the dark frozen landscape here at home, checking on isolated families following a devastating ice storm, or flying under fire in some remote region in Afghanistan to deliver essential supplies and equipment to fellow troops in the mountains.

Today's National Guard is prepared to serve the citizens of this great nation. They are more fit to fight; they are more ready, reliable, and accessible than ever before. There is not a single instance when our Guard was not accessible to meet the needs of the Commonwealth or the nation.

The National Guard soldiers and airmen live and serve in every zip code in America. Kentucky soldiers and airmen live in 119 of Kentucky's 120 counties. We have Guard facilities in 50 of those counties. Kentucky Guardsmen are currently supporting our nation's missions in Qatar, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Liberia, Jordan, Guantanamo Bay and Columbia.

When you include the unit that just returned from Jabuta, but is still on active-duty status, they number almost 1,100 today.

Those sequestration and furloughs impact our uniform technicians. We adjust and overcome to always support the missions asked of us. That is simply the Guard way.

Now, here is what you can do to help keep our America strong. All of you heard Secretary Hagel speak yesterday at this podium of the need to ensure the United States has the force it needs now and will continue to need in the future. You know, he said it will require a reshaping of the defense institutions "designed for different strategic and budget realities."

The Secretary's guiding principles following the end of the Iraq War and the drawdown underway in Afghanistan, in addition to the complications of budget cuts mandated by sequestration.

We are generally as follows: To prioritize the DoD mission's capability around the core responsibilities of defending the nation, maximizing military combat power, preserving and strengthening military readiness and, of course, honoring the service and sacrifices of DoD personnel.

You know, unless the law changes, the DoD is going to be forced to absorb \$52 billion in cuts next year, and the total of \$5 billion in cuts over the next decade. That's on top of the \$487 million reductions over ten years that have already been made.

Secretary Hagel said these cuts are forcing us to make tough decisions but necessary decisions to prioritize missions and capability around our core responsibility which is the security of our country. That requires the DoD to identify what is not absolutely essential to defend the nation and its interests and to prioritize how it matches missions to resources.

He said, and I am sure all of you took note of the fact that the President must be assured that the options were presented to him to protect our country and to defend our national interests are ready and real.

Protecting the country in an era of reduced resources will require maximizing the military's fighting strength. Secretary Hagel emphasized the need to continue improving efficiency and drawing down costs and overhead.

Going forward, we must preserve and strengthen our readiness and that has to be the key priority. He said all this will require careful balancing. Achieving that balance will require Congress to join DoD in a partnership of difficult choices, priorities and decisions. Secretary Hagel acknowledged it will command cooperation and courage.

Among the big issues, he said was that we will have to address is the unstable growth in personnel costs that consumes half of the Department of Defense budget. Now, you, the VFW members, are a very, very special group of veterans. At a time of financial hardship, following more than 12 years of war, I think you realize that the United States is at a critical juncture.

Although threats to our nation at home and abroad have not diminished, financial constraints are forcing significant decreases in defense spending. Frankly, I am afraid we have not even seen the start of the massive cuts. The most significant threat our nation faces isn't the Taliban, it is not al-Qaeda, North Korea or Iran, it is the almost \$17 trillion deficit and growing we face as a nation.

We simply cannot afford the cost of the currently-sized active-duty forces. The people costs are simply unsustainable. Secretary Hagel spoke yesterday in many, many familiar themes to me. To me, he was speaking about America's ace in the hole, the National Guard.

Today's National Guard is the most cost-effective component of the Department of Defense. A recent independent study found the life cycle cost of the Reserve component soldier or airmen is between 24 and 32 percent of the fully-burdened cost of a full-time active component soldier or airman. I believe that we need to mitigate the risk by making certain that we do not cut the Reserve component, and perhaps even consider growing its current size.

This is the best way to capitalize on the investment the American taxpayer has made in the National Guard over the past 12 years, while maintaining combat capability at 30 cents on the dollar of our component alternative. I ask that you continue to support your active Guard and Reserve through your incredibly-strong VFW voice. I ask that you also join our voice in protecting this national resource, our National Guard.

You know, I truly appreciate your patriotism and the service of you all. I have got to tell you that I am proud to be a Kentuckian and I am proud to be in the National Guard, and I am damn proud to be a member of the VFW. (Applause)

Protecting our nation, helping our fellow citizens, it is an honor and a privilege to serve in today's National Guard.

May God bless you and your families, may God bless our troops everywhere, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO RICHARD CESLER

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THIEN: Our next honoree devotes himself to conducting research and collaborating with funeral homes, cemeteries, government officials and policymakers in order to ensure that the people who work to protect and serve the United States of America receive dignified and distinguished burial services.

Richard Cesler's wholehearted mission is to assist the families of deceased veterans in finding and paying tribute to their fallen loved ones.

Mr. Cesler is a pioneer in locating and honoring forgotten veterans, and his undertakings have garnered him recognition from Americans who have loved and lost people they were close to, organizations that are devoted to tracing the whereabouts of the missing and government networks that honor soldiers who are missing or who have been recently accounted for.

His efforts sparked the development of the Missing in America Project, which is now established across the country. The project has led to the retrieval of more than 1,000 veterans' remains, and ensures they are given proper burials.

It is now my distinct pleasure to present a Certificate of Appreciation to the Director of the Washington State Veterans Cemetery and Past VFW Department of Idaho Commander, Rich Cesler.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Certificate of Appreciation presented to Richard Cesler.

"In recognition and utmost appreciation of his dedicated and selfless mission to assist the families of deceased veterans in finding and paying tribute to their fallen loved ones.

"His efforts leading to the retrieval of more than 1,000 veterans' remains, and ensuring they are given proper burials, displays a remarkable record of service to both the veteran community and the families he serves.

"Richard Cesler's compassionate efforts truly reflect the 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 23rd day of July, 2013."

This has been signed by John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE – COMRADE RICHARD CESLER

COMRADE RICHARD CESLER: I first would like to thank all of the officers, and certainly the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, John Hamilton, for this honor. I feel I am really a small part of a project that has caught the attention of the nation.

I made a report to you from the convention floor in Reno last year, and I introduced the Missing in America Project at that time. It is a non-profit organization whose sole purpose is to recover, identify veterans and give them their honorable burial in state and national veteran cemeteries around our nation.

What it requires, however, is a state law in every state to be able to do this. I am proud to say that Idaho through Idaho Code 541.144 was one of the first to provide that protection to be able to identify and recover veterans and veterans' spouses.

Having been the Director, I am recently retired, by the way, from the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs and the Cemetery Director there, having built that cemetery from an idea to its conclusion.

I was also the Director of the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery in Boise before that time. This project began with me as a question, what was I doing as a Director of the cemetery and finding abandoned veterans in Idaho? I couldn't answer the question.

On the way home, I stopped by a Cremation Society, and asked them that question. "Are you holding identified veterans here?" They said, "Yeah, we have six." So, I was trying to find a way to recover them. What I am here to talk about is not me today, I am talking about the volunteers around our nation who have assisted us in getting state laws written in 20 states. There are 30 states right now who still need to come onboard.

Commanders and comrades, I would challenge you to speak to me. I will stand in the back of this room as long as needed today to get the information to talk to your legislatures and get these laws enacted in your state, so we have a legal right to go and identify and recover those veterans and give them the burial they deserve.

I would say we have a slogan back here that says, "Nobody Does More for Veterans", and I would add to that "Our Living and Deceased."

The successes this year for the Missing in America Project were that we were identified to accept Combined Federal Campaign funds. We were also selected by Arlington National Cemetery to provide veterans to be placed in their column burial section. Undersecretary Steve Merrill was there and we provided 18 identified and abandoned veterans to be placed there. We feel that was quite an honor.

I would also like to thank Utah and Arkansas for coming on board this year. Comrades, this is a VFW project. We need your help. We don't leave

our veterans, we don't leave our soldiers, we should not leave our veterans when they are deceased and abandoned.

Thank you for this honor, and please come and talk to me. Thank you very much. (Applause)

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

INTRODUCTION OF MAJOR GENERAL KELLY McKEAGUE, JOINT POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMANDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Our next guest leads the one organization that is charged with finding, identifying and returning home our missing warriors. Air Force General Major General Kelly McKeague commands the operational arm of America's full accounting mission, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command.

Headquartered in Hawaii, J-PAC is responsible for global analysis and investigation, search and recovery, and laboratory operations to identify unaccounted for Americans from past conflicts.

To command J-PAC is a coming home for the General, who was born and raised in Hawaii, and is of Hawaiian blood. He received his commission in 1981 through the Georgia Tech ROTC program, and served as a Civil Engineer at all levels of the Air Force. He entered the Maryland Air National Guard in 1995, and would go on to become Chief of Staff of the National Guard Bureau, and Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for National Guard matters.

J-PAC has no better friend than the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. We have sent our leadership to Southeast Asia every year since 1991, to Russia since 2004, and now into China. We have pushed to have J-PAC funding restored and increased to match a new congressional requirement that would more than double the current number of identifications they make each year.

We are also pushing to have their civilian hiring freeze waived, which is tremendously impacting their ability to staff a new identification lab they just opened at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska. Plus, we want a civilian furlough requirement waived, which currently forces deployed scientists to take their accrued furlough days all at once when they return home.

J-PAC's mission is tough enough without budget and personnel problems inflicted by those who either don't understand the importance of their mission or who have never walked in harm's way. That's why the VFW has their back and always will. We, who have been there, understand how formidable their task is to try and account for the 83,000 missing servicemen in some of the most remote parts of the world.

And even though we know J-PAC will never find all 83,000, we still rejoice in every new identification, because it means another American family somewhere is finally getting to welcome their loved one home.

Comrades, please welcome the Commander of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, Major General Kelly McKeague. (Applause)

REMARKS BY MAJOR GENERAL KELLY McKEAGUE

MAJOR GENERAL McKEAGUE: Commander-in-Chief Hamilton, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Thien, distinguished veterans, families, ladies and gentlemen:

It is indeed a distinct honor and privilege for me to not only participate in this national event, but to humbly serve this noble mission.

When your Commander-in-Chief described the VFW as being no greater friend to J-PAC, I myself could not be more appreciative in evaluating that great partnership and the staunch support that we get from all of you in this great organization.

I am the proud son of a Retired Army Master Sergeant, one combat tour in Korea, two combat tours in Vietnam. I also happen to be the proud grandson of not only a grandfather who served in the United States Navy in the Pacific during World War II, but another grandfather who was a Navy civilian, found himself on the docks at Pearl Harbor on that fateful December 7th day.

What I would like to do this morning is to share with you what this organization is all about. Ours is a global worldwide mission through painstaking research and investigations to recoveries in the most inhospitable environments.

And with some extraordinary scientific applications, we work to bring our fallen heroes home. What I would like to do this morning with you is to share some cool pictures that talk about our three missions through the eyes of the people that serve you and this mission.

This is Marine Corporal Steven Rich and Army veteran Stanley Hahn. Corporal Rich earlier this year earned his degree in Korean Studies. He and Stanley worked feverishly on investigations in Korea. I asked Steven why is it that he pursued his degree in Korean Studies? He looked me straight in the eye and he said, "Because it helps me to do my job better and to bring more fallen heroes from Korea home."

Starting from the left, you see Robert Olson. Next to Robert is Dr. Robin Rodriguez. Robin stands all of this high (indicating). This is a picture of them in a remote village on Muson, interviewing witnesses, hopefully to find clues about a World War II cross site. Robin has her degree, PhD. in History. As I mentioned, Robin stands about this high, tough as nails. Despite being an academic, Robin can run circles around many of our service members during our physical training.

We also do recoveries. Here you see a remote location overlooking the Khe Sanh Valley in Vietnam.

The individuals you see there all serve in our United States military. They just happen to wear civilian clothes when they are on-site. All six of them that you see in this picture include the team leader, Marine Captain Mark Kelly, who served in either Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom. These are combat tested, combat proven veterans who dutifully serve in trying to recover remains in remote locations.

This is a great picture. Hopefully you can see it. This is on the side of a mountain in Papua, New Guinea, where our recovery team is looking for a crest site and the remains of World War II pilots.

Strapped to the mountain is Army Sergeant Dan McGill. He is a proven combat veteran, three times deployed to Afghanistan, and he is also an accomplished mountaineer. Next to him, strapped to the mountain, is Minnie Symingson. I asked Minnie, in your wildest dreams, while in the university, did you ever think you would be strapped to the side of a mountain putting your fate's safety in the hands of an Army Sergeant?

This is where it all comes to fruition. I have mentioned to you that when our team is deployed, they deploy in civilian clothes. Ours is a humanitarian mission. But just in case that recovery team discovers and finds remains, they are prepared with our uniform.

Here you see Army Staff Sergeant Riley, three-time deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Marine Sergeant Wayne Hansen, two-time deployed to Afghanistan, paying their respects in honoring a fallen comrade whose remains were discovered in Vietnam.

This is a picture in the South Pacific. Our J-PAC team, as you see here, is boarding a C-17 to return home with the remains of a World War II pilot that they had found. The C-17 crew that you see there loved this mission. Their call sign every time they bring somebody back is repat, short for repatriation.

Our last mission is identification. Here you see archeologist Owen O'Leary looking at a boot that was found at a World War II crest site, looking for material evidence to piece the clues together.

I am particularly proud of this one. This is Dr. Maria Teresa. She is one of our anthropologists. She is a smart lady. In fact, if you look at what the Academy, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences does with their highest certification, it is called a Diplomat status. There are only 75 Diplomats in the entire United States. We at J-PAC are proud to have 11 of those 75. Dr. Marie Teresa was the eleventh Diplomat to bestow that status.

Let me leave you with four take-aways. I hope the pictures I shared with you, that you understand the sheer dedication and talent of the people that dutifully serve in the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command. They are talented beyond measure, passion and dedication unrivaled.

I also share with you that we are highly-dependent upon the host nations we operate in. Those host nations enjoy a strong partnership with J-PAC. I will tell you to a "T" they all marvel at how the United States and why the United States spends as much attention, resources and energy on finding the fallen.

The physical challenges that Secretary Hagel talked to you about yesterday, we are not immune from that. It is a physical reality, but we are working in and amongst that. We are looking at how to become more efficient, how to become more effective. The assistance and support we garner from the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization is priceless. It is that fervent interest by all of you, and it is that staunch support of the VFW that allow us to thrive and allow us to succeed.

Over the doors of our laboratories is a great quote from President Calvin Coolidge. It says, "The nation that forgets its defenders will be itself forgotten."

Ladies and gentlemen, let me assure you we will endeavor to search for, recover and identify our fallen heroes, your comrades. (Applause)

The passage of time neither dims nor diminishes this noble mission. I am thankful that you understand that. I am thankful that you fervently support that.

Let me express on behalf of my team at J-PAC the tremendous partnership and support we gain from all of you and from your great leadership team. May God bless each and every one of you. May he bless all veterans, especially those in harm's way that are serving our great nation, and may he shed his grace always on this great country. God bless you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF MAJOR GENERAL MONTAGUE WINFIELD,
DEPARTMENT ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE –
POW/MISSING PERSONNEL AFFAIRS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, General. This week you have seen or heard from foreign guests from Russia and Vietnam. We invite them as a sign of respect for military veterans the world over, regardless of politics, and to prove to them our 100-percent support of America's Full Accounting Mission.

Your VFW only wants one thing when we travel overseas. We want their governments to fully understand, from an American combat veterans' perspective, that what matters most is the return of a fallen comrade to their loving family.

Enabling our government researchers to access foreign military archives is the key that we believe will help unlock the mysteries surrounding thousands of missing Americans going back to World War II.

The direct beneficiary of our relationship with these foreign governments and veterans' organizations is our next guest, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs, Retired Army Major General "Q" Winfield.

General Winfield, who also serves as the Director of the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, or DPMO, as it is known, is the Washington-based policy archival research arm to General McKeague's Operational Command.

General Winfield came into the job with the hands-on experience of being the first J-PAC Commander, which was formed in 2003 with the merger of Joint Task Force-Full Accounting and the Army's Central Identification Laboratory.

As Deputy Assistant Secretary, he is responsible for developing policy and strategy for personnel recovery, personnel accounting, and DoD support to civil search and rescue. As DPMO Director, he leads the national effort for the fullest possible accounting of American personnel missing as a result of hostile action.

Time, location and circumstance of loss may prevent us from recovering all 83,000 of our fallen comrades, but our government is going to keep the faith with our missing and their families by doing their absolute best.

And your VFW is going to do its very best to protect their budgets, missions and manpower requirements, because they are the ones who honor the soldier's creed of never leaving a fallen buddy on the battlefield.

Comrades, please welcome the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs, and a Life Member of VFW Post 6587 in Spring Lake Park, Minnesota, Major General "Q" Winfield. (Applause)

REMARKS BY MAJOR GENERAL "Q" WINFIELD

MAJOR GENERAL WINFIELD: As always, it is a great day to be in the service of this wonderful nation. It is a great day to be a part of this most noble mission.

John, thank you for that very warm introduction. I am honored to have been invited to be here with you today. I am also delighted for the opportunity to be able to speak, but more importantly, thank you all for your service and thank you for what you do for our mission.

You see, there is no bigger or more important partner to the POW/MIA issue than the VFW, knowing that the VFW is supportive of our mission to account for our missing war heroes.

Your bell buddies, your wingmen, your shipmates reminds me that as a nation we must continue to fulfill our sacred pledge to account for our missing, no matter what it takes, no matter how long it takes.

On behalf of the Secretary of Defense, I am responsible for leading the national effort to achieve the fullest possible accounting of more than 83,000 warriors who were lost while serving this great nation. I am also responsible for limiting the loss and capture of Americans serving abroad in current operations.

One of the most important aspects of my job is to meet and work with the families of our missing. This past week I met with 80 families in Salt Lake City, Utah, where one of the family members shared a very touching story. He said that his brother-in-law, Sergeant George Green, United States Army Special Forces, wrote a letter home in 1970. In the last paragraph of what was to be his last letter home to his mom, he wrote, "If I am killed, no one will ever recover my body because I don't want anyone to risk their life for this worthless piece of clay."

In December, 1970, Sergeant Green was a part of a long-range reconnaissance patrol operating in Laos. The patrol was engaged by a heavy enemy force, and during the firefight Sergeant Green was killed. Because of the intensity of that firefight his team had to leave his remains behind.

Like thousands before him, Sergeant Green answered the call of duty. Like thousands before him, Sergeant Green was a humble soldier. Like thousands before him, Sergeant Green laid down his life for his brothers in arms. Like thousands before him, Sergeant Green paid the price for our freedom with his life. Sergeant Green may have felt that he was a worthless piece of clay, but to us he was and is an American hero deserving our nation's highest priority and enduring efforts. He is not forgotten.

George Washington, over 200 years ago got it right. He said, "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in war, no matter how justified shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of early wars are treated and appreciated by our nation."

In 2010, Congress passed the most significant piece of legislation for the POW/MIA issue since 1996. It directed the Secretary of Defense to

implement a comprehensive coordinated integrated fully-funded program to account for our missing from World War II through the Gulf War. It also directed the Secretary of Defense to increase the capacity and capability of the accounting community to account for our missing.

The accounting community is a very large organization. J-PAC is a part of that accounting community. We live by a core set of values, commitment, integrity, open communications and compassion, commitment. We make the pledge a reality. In particular, we do the right thing for the right reason.

Open communications, we build and foster trust with all, and finally compassion. We honor the sacrifices of our missing and the sacrifices of their families. In 2012, we had some very impressive events. 2013 had some even more impressive events. From last year's VFW National Convention to this one, the accounting community has accounted for 64 of our missing warriors, seven from World War II, 40 from the Korean War, and 17 from the Vietnam War. (Applause)

Additionally, the White House approved the Charter for the U.S.-Joint Russian Commission. This is a wonderful, wonderful advancement, because it will allow us to increase our relationship with our Russian counterparts as we seek to get more access to their archives.

We have had a series of very high-profile cases as well, high-profile cases that received widespread recognition. It honored our missing.

Lieutenant Colonel Don Faith, who led Task Force Faith during those heroic operations at Chosin Reservoir in Korea, received the Medal of Honor posthumously. He was lost in December 1950. Lieutenant Colonel Faith was accounted for in October 2012. Lieutenant Colonel Faith was buried in Arlington National Cemetery in April.

Lieutenant Dennis Peterson, the last search and rescue member lost in Vietnam from the Navy, he was shot down when his Sea King helicopter was accomplishing a search and rescue mission. His crew and he were lost in 1967. He was awarded the Silver Star posthumously. He was accounted for in July 2012. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery in May.

I had the privilege of attending both of those ceremonies as the senior representative of the Secretary of Defense. Finally, Father Emil Kapaun is credited for saving the lives of dozens of POWs in Korea in 1950. He risked his own life to steal food from the Chinese that kept many Americans alive. In April, he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Father Emil Kapaun has not been accounted for, but to him and the 83,000 we say we are keeping the promise. We say until they are home, we say you are not forgotten.

During the Commemoration Ceremony for the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, President Barrack Obama stated, "And when an American does not come back, let us resolve to do everything within our power to bring them home. That is our solemn promise."

I want to close with a quote from a widow of one of our missing. She said, "You don't appreciate a funeral until there is not one." The men and women of the accounting community are dedicated, committed to doing everything humanly possible to account for America's heroes, those who are still missing. We believe in that mission. We are the only nation that puts the effort that we put in trying to bring home America's fallen heroes.

God bless each of you, God bless all of our veterans, God bless the families of all our missing, God bless the men and women serving around the world to ensure our freedom, and God bless these United States of America. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I will say to both of these guys we really have some friends that get it and understand, and they are really totally dedicated to this mission. We are blessed to have them here.

PRESENTATION OF TEACHER AWARDS

For more than a century, we have placed great emphasis on educating our nation's youth on civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism. In 1999, the National Citizenship Education Teacher Award was created to recognize teachers who strive to implement these values into their classroom curriculum.

This year's award winners are three exceptionally devoted Americans who have undoubtedly fulfilled their responsibilities as citizens of the United States through the art of teaching.

These three honorees were selected from across the nation for their originality and dedication to citizenship education. They have effectively encouraged their students to become better citizens by spreading knowledge of our nation's history, its institutions, and becoming involved in the community in which they live.

Each recipient will receive the \$1,000 Past Commander-in-Chief John Smart Award for personal development, and their schools, likewise, will receive a \$1,000 award.

I would like to take this moment to personally thank these three teachers, and all of the teachers of the world. Without them, who knows where our country would be. They teach the leaders of tomorrow, and America is forever indebted to them for their service to our children and this country. Thank you, teachers, and congratulations to you on the job well done.

INTRODUCTION OF MATT MADDOX, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER AWARD

I am pleased to introduce to you the National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year, representing Grades K-5, Mr. Matthew Maddox of Troy, Illinois.

In the five years that Mr. Maddox has been teaching fifth grade at Columbus Elementary School in Edwardsville, Illinois, he has provided his students with some extraordinary, hands-on experiences. Not only has Mr. Maddox identified unique ways to teach about important core subjects, he has made a great effort to instill a sense of appreciation for the military in each of his students.

Mr. Maddox's class successfully teamed up with Illinois Representative Dan Beiser to write a House Resolution to recognize "Iraq/Afghanistan War Remembrance Day" in Illinois. The Resolution gained overwhelming support and was passed into law.

His class has also raised \$800 to send two veterans via Honor Flight to visit the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., and corresponded with local Pearl Harbor veterans to hear first-hand accounts of what happened that day.

Mr. Maddox maintains an open invitation for local veterans to visit the class and share their military experience with his students.

As if his previous accomplishments were not enough to warrant him this award, Mr. Maddox has partnered with Southwest Airlines and the Academy of Model Aeronautics to demonstrate the art and science that go into engineering by teaching students to design, build, and fly five original radio-controlled model aircraft.

He has also engaged his students in a near space balloon project using a military weather balloon to capture video images from an altitude of 76,500 feet.

Matt Maddox is the prime example of what a teacher should be, continually giving his students real-life unique lessons to teach them about the world around them, while also encouraging strong values and loyalty to our nation and our veterans.

Currently, Mr. Maddox and his class are in the process of dedicating a city street in honor of a local fallen hero.

Please join me in welcoming Mr. Matthew Maddox, sponsored by VFW Post 1299 in Edwardsville, Illinois. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "National Citizenship Education Teacher Award, Grade Level K-5, presented to Matt Maddox, Columbus Elementary School, 2012-2013."

RESPONSE BY MR. MATT MADDOX

MR. MADDOX: First, it is pretty easy to speak in front of fifth graders. I speak for a living, but when I am in front of a bunch of heroes and people that I look up to it is a little difficult. Excuse me if I am a little bit nervous. I was just going to go off the cuff, but then the other two teachers up here started writing notes down and I said maybe I should do that, too.

First, I just want to thank the VFW and two individuals of the local VFW that I want to have stand and be recognized real quick, who mean a lot to me and have been very supportive, Russ Rieke and Larry Miller. If you could please stand from the Illinois delegation. (Applause)

So, Larry came in my classroom to do a presentation and he said, "How much time do I have?" I said, "You have as much time as you want." He goes, "Well, 30 minutes is good." He was there for two and a half hours.

The kids never lost a beat. They stayed engaged the whole time. I was talking to Russ and I said I have been trying for years to find a Pearl Harbor veteran to come speak to the kids. We exchanged letters with different veterans throughout Illinois. He said, "Well, there is a veteran in Highland, Illinois, and I would like to bring him in."

He is Dallas Harvey, a Pearl Harbor veteran that was brought in by Russ Rieke to come to talk to 125 fifth-graders, a first-hand account of what happened on Pearl Harbor.

Those students, I see them during the summer, and I still have many of them mention that to me today, because it's a life experience that they will remember for the rest of their life, and they will be able to share that with their kids and their grandkids, that they actually had a chance of that great opportunity to actually meet a Pearl Harbor veteran.

I also want to thank Scott Fitzgerald, who nominated me for the award. Scott spent ten years in active duty in the Air Force as a pilot, and is now a Southwest Airlines pilot. We have partnered on so many different projects.

Also, my superintendent, Dr. Ed Hightower, who is very supportive of the military. In fact, he is a patron employer award winner in Illinois for his dedication to employees that are veterans. I, myself, am in the Illinois Army National Guard and he supported me when I enlisted, and now I am currently going through officer training, and he has supported me all the way. I just want to thank him.

Just a few things that were mentioned, I feel it's very important to honor veterans. I am very lucky to have my dad, who is here, my dad and my parents are here today; my dad and mom, and their friends. My dad just retired July 11th from the United States Air Force, both active and Reserve.

I had a good role model in my life and taught me to appreciate veterans, to look up to veterans, because they really set the standard high. I really want to thank them. Thank you for raising me. I know I was a terror, but I am glad to say I have calmed down a little bit.

Both John Ramer and Jim Maddox are eligible for the VFW, but they are not members, so if you could, can help me out with that they really are looking forward to a couple of recruiters that will go and talk to them very shortly. You guys will help out with that, right?

Whenever I am eligible, I will be joining. Again, I just want to say thank you. It is important to honor the top one percent.

I always tell my students that there is one percent of the population that has served or currently serves in the military, and that's a pretty elite group of people. Those are the type of individuals that students should be looking up to, their parents, veterans, because of the way veterans carry themselves, how professional they are and the standard that they set high, and the attention to detail that they possess, and students can learn a great deal from them about a lot of life experiences.

That is why I invite veterans to my classroom at any time. I probably have had five or six different veterans come and speak last year, and the students really enjoy hearing from them. I have partnered with Senator Bill Haine and Representative Dwight Kay from my home District, and we wrote up the Resolution this past year, Senate Bill 1703, which amends the School Code in Illinois to have October 7th the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Day in Illinois. So, that will be on the school calendar, and it will be dedicated every year, once it is signed, and it will probably be signed this week by the Governor of Illinois and will become law in Illinois.

That is very important. Also, we partnered with them as well on House Resolution this past year which dedicates a week to physical fitness in Illinois, which if any of these students want to be in the military, it

definitely helps to be physically fit. It definitely encourages and ties into the military as well.

Again, thank you and I am really humbled by this award, and it makes me want to work harder and continue to partner with veteran organizations, and continue to teach students and guide students in the right direction. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF HUNTER JONES, MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Now, I will introduce the National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year, representing Grades 6-8, Mr. Hunter Jones, an eighth-grade history teacher at Will James Junior High School in Billings, Montana. Mr. Jones' peers and community believe he upholds the values and provides the inspiration it takes to be awarded this esteemed VFW National award, and we couldn't agree more.

Walking into Mr. Jones' classroom, you are immediately greeted with war artifacts that cover the walls, depicting all of America's wars. Mr. Jones teaches his students about the sacrifices of our country's men and women in a way that encourages his students to adopt his unwavering patriotic support of our troops.

While his classroom and teaching style provide enthusiasm and motivation to his students to learn all they can about our nation's history, Mr. Jones doesn't stop there. Eleven years ago, he created an after-school program for his students called the Soldier Support Club. This club provides opportunity for them to collect and distribute supplies to our troops overseas.

With his guidance and encouragement, Mr. Jones' students have shown their gratitude and commitment to our armed forces by sending over 12,000 letters and 5,000 packages to troops since 2003. These are quite impressive numbers, and we are grateful to Mr. Jones who sets such a high standard for his students.

Additionally, Mr. Jones has organized a Veterans Day Award Assembly. Students host local veterans and their families as guests of honor and sing patriotic songs in remembrance of our fallen heroes.

Between coordinating care packages, writing letters to the troops, and teaching his students about patriotism and history, Mr. Jones has been previously recognized in his community for his outstanding teaching methods and commendable civic service.

He has a collection of Certificates of Merit and Flags from appreciative recipients of his students' work and was named the 2009 Daughter for the American Revolution Montana Teacher of the Year, as well as the 2012 VFW Post 1634 and District 3 Teacher of the Year.

Mr. Jones continually focuses on developing his students into mature young adults who can truly appreciate those who wear the uniform. He has demonstrated time and again his passion for community service and his dedication for the United States military. He is a patriot through and through, and we thank him for passing his ideal down to his students.

Please join me in welcoming Mr. Hunter Jones, sponsored by VFW Post 1634 in Billings, Montana. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "National Citizenship Education Teacher Award, Grade Level 6-8, presented to Hunted Jones, Will James Junior High School, 2012-2013."

RESPONSE BY MR. HUNTER JONES

MR. JONES: Thank you very much. This is quite an honor. I would first like to thank the National Veterans of Foreign Wars for this honor. I would love to thank the State of Montana VFW for this honor, and especially District 3 and Post 1634, my friends over there, for this honor. For me, there is no greater award that I can ever receive than an award from the VFW. I will explain.

I come from a military family, but although I came from a military family I decided at a young age just to be a citizen. As a citizen, I was free to do what I want, I was free to raise a family the way I wanted, and I was free to choose a profession that I wanted.

All the while I was very conscious that someone else was paying the price for that freedom. When I got into teaching, it was a natural thing for me to want to teach American History.

Teaching our history is a way for me to educate our young people the values and importance of our military. I teach from 1750 up to 1880, but even though it is done in my curriculum, I always put emphasis and lessons on the value of our veterans.

When I got to Billings, Montana in 1995, I was teaching there, and after two years I had the idea to start asking my kids if any of them had relatives that were veterans? I was surprised to see the hands that were raised. Billings, Montana, is a center for many different Reserve and National Guard Units. So, in 1998, I started having my students interview their relatives and bring in that information, and we started to have the kids make veterans certificates thanking them for their service from my school, Will James Middle School. Then later that year, we had all those veterans that were able to come to school and have my students give them the certificates they made.

Well, that kind of just grew and grew and grew, that assembly. We switched it over to Veterans Day, and we have continued with this program inviting veterans from all around Billings and Yellowstone and Carbon County, and it has become a regular thing that I look forward to and the school looks forward to.

As the years have gone by, we have lost so many World War II veterans, and now as time goes by we are losing our Korean War veterans. But our Veterans Assembly continues. I am lucky enough to have friends in the 189th National Guard Aviation Unit, and they have brought down a Black Hawk Helicopter, weather permitting, every year for the kids to see.

The National Guard and Reserve Units bring other vehicles to Will James. It is something that our community looks forward to. Now, after 9/11, of course, everything changed, and even before that I was not aware of how many families in that area had ties to the military. In 2012, I ran into an ex-student of mine, she was married, and I asked her what her husband does. She said, "Well, Mr. Jones, Brian is in Afghanistan."

So, I took that information and I asked Alexis if she would mind if I had my students write to Brian in Afghanistan. We have a fellow in my school that teaches there, he was in Vietnam, and he had told me once that in Vietnam he never got a single letter from anyone. So, with that thought, I decided to form this club, and we started to write letters to Brian. Well, he started to write back. Then we adopted his whole team over there in Afghanistan.

Then I started asking my students, and hands started raising as that year went on. Class by class kids would start to raise their hand or bring up a note to me saying that their brother, their mother, father, uncles, cousins were deployed in Afghanistan.

In the year 2003-2004, things really picked up. There was not a single class in the whole school that if we asked at 9:00 in the morning, hands would be raised. It was that many contacts or families of veterans involved in the military. So, we started sending letters all through these last 12 years. We have been sending boxes all through these past 12 years. That is the way that the kids can identify with the reality of the people that are buying their freedom, paying for their freedom. So, that effort has continued.

I have a list of 32 of our soldiers active-duty that are either in Afghanistan, Kuwait or elsewhere around the world. I even have three names that we are sending things over to Africa. Now, earlier, I said this is the greatest honor that I could ever have. That's because coming from a military family, I had two grandfathers that were in France in World War I. They both came home, which I think is remarkable.

My father, my mother and my uncle were all in World War II. My father has long passed. My uncle has long passed, but my mother was a nurse in World War II and she was thrilled that I became a history teacher. She was thrilled that I would teach the values of the Constitution, that I would always remind my students the value of who is paying for our freedom.

My mother passed away at the end of last year, about two months before I got a call from the National VFW. So, I have to think that she is up there looking down proud as can be that I had this honor. I cannot thank you all enough. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF MATTHEW SUSIN, HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It is with great pleasure that introduce you to the National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year, representing Grades 9-12, Mr. Matthew Susin from Eau Gallie High School in Melbourne, Florida.

Mr. Susin teaches ninth-grade History, but he doesn't just teach his students History from the book, he really demonstrates it for them.

He has been inspiring his students to learn and appreciate America's heritage and military history for many years. His enthusiasm for U.S. History is clear in the teaching methods he utilizes in the classroom. His knowledge and innovative teaching methods help bring textbooks to life and is a reflection of his hard work, dedication and passion for teaching our nation's youth.

Mr. Susin's resourceful techniques enable him to demonstrate history to his students instead of merely telling it to them.

Every year 200 students reenact the Battle of Belleau Wood where, thanks to Mr. Susin's creativity, they act out the battle in a trench warfare environment. Mr. Susin went as far as renting a backhoe to build the battlefield himself at a paint ball facility to give the students a more realistic feel for what World War II troops endured during combat.

Students also reenact the Battle of Lexington-Concorde that begins with a student acting as Paul Revere running down the school hallway yelling, "The British are coming!" Students who have graduated come back to participate in these reenactments and the entire community looks forward to them.

In his outstanding commitment to instilling Americanism and patriotism in his students, Mr. Susin created the Row Kappa Historical Honor Society at his high school where students volunteer at local and military museums.

Mr. Susin's peers speak high of his interactive curriculum dedicated to our military, as well as his commitment to the previous students who joined the military after high school. He keeps in touch with them and sends them holiday care packages.

The knowledge he shares with his students will transcend generations, and they are indeed fortunate to have been taught by one of America's finest.

Please help me in welcoming Mr. Matthew Susin, sponsored by VFW Post 4643 in Satellite Beach, Florida. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "National Citizenship Education Teacher Award, Grade Level 9-12, presented to Matthew Susin, Eau Gallie High School, 2012-2013."

RESPONSE BY MATTHEW SUSIN

MR. SUSIN: Before I begin my speech, I wanted to thank my wife. On our anniversaries we always wanted it to be a place where there is no people, where we can be quiet and she can spend that entire time with me and just honor our marriage. Today is our anniversary. (Applause) I couldn't think of a better place to be than with my wife Tina Susin.

I want to say thank you for the prestigious award. My Florida delegation over there made me honored to be here today. Satellite Beach nominated me. I won District 8 and then was able to move up the chain.

I want to say thank you to every one of you here for your service and thank you for the ability to be here today.

I teach American History and American Government in Eau Gallie High School. One of the things I have done is I have built trench warfare, battle reenactments. I have done all these things, and it comes from when I was in high school and I was convinced that the teacher I had for History was actually dead behind the podium because he slept with the newspaper in front of his face.

I grew up with a grandfather who served in World War II in Operation Iceberg in Okinawa. He lost his arm when mortar hit, and he debilitated his legs to where it put him in a wheelchair at an early age.

I have 14 first cousins, who would come with me, and I would dress them up in his World War II memorabilia and I would have them out back reenacting the battles when I was 11 and 12 years old. This transformed into my classrooms later on. He talked about how I built the World War I battlefield with the trench reenactment. The key to that was I found the kids learned so much better when they learn, not from a textbook, but they actually live out every one of their experiences.

The problem that we have today is that it is too hard to teach out of the textbook because they give you all of the standards and they force you to cover a curriculum. I didn't get my degree in teaching, and I didn't get my tactics from a teaching class. I live history through my class. My kids love being in there.

The Battle of Belleu Wood that we reenact, six trenches on a three-acre facility. I cut down pine logs to build a German bunker for them. I went on to build a Vietnam battlefield through the swamp that is right next to it.

Every year VFW members and their sons and their grandparents come back and we get together and do that. They love it every year, and I have kids that come back from the military and do it also. My grandfather, who was such an inspiration in my life, is who drives me to become who I am today. We lost him last March and since then it has been a road that has gotten me along a path that has brought me here today. I think he is pulling the strings the entire way.

You see, one of my students was in the Pacific Theater, was in a boat going through the Solomon Islands and was trading batteries for hand-carved statues, and all of a sudden the native held up American dog tags. This was eight months ago.

She contacted me and took them and said we need to find a home for those dog tags. So, through the local VFW Post, along with some other veterans groups, we were able in the last eight months to find those six dog tags, the homes of the relatives of those people that fought in World War II. (Applause)

Currently, I am working on another project that just came to me a month ago. This is why I say that my grandfather is moving through me.

I was with a veteran sitting down and he said, "You know, Mr. Susin, you do a lot for everything in your community. Did you know that the American flags are made, a portion of them, in China?" I about fell out of my chair. I said, "How can it be that we have a repressive Chinese government who makes American flags, who might be in my classroom?"

So, I contacted my local legislator with my Student Government Association, Representative Workman, is going to file a Bill along with the State Senator, and the Governor is going to sign it, which states that all American Flags in the State of Florida will be made in the United States in governmental municipalities. (Applause)

Thank you. I told him, when I called Representative Workman, I said, "I am not going to take no for an answer. I need you to file this Bill. I promise you if you don't, I will have every student, every parent, every VFW member inside your office for the next 365 days to make sure that you do file this Bill."

So, I challenge some of you to go do the same in your states. Please contact your local legislators, tell them on the state level this is what we want. We can't have the American Flags to be made in the sweatshops over in China, or in a foreign repressive government. We have to be able to make it here with Annin Flag Company and other groups that make them here in the United States with the American-made fibers.

Please contact your state legislators and do that. I don't want to look up in my classroom, when I am doing the Pledge of Allegiance to my American Flag to know if it came from China or not. I don't want to sit at a football game, when I am standing there and wonder if that flag out on the field was made in China. I don't want to do that. I am going to make sure in my state that it doesn't happen any longer. I would challenge each one of you to make sure that in your state it doesn't happen, either.

You know, a lot of people say that inspiration in your life as a teacher inspires other students. I have found that my inspiration comes from my students. Whether it was any of my reenactments or any of the things I do in my class between debates and model Student Senate, and everything else, I am inspired by my students to do better. Thank you. God bless America and God bless every one of you for doing what you do for us. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RICHARD L. DeNOYER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: During his 32 years with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Past Commander-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer amassed a distinguished record of service to our nation, community and to our organization.

Throughout his year as VFW Commander-in-Chief, Richard demonstrated his dedication to America's veterans and service members. Operating under his theme "Service with Pride," he proved to be an aggressive and passionate spokesman for all those we serve.

Traveling the world to defend our veterans and those who have been lost in battle, he has proven himself time and again to be among the VFW's finest. The words "Above and Beyond" are an apt description of Richard's tenure as Commander-in-Chief.

For that, and his many years of dedicated service, we owe a lasting debt of gratitude to him. Please join me in honoring Past Commander-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer with the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to Richard L. DeNoyer.

"In lasting appreciation and spirited recognition of his extraordinary record of outstanding and stalwart service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. His many accomplishments as an exceedingly-involved and active member, including successful duties at the Post, District and Department levels ultimately culminated as Commander-in-Chief.

“His admirable and noteworthy commitment to the VFW, along with the professional presence with which he performed his duties, are in the finest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 23rd day of July, 2013. Approved by the National Council of Administration.”

This has been signed by John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen F. “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE – PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RICHARD DeNOYER

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DeNOYER: Last year at the National Convention in Reno, I completed my year. One of the greatest experiences in my life was my year as Commander-in-Chief. Without a doubt, any success that I enjoy certainly can be attributed to many, many people.

I would like to take an opportunity to just recognize a few: “Gunner” Kent and his Adjutant General staff.

Larry Maher, Bob Greene and the Quartermaster General’s staff. My Department, the Department of Massachusetts, which supported me all of the way to the final responsibility as Commander-in-Chief.

My class of 2011-2012 Department Commanders, and I would ask them to stand and be recognized, those of you that are in the auditorium.

Thank you for your support, and it was an honor to serve with you. Without a doubt, before I forget, because I have to, you know, live with this lady, and I certainly do not want to forget the love and support of my wife, Theresa. Believe me, that made all the difference serving as Commander-in-Chief.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you and just say what an honor it was to serve with you in 2011-2012. Thank you all. God bless and God bless the VFW. (Applause)

STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA DIRECTOR MICHAEL DAKDUK

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Our next guest is a great supporter of our military and strives to help our veterans succeed after getting out of the service. Michael Dakduk is the Executive Director for the Student Veterans of America, an organization that has joined with the VFW to help our veterans succeed in college.

Student Veterans of America Chapters are made up of groups of student-veterans on college campuses who are there to support each other through the challenges of being a student-veteran. These chapters provide the students with a sense of camaraderie they may be missing after leaving the military.

The SVA and VFW joined together to give America’s student veterans more specialized assistance in navigating the VA and acquiring their GI Bill benefits. In addition, these veterans are learning about the VFW and how we will continue to be there to support them even after they have completed their educational goals.

To show our support of this great organization, I am pleased to present Student Veterans of America with a \$5,000 check today to go toward expanding their outreach efforts to student veterans.

Please join me in welcoming a great veteran who has been organizing Student Veterans of America Chapters since his own college days, Student Veterans of America Executive Director and VFW member Michael Dakduk. (Applause)

REMARKS BY SVA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MICHAEL DAKDUK

COMRADE MICHAEL DAKDUK: Thank you so much. I want to begin by thanking Chief Hamilton for all of his support and Senior Vice Chief Bill Thien and Junior Vice Chief John Stroud, and the Executive Director of the Washington, D.C., office, Bob Wallace. I also want to acknowledge “Gunner” Kent in his retirement. Congratulations.

Also Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier, with all the volunteer work he is doing to support student-veterans, and specifically Ryan Gallucci in the Washington, D.C., office, and Dan Parker in the Kansas City Office Headquarters, and the rest of the staff in Washington, D.C., and Kansas City. Also my home state of Nevada, Department of Nevada, I would like to acknowledge them, and the Ladies Auxiliary and the President of the Ladies Auxiliary Leanne Lemley and fellow comrades.

Student Veterans of America is a national coalition of student-veteran groups all across the nation, but this isn’t a new phenomenon. The student-veterans have been organizing since World War II when troops returned home and used the original GI Bill.

In 1944, student-veterans organized at the University of Missouri. They created a student-veterans group by the name of Eagles and Bankers. Eight hundred student-veterans on the campus of the University of Missouri, World War II veterans, came together to provide peer-to-peer support, and to work to change the campus to be more supportive of military veterans.

In 1954, military veterans returned home from the forgotten war in Korea. They joined the student-veterans group at Northern Illinois University, known as the NIU Vets Club, to provide peer-to-peer support, to support one another and to change their college campus to be more supportive of Korean War veterans.

Now, fast forward to 1972, and the troops returned home largely to an unwelcoming campus and society, protests on campus at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Vietnam veterans came together and provided peer-to-peer support to ensure that one another would succeed in higher education.

Now, over four decades later military veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan have come together, and in 2008, student-veterans from 20 separate colleges and universities gathered in Chicago, Illinois, and they said, “Why don’t we coalesce our energy under one banner,” and Student Veterans of America was born, and what started on only 20 student-veteran college campuses has now emerged to over 850 colleges and universities throughout the nation in all 50 states, including Washington, D.C.; incredible growth.

Five years ago, 20 campuses, now 850. By year-end, we will probably be in over 1,000 college and university campuses. That is absolutely incredible.

But, we did not do this alone. With the help of the VFW, that is attributed to our growth and strength today. Earlier this year, we signed an agreement with the VFW to formalize our partnership.

Now, we recently announced several months ago the special e-mail address exclusively for student-veterans that are having issues with their GI Bill benefits or other VA educational benefits, known as “1 Student Veteran.”

Any veteran that wants to e-mail 1studentveteran@vfw.org can get information within four hours, support for their GI Bill financial claims or other GI educational benefits, or any benefits. They will get the referral to the appropriate service officer.

On the local level, I recently read about how student-veterans at the University of Colorado, in Denver, are being supported by VFW Post No. 1, and they worked to create an emergency loan program. Some folks were not receiving their benefits on time. They would receive the support.

At Daemen College, student-veterans felt empowered and decided to work at the Harvey Morin Post 2940 to support that Post in getting engaged in leadership positions. Now, they are working in West Seneca at many different VFW Posts to enrich the VFW Posts and be a part of the leadership positions and to dispel the notion that there exists such a great generational divide; that we can't come together. I refuse to believe that.

The only divide that exists or will exist will be created or bridged by us. The onus is on us. I don't think that there is a divide so great between our generations that we can't come together for the common mission and greater good of all veterans of all generations, and that's why I believe so much in this partnership.

So, I want to thank everybody here, comrades and the leadership here at the VFW. I look forward to continued partnership with the VFW for many years to come. Thank you so much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: You know, I just want to say quickly before he gets out of here. One of the things when we talked about doing this, I called Jim Nier and said, “Jim, we need to do this. We need to make this thing happen with the VA.” And we got Bill Thien and John Stroud involved, and they concurred and said we want to build this relationship over the years. I want to tell you something, it wasn't about new members, it wasn't about politics, it was about helping American heroes to help them to make certain we took care of those young people coming home.

We, in the VFW, are very proud that we are doing that. So, you should be proud of that.

INTRODUCTION OF GORDON LOGAN, VFW JAMES VAN ZANDT CITIZENSHIP AWARD

It is now my pleasure to introduce and recognize the recipient of this year's VFW James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award. He is a dedicated VFW

member and a true patriot, Sport Clips founder and CEO, Mr. Gordon Logan.

Gordon is a VFW Life Member of Post 8587 in Georgetown, Texas, and a member of the VFW Foundation Board. He served in the Air Force from 1969 to 1976, which included service in Vietnam as a C-130 Pilot.

Sport Clips' relationship with the VFW began because of Gordon's strong desire to support Operation Uplink, a desire fueled by his own memories of wanting to call home during his time spent overseas. So, in 2007, Sport Clips kicked off its first Operation Uplink fund-raiser by donating one dollar from each haircut directly to the VFW Operation Uplink program.

Gordon and his wonderful Sport Clips team have continued their efforts each Veterans Day for the past six years with ever-growing success, generously donating more than \$2 million in total. This year, Sport Clips is sponsoring an impressive 34 free call days for our troops stationed overseas and for our hospitalized veterans.

And now, as the wars in the Middle East continue to wind down and troops return home, Sport Clips is working with the VFW on developing a new scholarship program for veterans.

The VFW is so fortunate to have forged such a strong relationship with a great American company and to have a great friend and supporter like Gordon.

It should be noted that Sport Clips recently came in at number one on Military Times' list of the best franchises for veterans. Gordon has made it a priority to award Sport Clips franchises to veterans, giving them the opportunity to own their own businesses and share in the American dream that they have fought to secure. Additionally, in an effort to combat the high unemployment rate among recent veterans, he has enlisted the aid of the International Franchise Association in securing thousands of jobs for Post-9/11 veterans.

Gordon, we are proud to call Sport Clips the VFW's official haircutter. Well done.

Comrades, I present to you the recipient of the 2013 VFW James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award, a truly wonderful individual, Mr. Gordon Logan. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "VFW James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award, Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded to Gordon Logan.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation of his unwavering devotion to our nation's military community through his support of VFW's Operation Uplink program and his many endeavors to provide employment for veterans. His selfless efforts and tireless dedication have positively impacted the lives of millions of veterans and their families.

"His commitment to VFW programs and to the veteran community are true to the ideals, traditions and values of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and has justly earned him our deepest appreciation and respect.

"IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 23rd day of July, 2013. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen “Gunner” Kent, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE – COMRADE GORDON LOGAN

COMRADE GORDON LOGAN: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Hamilton and Adjutant General Kent. It is a great honor to receive the VFW Citizenship Award. I am humbled to be recognized by the membership of the premier veterans organization that works so hard to do so much for our veterans.

I accept this on behalf of all the Sport Clips team members who have worked so hard to recognize and assist our nation’s veterans.

Over the past few years, it has been my pleasure and honor to work closely with Adjutant General “Gunner” Kent, and the extremely capable team of the VFW who direct the day-to-day operations of the VFW and the VFW Foundation.

Sport Clips has been the official haircutter of the VFW since 2006, and we are very proud to have raised almost \$2 million for the Operation Uplink, to provide over two million phone calls home for servicemen and women overseas and the hospitals. (Applause)

This has been a team effort from our clients, for our stylists, our franchisees and our corporate support team that speaks volumes of the appreciation that American people have for the service and sacrifices of our armed forces.

As Commander-in-Chief Hamilton mentioned, this year the number of deployed troops is decreasing. We have shifted our emphasis over to the Sport Clips VFW Helping Heroes Scholarship Program. This program will be administered by the VFW Foundation, and the goal is to provide scholarships to honorably discharged veterans to assist them in their transition from the military to successful civilian careers without the burden of excessive student loan debt.

We expect to raise well over \$500,000 this year for this program. This year we have created a position of Veterans Affairs Officer to assist us in coordinating our efforts to work with the veterans and veterans groups.

Many of you may have met Matt Deputy here this week. Matt is an Air Force veteran and active member of the Air Force Reserve. Through his efforts, we have been able to actively support several other veterans causes that complement our commitment to the VFW. Honor Flight for World War II veterans, to give them an opportunity to visit the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., and other historical sites. We are sponsors of the Wounded Warrior Family Support Hi-Fi Tour this summer and fall to raise funds for Smart Homes for disabled veterans who need special accommodations because of their injuries.

We are sponsors of two Boeing Stearman Biplanes that are operated by the ageless aviation teams that provide flights in these World War II trainers to World War II veterans. Later this year, we are sponsoring the Texas Dream Flight tour that will take these biplanes around the State of Texas so World War II veterans can once again go up in these great aircraft. Ride on Center for Kids is an equine therapy program using specially-trained horses to assist kids and veterans who have physical and

emotional disabilities. Working with Fort Hood and other veterans organizations, this program for veterans of all ages involved from World War II to the current conflicts.

Working with the International Franchise Association, we are active support of the Vet Brand Program to provide discounts to veterans who are interested in getting in franchising, and also to provide mentoring to veterans with this important decision.

Two years ago, I announced Operation Enduring Opportunity and to date over 70,000 veterans have become employees of franchises or franchisees themselves. We have been working closely with the VFW to provide opportunities to more and more veterans who are looking to make this transition to civilian careers.

I pledge to you to continue our efforts to recognize and give back to our nation's heroes who have given so much for us.

My wife, Betty, my son, Gordon Edward and our daughter, Carolyn, and our entire Sport Clips family, we are committed to continue these programs and hope we can make a small difference in the lives of our veterans.

Thank you for this recognition. We have worked very hard to ensure that your confidence in me and Sport Clips will be well-placed. God bless the VFW and God bless America. (Applause)

THE AERONAUTIC & AEROSPACE AWARD TO MARS SCIENCE LABORATORY – NASA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It brings me great pleasure to introduce our next honoree to you. We are all familiar with NASA and its many accomplishments over the last several decades. But recently, with the end of the Space Shuttle program, combined with the economic crisis, many thought the end or at least the suspension of NASA's space exploration was inevitable.

Not so. With the August 6, 2012, landing of NASA's Mars Science Laboratory "Curiosity" Rover, the nation and the world discovered a renewed fascination with our planetary neighbor, and again NASA was able to celebrate another outstanding achievement.

About the size of a ten-foot car and five times heavier than two earlier Mars Rovers that were launched in 2003, Curiosity took with it additional cameras and equipment to gather samples of rock and soil, and to process their composition internally with onboard instruments. The overall goal of the mission is to assess whether Mars ever had or still has environmental conditions favorable to life. Advancing technologies and further understanding of the planet's environment will also yield benefits that will hopefully, one day, enable humans to successfully land and survive on the red planet.

By successfully landing a one-ton high-tech mobile laboratory on the surface of Mars, NASA's scientists and engineers proved their mission to continue space exploration is still very much alive. And furthermore, that America will continue to lead the effort in space exploration.

Representing NASA's Mars Science Laboratory here today, please welcome Charles Baker to the stage as we recognize his team with the 2013 VFW Aeronautics & Aerospace Award. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Aeronautics & Aerospace Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to NASA's Mars Science Laboratory Team.

"In recognition of its dedication in pioneering efforts toward the success of our nation's exploration of space and to the technological advancements that inspire America to set greater goals and continue striving for excellence.

"NASA's Mars Science Laboratory team's unyielding determination and stalwart accomplishments have justly earned them the upmost appreciation and admiration 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 23rd day of July, 2013. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE – MR. CHARLES BAKER

MR. BAKER: Thank you very much. Commander Hamilton and distinguished guests, on behalf of NASA and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, I graciously accept this fantastic honor. It has been outstanding.

I would also like to thank everyone. As a veteran myself of the Navy and Air Force, I have a sense of privilege to actually be here and accept this honor and to talk about what I do at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

For 50 years, JPL has been a spearhead in planetary robotic exploration, and I started at JPL ten years ago, and it has been an exciting, very exciting opportunity. I have learned a lot and continue to learn a lot about what is out there.

We have a saying at JPL, a few phrases, and I actually use it when I do outreach. That is that we make the impossible, possible, and that we dare mighty things.

There has been a lot of media attention recently with our MSL landing, our Curiosity Rover. We did the impossible.

Just to kind of give you a side note here, I do a lot of outreach and a couple one time actually made a statement when I finished my briefing, and they said they were on sabbatical in China, and some scientists and engineers at the Chinese Space Agency were there. They were there to actually view the landing, so they had the video feed on August 5th of last year.

This couple related to me that they basically said when they looked at the faces of those Chinese scientists and engineers, they had a sense of astonishment that we completed the mission, not only completed it successfully but virtually flawlessly. That is our legacy.

We couldn't do this without the defense of our nation, without you, the veterans, to support our nation and keep us free so we can explore and endure mighty things and accomplish mighty things. It is in that spirit that I

want to say thank you so much, and again I am honored and privileged as a representative of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory to accept this prestigious award. Thank you so much. (Applause)

THE AERONAUTIC & AEROSPACE AWARD TO PIONEER AEROSPACE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I am pleased to honor an organization that many of you in the audience unknowingly may have at one point or another been in close contact with. For some of you, you have relied upon its product perhaps more than you would have liked.

Pioneer Aerospace Corporation is one of the key parachute suppliers for the U.S. military, and has been designing innovative parachutes since 1938.

They have truly supported our troops throughout the years, designing parachutes to aid in our nation's most important endeavors. Some of you may recall the 1945 paratrooper parachutes, the 1954 Pioneer aircraft braking parachutes, and the 1965 military chest-style parachute, to name a few.

Their systems have supported specialized tactical, personnel cargo, humanitarian weapons and space exploration programs.

The experts at Pioneer have not only worked hard to ensure the safety of our service members, but they have created the largest parachute for the space shuttle Solid Rocket. The parachute weighed in at a hefty 2,000 pounds. The team also recently provided the Deceleration Parachute System for the Mars Curiosity Rover which landed the science lab safely onto Mars where it currently functions today.

The advanced developments of technology that contribute to combat and commercial defense systems, space-based operations, security warfare technologies and national defense are imperative to our nation's military success in keeping us free.

In recognition of their outstanding abilities, accomplishments and service to the military and the country, please help me welcome Al Witkowski, representing Pioneer Aerospace Corporation, to the stage as we recognize his team with the 2013 VFW Aeronautics & Aerospace Award. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: "Aeronautics and Aerospace Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Pioneer Aerospace Corporation.

"In recognition of the innovative developments and unrivaled reliability that have led Pioneer Aerospace Corporation to become the key parachute supplier for the United States Military.

"Its steadfast devotion to scientific research and incorporation thereof in manufacturing advanced equipment to keep our military and space explorers safe has justly earned it the utmost appreciation and admiration 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 23rd day of July, 2013. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief, and Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General.

RESPONSE – MR. AL WITKOWSKI

MR. WITKOWSKI: Thank you, distinguished host, Commander-in-Chief Hamilton.

On behalf of Pioneer Aerospace and the President, John Smith, and all of our employees, I would like to express our sincerest appreciation for the honor of this award. We have always been dedicated, supported the armed services.

Pioneer was founded 75 years ago by a young man named Floyd Smith, who in 1919, as a U.S. Army soldier invented the rip cord parachute that was then jumped by Leslie Irving, who took all the fame.

When he left the service in 1938, he became the Chief Engineer of Pioneer Aerospace, and our initial products were for personnel and aircraft escape for World War II servicemen.

Our plant in Mississippi has produced hundreds of thousands of parachute systems for troops, cargo munition and flares. We continued to produce B-52 landing parachutes, the blue-two flare parachutes, and even T-10s for some of the NATO countries that have not yet adopted the new system.

From the earliest rip cord parachutes, the early age of modern space systems, Pioneer maintains Floyd Smith's engineering spirit and ingenuity with the development of the Space Shuttle SRB system, the world's largest recovered system, the Stardust Comet, the sample return capsule, the world's fastest human-made re-entry system.

That capsule now sits in the milestones of Flight Gallery on the National Mall. Then there is MSL, the world's largest supersonic parachute ever to be deployed on another planet. The glory and pride and patriotism associated with these programs will continue to drive us in our support for our armed services and our space programs for many years to come.

Every one of our Mars parachutes, and I have done five of them, has a U.S. flag on it. It is with pride and honor to you in support of our military and our freedom that I accept this award on behalf of the employees of Pioneer. Thank you very much. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL HOME REPRESENTATIVES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: One of the stand out icons of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary is the VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan. The National Home is a profound example of veterans helping veterans. This morning, we have with us the home's terrific leaders, Board President Jack McDermott of Florida, Executive Director Patrice Greene, and most importantly, our 2013 Buddy Poppy Child, Unity Heim, who resides in the Connecticut House.

Once again, in keeping with one of our great time-honored VFW traditions, our 2013 Buddy Poppy Child will circulate among the generous comrades in the meeting room and "pass the hat" on behalf of the National Home. So, please, stick around and reach deep into your pockets. Your donation to such a worthy cause will help bring a big smile on Unity's face this morning.

REMARKS BY BOARD PRESIDENT JACK McDERMOTT

COMRADE JACK McDERMOTT (Department of Florida): Good morning. Thank you, Commander, for inviting us here today. It is an honor to serve as the President of the National Home Board of Trustees. We have 12 elected Trustees, many of them whom are in this audience here today. We also have five ex-officios. We have our own Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent. We have our Quartermaster General Bob Greene, who is busy doing something right now. And, of course, you, Commander-in-Chief John.

I want to thank all of you for your hard work and your commitment to the veterans and their children and their families in our home. I would like also to take this opportunity to thank retiring Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent for his service to the National Home.

As Adjutant General of the VFW, he has served as an ex-officio member of the National Home Board of Trustees. He has a positive contributing influence on the Board, and throughout the years his advice was always straightforward, sound and believe me directly to the point.

"Gunner" has been very helpful in support of the National Home, lending his common sense, his expertise, policy and most importantly facilitating the home's presentation at the National Convention, the Washington Conferences and the National Service Officers are all very important venues to teach the people about our National Home.

We thank you, "Gunner", for your guidance and counsel, for your years of hard work for the VFW, and on behalf of the veterans, and your service to the VFW National Home for Children.

"Gunner", please wear this National Home shirt with pride, and we hope the gift of a tribute brick in the walkway at the National Home in honor of your service will hold a special space in your heart throughout the years. Thank you again for what you have done for us. (Applause)

Again, thank you, "Gunner". We thank all of you, the VFW members all across the country for what you have done for the National Home.

Today I am happy to report that we have another reason to be proud, because our Trustees recently made a big change to meet the important needs of all who we have been seeing over the past several years. The change helps the Home do what it set out to do since 1925. That is to keep the family together, the whole family, the married family.

For decades, the Home has been helping families who need help, military families, veterans' families, and our VFW partnering with the Ladies Auxiliary programs.

But this day and age, there are a lot of young veteran couples with children who need us and we want to be sure we can help them. So, we amended the eligibility, and we look forward to doing our part to help these young American couples who need us to get strong again and to hold their families together.

That is another reason for all of us to be proud of the National Home. It all got started by one little quick instance. A gentleman called up on the hotline, and he was having some problems, an Iraqi veteran. His statement was, "I guess I will have to divorce my wife so I can get some assistance."

That kind of got the ball rolling and got us all thinking. So, we have changed that and now it is up to you to help us move it along. As Trustees, we get to meet the children and the families that you are helping. As members of the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary, we can be very proud of what we do for our National Home.

So, please, come and visit us at our booth or come this afternoon to Room 218 between 3:00 and 4:00 for our workshop. We would like to answer any questions that we can.

What I would like to do now is to introduce Patrice, my friend of over 15 years, and our Executive Director of the Home. Again, thank you for what you do for the Home. (Applause)

REMARKS BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PATRICE GREENE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: Thank you, Jack. We congratulate Commander-in-Chief Hamilton for his service on behalf of America's veterans. We know the National Home holds a very special place in his heart, and I will tell you what, if I had asked his permission to do what we are about to do, he would have said "no way", but I didn't ask his permission and we have a little video that shows John's dedication to the National Home over the years. So, if we could start that video.

(Whereupon, the video is played at this time.)

There was more, but we couldn't show them for certain reasons.

This year the National Home marked its 88th year of care for the children and families of our nation's veterans, and that is a wonderful tribute to all of you and to all of those who went before you.

The founders of the VFW National Home held a firm belief in honoring the service and sacrifices, of those gone before us and also in strengthening foundations for future generations.

Last year we dedicated a beautiful Tribute Park at the National Home, and it is a beautiful way to do just that. I know without a doubt that John believes fully in the mission of the National Home with all his heart. So, we want to publicly thank Commander-in-Chief John and Ladies Auxiliary National President Leanne Lemley for a special project they have promoted with their Department Commanders and Presidents this past year.

They had set a goal to raise \$16,000 toward this project, and as of last tally you raised \$28,000 toward the project. (Applause)

So, by late summer several new and beautiful streetlights are going to decorate the Entryway and the Tribute Park at the National Home. There is enough extra money, that in the public areas, like in front of the Community Center and Health and Educational Building, we are going to be adding some lights there.

I want to mention today we have Todd Marriott in the audience, our Facilities Director. So, publicly, we are going to challenge him to have those in by the end of summer. I thank all of the Department Commanders who helped to make that project possible. With your help, so many children and families have been assisted at your National Home, and in the years to come more families will be strengthened, too. Please come to our workshop this afternoon from 3:00 to 4:00. We know that you need to

get ready for the Patriotic Rally, so we promise we will end right at 4:00 o'clock.

We want to thank you one more time for all you do to make everything possible at your National Home. This morning, we have with us back here the National Home Choir led by Brian Lorente, and Kirsten Grady. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the choir members were introduced at this time.)

MR. BRIAN LORENTE: Good morning. My name is Brian Lorente. I have been a Director at the National Home for about 14 years now. It is a pleasure to be back here and hanging out with you guys.

We are very excited to be at the rally this year. We have a completely rookie choir here this year, so we look forward to seeing you guys at the rally. Thank you so much for all you do at the National Home. Please come visit us in Michigan. Thank you. (Applause)

MS. GREENE: We have one choir member that we didn't introduce yet, and that is because she is the 2013-2014 VFW National Buddy Poppy girl, Unity Heim.

REMARKS BY 2013 BUDDY POPPY GIRL – UNITY HEIM

BUDDY POPPY CHILD HEIM: Good morning. My name is Unity Heim. I am eleven years old. My birthday was just last week. I live in the Connecticut House at the VFW National Home for Children. My dad's name is Paul, and I have one little sister, and her name is Indigo.

I am going into the sixth grade. When I grow up, I would like to become a teacher or an artist. My hobbies are drawing, soccer, playing the piano. I am learning to play the ukulele.

I also take care of my 4-H rabbit at the National Home farm. My rabbit's name was Puddles, and I got to sell him at the Eaton County Fair. I get to do tennis in the summer and I am on the soccer team. We get to go on a lot of trips. My favorite is the Wind Secret. It is a giant swing 301 feet high.

My family feels safe living at the National Home, and I like living here because it makes me feel like I have been given free expression.

Our house is one where I have my own room. My grandpa served in World War II and I am glad to be the Buddy Poppy girl, because I can thank everyone who served our country and show them how much we appreciate them. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: If you want to do a job, get a good woman. Let me just quickly tell you before I do this. On my first trip to the VFW National Home 30-plus years ago, I promised a lady from Miami that I would go up from Miami and go up and help cook this meal at Christmastime. The first year or two, I skated it when I was a member, because I was always busy, and finally she came to Jacksonville and beat on my door and said, "You know, this Christmas you need to go." I went, and it forever changed my life.

I can tell you, it is the crown jewel of the VFW. It is what we are all about, taking care of veterans, families and children. What a wonderful, wonderful place.

I had this misconception that I was going to be going in there and find these barracks-style living quarters with all these children housed in these beds. I got up there and I found a 634-acre campus, whatever it is, I can't remember, a campus with these beautiful homes.

I was so impressed and so moved that for years I went back every Christmas. Unfortunately, I have not been able to go to the last two, because you guys had me going other places. So, I have not been able to go up and do that.

Our group from Florida goes up there and puts on a barbecue. We call it the snow for the children during that time. We also have the employees' dinner during that time, and get a chance to give a little something back.

I want to encourage you to do two things. First, I want to encourage you to send some money to the VFW National Home for Children, because it is just the right thing to do.

Secondly, if you have not been to the VFW National Home in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, you need to go. It will make you so proud to be a VFW member that you won't be able to stand it.

I am telling you that is a great place. Let me do this. I want to ask the Commander of 3559, Miami Beach, and the Quartermaster to please rise, if you would. Anybody that might be here from that Post, please rise. I believe you are it.

These guys have worked very hard to help raise funds and, Patrice and Jack, you-all come forward. They have one check for the general fund. They raised \$20,000. These are my good buddies, I should say it, Doug Morris and Larry Schatz, who worked very hard.

I have an additional \$5,000 check raised to go to the Florida Home. Please accept this on their behalf for their hard work. Larry and Doug, thank you so much. God bless you. These guys do this stuff all the time.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: Before we finish up, we want to make a presentation to the Commander-in-Chief. It is a photo collage of some of the significant moments at the National Home.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Some of these are old. I truly have hair here.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: We also have a National Home shirt that is embroidered, and you can wear it all the time. Then last, but not least, we have a brick for the Commander-in-Chief in the Tribute Walkway at the National Home. I hope you will treasure it. I hope you will come and see us this Christmas.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Patrice. You know, Patrice and I have been friends for an awful lot of years. That was long before she was the Director and now she is here, and my good friend Todd Marriott, who we all know, and Todd's hair was all black and I had some. He is the Facilities Director, and say hi to him as well, please.

Todd, stand up. This is Todd Marriott, the Facilities Director at the Home. (Applause)

When the Poppy Girl comes around, you don't have to put in ones, she will take fives, tens, twenties, whatever you have. As a matter of fact, do like you do with your wife, just give her your wallet. It is the same deal, just the younger generation. It is the same thing.

INTRODUCTION OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL ALCIDES LUGO,
VFW DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA RETIREMENT HOME

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Our next guest is here representing a very unique and special endeavor the VFW Department of Florida has undertaken. Retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Alcides "Al" Lugo, Jr., is the Executive Director of the VFW Retirement Home in Fort McCoy, Florida.

The VFW Retirement Home is a 501(C)(3) non-profit veterans organization owned outright and operated by the VFW Department of Florida. And it's the only facility of its kind anywhere in the world.

The goal of the facility is to provide a home-like atmosphere to veterans who have proven their loyalty and patriotism by serving our country in foreign lands during time of war. The Home's guiding principle is to provide affordable, independent living accommodations to VFW members, Ladies and Men's Auxiliary members and their spouses.

The doors to the VFW Home opened in October 1991. The facility is spread out over 42 acres and rests among the tranquil oaks and palms. Due to the high demand for independent living accommodations for veterans, the Retirement Home opened an additional 19 rooms in 2006.

Before working at the Retirement Home, Lieutenant Colonel Lugo amassed a long and impressive career in the military, dating back to 1986. He held several key positions over the years, with stops in Germany, Afghanistan and the Pentagon, the Pentagon being the most dangerous, to name a few.

His awards include the Legion of Merit, four Meritorious Service Medals, three Army Commendation Medals, four Army Achievement Medals, the National Defense Service Medal with Bronze Star, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Armed Forces Service Medal, among others.

Comrades, please give a warm welcome to my friend from Florida, Lieutenant Colonel Al Lugo. (Applause)

REMARKS BY AL LUGO

COMRADE LUGO: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Past National Commanders-in-Chief, Senior Vice Bill, Junior Vice John, Adjutant General "Gunner", we are going to miss you, Quartermaster General Bob Greene, National Officers, State Commanders and Fellow Comrades:

It is truly an honor to be here today and talk to you a little bit about the VFW Retirement Home which is now called the VFW Veterans Village in Fort McCoy, Florida.

As you saw the videotape on the National Home, you saw most of the Florida leadership there is being led by our Commander-in-Chief, our Past National Commander-in-Chief, Jack Carney, and you have seen the Adjutant there, and Jack McDermott. So, there was no guessing on how the VFW Retirement Home/VFW Veterans Home came about 23 years ago.

It was an idea that basically I understand the Department of Florida wanted to do something for the veterans; for them to have a quality peaceful place to live and take care of them. We have done that. As the

motto says, "No One Does More for Veterans", and that is very, very true of the VFW and the Department of Florida. So, I am very proud to lead this organization.

We have a booth set up in Room 130. If you have not been there yet, we have a couple of ladies from the Home there, Sharon and Pam, so please stop by and see them.

As you know, we are going to celebrate our 22nd year, and as the Chief mentioned, it is a great place to be. It is on 42 beautiful acres in Central Florida, right there in Ocala National Forest, very close to many, many things.

We provide one-stop shopping, basically an all-inclusive place to live for the veterans, spouses and widows of veterans. We get zero funding from local, state or federal governments. This is basically operated by the rent of the residents and the Department of Florida and the Ladies Auxiliary and the friends of the Home.

I encourage you guys to come by. Everything is inclusive. We are looking forward to taking a tour, giving a tour to the Southern Conference, when they arrive there this October or November to visit Florida.

Again, it is truly an honor and privilege to be here today to talk to you about the Home and to represent the great State of Florida and its leadership.

Before I step off the microphone, because I know I am between you and lunchtime, and in the Pentagon you never wanted to get between a crowd at lunch. So, it will be quick.

We do have a couple of things for our Commander-in-Chief before I leave. First of all, we in Florida were very concerned that our Commander-in-Chief is going to be living in Kansas City for three years. We don't want him to get too cold. So, I modeled a special jacket from another Commander-in-Chief. I will make this presentation for our National Commander-in-Chief to wear proudly while he is there. I hope he will not get cold.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.

COMRADE AL LUGO: "Gunner" said that won't keep him warm, but we will get him some of those long underwear.

Also, Chief, we also want to present to you a key to the Village. It is presented to John E. Hamilton, Commander—in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Thank you for your leadership, candor and your recollection "No One Does More for Veterans", presented by Al Lugo, VFW Village Director, 23 July, 2013.

Chief, this is so you know you always have a place to come home to. If you ever need something, you have a place to come home to. Thank you, sir, for your leadership.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Al.

COMRADE AL LUGO: Again, Chief, thank you for the opportunity to be here today. Please stop by and see us. Again, thank you for what you guys do out there for all of our veterans. God bless you, scout's honor. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Al. We are very proud of that Home in Florida. If you get a chance, go down and see it. If you need a place to stay, go stay there, live there. It is a great place.

COMRADE AL LUGO: Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

INTRODUCTION OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL JEFFREY W. TALLEY, CHIEF OF ARMY RESERVE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It is now my privilege to introduce the Chief of the Army Reserve, Lieutenant General Jeffrey W. Talley. The General was sworn in as the C.A.R. in June 2012. He is the principal staff advisor to the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff on all Army Reserve affairs, and is responsible for developing Army Reserve budgets, training programs and policy decisions.

He commands all Army Reserve Troop Program Units worldwide, which totals 205,000 soldiers and 12,600 civilians on an annual operating budget exceeding \$9 billion. He has soldiers at war, training for war and returning from war. And just like the rest of the military, he has to be a serious money-manager in order to properly organize, train and equip his force while operating under severe budget restrictions and the continuing threat of mandatory sequestration. That's the good news.

Among his many challenges is how to properly care for Reservists after they deactivate and return home, sometimes far away from any military treatment facility or perhaps even a VA outpatient clinic.

He has soldiers going through physical and emotional problems brought about by military sexual trauma, post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injuries, as well as service-connected wounds, illnesses and injuries.

He has soldiers returning home to a lousy job market or having to fight to get their civilian jobs back. And he has soldiers returning home without their number one safety net, their peers, the brothers and sisters they went to war with.

General, I see from your bio that you were commissioned in the Corps of Engineers after graduating from LSU.

In your 31 years of active and Reserve Service, you have commanded at every level, from platoon to division, with duty in Korea, Kuwait and Iraq. I also see that your youngest son, Matthew, is an Army First Lieutenant and a combat veteran.

I want to promise you that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States will be there for your son and everyone else who serves our great country in uniform, and their families, too.

When you look out across this room, you might see a lot of gray hair, or no hair, but what I want you to take back to Washington are our faces, because we were all twenty-something-year-olds when we went off to our wars. And we all came back changed, just like you, your son and all of our soldiers.

General, the VFW relevance after 114 years is we have all walked in the same shoes. So, when that youngest soldier deactivates and returns home, please let him know that the VFW family is their family, too, and we

will always have their backs at home, abroad, and most especially on Capitol Hill.

Comrades, please welcome the Chief of the Army Reserve, Lieutenant General Jeff Talley.

REMARKS BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL TALLEY

LIEUTENANT GENERAL TALLEY: Before I begin, there is a big sign here that says "please don't touch the microphone."

Commander-in-Chief Hamilton and incoming Commander Thien, Fellow Veterans, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good morning and thank you very much for the opportunity to let me be part of this important conference. Everyone here knows firsthand the sacrifices that have been borne by those who have worn America's uniform, fighting abroad, so we can keep our freedoms here at home.

Please accept my sincere appreciation and my admiration for each one of you in how you have served, but not just the military members, but more importantly your families, your families who supported you while you wore the uniform and after you came home.

It is not lost on me, the reason I serve and enjoy the freedoms that we have in the United States is because of the brave men and women like yourselves that have served before me. Thank you.

I also want to thank the VFW for all they do for our veterans. As General and President George Washington once said at the beginning of our great nation, "You can tell the character of a country in how it takes care of the veterans."

In my opinion, we can never do enough for those who have fought and bled and died in service to America.

Now, like each one of you, I have seen firsthand the world is a dangerous place and the United States must stay ready for the threats that come. The challenge today is that our country simply can't afford an act of component of the size and capability that we need to meet all of our challenges. To mitigate this risk to our national security architecture, we must invest in our Reserve component.

Our Reserve component, who is trained and fought together with our active brothers and sisters for over 12 years of war, this is exactly what our nation is doing and allow me for just a few minutes to talk to you about your Army Reserve.

The Army Reserve is one of the three components of our Army: our regular Army, our Army Reserve and our Army National Guards. It is the only component of your Army that is a single command.

The Army Reserve is a component and a command, and I am blessed with the privilege of being the Chief of the Army Reserve, the head of the component, but also the Commanding General for the Army Reserve Command.

The Army Reserve Command is the largest Three-Star Command in the entire Department of Defense. It is the size of the Marine Corps. It is the second-largest Four-Star Command in the total Army. We have over 205,000 soldiers serving in 30 countries, 12,600 civilians, currently have almost 17,000 serving in direct support of our Army Service Senior

Commands and Combatant Commands around the planet, with about 6,500 in combat in Afghanistan.

We have 136 General Officers, Flag Officers and Senior Executives that help run the Army Reserve, which has 62 General Officer Commands. It is a big organization. Now, most of that organization, those are traditional Reservists. So, what that means is they are working full-time in a civilian job. They are leaders in their community. Hopefully, they are members of the VFW.

They are working in less than a full-time status to serve their nation, but ready when the nation calls to return to active duty and to serve on contingent and combat missions around the world. That is exactly what we have been doing and will continue to do.

A few facts that a lot of folks don't realize is when you look at what you call your enablers for your Army, your lawyers, your doctors, your engineers, your financiers, logistics, pick whatever is your favorite technical enabler is for the Army, those enablers are not in the Army, they are in the Army Reserve. Most of what we call combat support and combat service support are not in the Army National Guard and they are not our regular Army, they are in the Army Reserve.

They work in those capacities in the civilian sector predominantly in the private sector, but in the public sector as they also continue to wear a uniform and serve the nation.

The Army Reserve has become an important part of the operational force during these 12 years of war. There are two ways that we want to continue to try to stay part of that operational force, because one thing the United States has realized is the Reserve component is a great return on their investment.

The Army Reserve is about six percent of the total Army budget. We provide about 20 percent of the total Army Armed Forces. That is a good return on investment.

We do this really in two ways. But, first, let me tell you what the mission of the Army Reserve is. It is really simple. We provide trained and accessible soldiers, leaders and units to General Allen, the current force Commanding General, but other supported Commands around the planet.

Specifically, those Army Service Commands, the Army Corps and our combatant commands.

Now, in the Army we do this by what we call planning, preparing, providing. We plan like integrating our Army Reserve forces in the theater exercises and training exercises. We prepare by doing total Army integration in terms of training with all of our components within the Army and our total force, and then we provide those when the nation calls, whether it could be contingent missions in Africa to help prevent and shape activities around the continent, service to the Combatant Commander in AFRICOM or direct combat missions.

But there is a way that the Army Reserve is really maintaining our readiness. I think it will be something that you will find interesting, because it is unique to the Army Reserve, and it is what we call the private public partnership initiative.

Now, in the private-public partnership initiative for the Army Reserve, what we do is first off we recognize that most of our force are citizen-

soldiers, and they are working in the private sector most of the time. Well, as we advance the readiness of our Army Reserve, we have to recognize that if the solution involves getting more money from the Department of Army and the Department of Defense, that probably isn't going to work, because the United States is broke and the Department of Defense has to reduce its spending as does the country reduce its spending. So, we have to find other ways to promote readiness as individuals, as leaders and as units.

So, the private-public partnership initiative for the Army Reserve is taking advantage of a platform that we have already created, which is the Employer Partnership Program, which was started by my predecessor, Jack Stultz, who now lives in the great state of Florida. Jack started this program recognizing that if we got the agreements in place with the private sector for the most part that the Army Reserve could provide great employees to those companies.

Why? Because they are loyal, they come to work, they are drug free, they are physically fit, they are focused on being a member of the team. They have leadership skills, all of the things that all of us want in our private and public civilian organizations.

Well, the private-public partnership initiative takes that initial effort by General Stultz and moves it to the next level where we partner with non-for-profits, such as the VFW, trade organizations, people that provide professional credentialing and for-profit companies. We use them to help us train and provide a civilian version of the readiness of individuals, leaders and units.

For example, in order to be a ready unit, you have got to have ready leaders, but you have got to be ready as an individual. That means keeping a balance between the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional. If you are a true Reservist, you can't do that while you are in full pay status, because you are only in pay status one battle assembly per month and a few weeks of annual training in the summer, unless you have been activated and deployed.

So, what we are using is we are using what works in the civilian sector as we find ways to have our Army Reserve soldier invest in himself or herself so they become more physically fit. They become able to better cope with life skills, which is a real issue that helps get at suicide prevention.

We use what is in the civilian sector and we couple it with what we learn in the Army and our military programs. We use corporate mentor coaching and teaching programs that are used in corporate America, where they provide that level of integration and training to our citizen-soldiers in a volunteer fashion to make them better leaders.

Then, from a unit perspective, this is probably the most creative, we are using private sector money to help provide support for our Army Reserve Units to train abroad.

Let me give you an example. If you go to the Continent of Africa, there are 54 countries. The largest employer in Africa is Coca-Cola. I am not putting a plug in for Coca-Cola, but Coca-Cola is investing hundreds and millions of dollars in water projects in Africa. Why are they doing that? Well, water is the principal ingredient in Coke, but water is also all about

life-saving, life-sustaining capabilities for the people on the Continent of Africa.

The Army Reserve is all about life-saving and life-sustaining capabilities. That is what we do. So, the Army Reserve in partnership with the U.S. Water Partnership Organization are going to do Title 10 training in Africa in support of the combatants commander there, where we will train our forces, logisticians, statisticians, engineers. And most of the medical profession for the Army, and as we go over there and do our Title 10 training, we will be doing water projects that will be put on and paid for by the private sector.

What a great idea. It allows the Department of Defense and the State Department to work closer together to help shape what is going on in the ground in Africa and in other areas of responsibilities, in support of other combatant commands. I provide the Title 10 training that I have to do anyway, but the bill of materials, all the extra expenses are picked up not by the United States Government, but by the private sector. It is legal, it is responsible, and it works. It keeps people in the Army Reserve. It advances their skill sets and helps prevent and shape, so maybe we don't have to fight so many wars.

It is a great example of the private-public partnership effort that I am talking about. I think it is very, very valuable for how we move forward as a Reserve component recognizing that unlike our active component brothers and sisters, we live and work in the civilian world most of the time, and then need to be ready at a moment's notice to support them as we come on active duty.

In the future, we see a lot more contingent missions, less combat missions, where we are trying to prevent and shape the goal of every combatant commander around the world is to not get in a fight. It is to prevent and shape so we don't get in a fight.

But if we do get in a fight, we are going to win and we are going to win decisively. There is no question about that.

The United States is the most powerful military force the world has ever known or ever will know. But the best fight is the one you never fight. You remember Song Su, the best fight is the fight you never fight. So, the way you prevent and shape, you have to recognize that the world's problems and the United States problems can't be solved by your government or the governments of the world alone. It is going to take a private sector working with the public sector to solve the complex problems in the United States and abroad, and a lot of people forget that the VFW represents the private sector.

The private sector is for-profit and not-for-profit. We need to foster a closer relationship between our armed forces and that private sector for-profit and not-for-profit. So, I look forward to maybe moving forward in the private public partnership programs as we forge relationships with the VFW and find specific ways that we can help our veterans, those who have served and those who are still serving in uniform.

I want to have an opportunity for maybe some questions and dialogue. I move General Shinseki has landed and will be coming in shortly behind me. So, I think that is good that he got delayed, because you are saving the best for last.

But in closing, I simply want to say my father, Private Don Talley, United States Army, eventually Sergeant Talley, fought through Africa and Europe in World War II as part of the Army Air Corps. I still recall Dad telling me of the day when a military truck pulled up on the farm that his parents owned in De Soto, Missouri, which is kind of out in the sticks, so to speak, and a non-commissioned officer got off the truck with a clipboard and read off all the names of him and his brothers.

I think he had eight brothers. He told them to pack their stuff quickly and get on the truck, and they were going off to war. So, they did. Absolutely amazing was the fact that all of them survived except for their one brother who went into the Navy, who was killed at sea. But the scars of those experiencing fighting World War II remained with him and remained with all of his brothers throughout the rest of their lives.

Another short story that I want to share with you is when I married my wife, Linda, and we have been married now 31 years.

For the record, absolutely the best decision I ever made was to marry Linda, because every great soldier has a great family. She was a Marine brat. Her father was Retired Gunnery Sergeant Louis Hall. Now, "Gunny" was platoon recon, and he served with the famous Chesty Puller, and he had three combat tours, one in the Korean War and two in Vietnam.

Simply put, "Gunny" was one tough son of a – well, you know what I mean. Without revealing too much, I do remember the day that I asked for permission to marry his daughter. He wasn't too keen on an Army soldier marrying his daughter, and "Gunny", and that is what I called him, I didn't call him dad. I called him "Gunny" because he liked it that way and I did, too. I think he finally realized that even though I was Army that I wasn't all bad.

My point in sharing a story about my father who since has passed on and my father-in-law, "Gunny" Hall, who also has passed on, is to let you know that I am immensely proud of both of them and their service to our nation.

Like them, I serve because I love our nation, and I recognize how important it is to have men and women of character defending it.

I want to thank you for allowing me to share a few minutes with you this morning, but most importantly, I want to thank you, thank you for supporting our veterans and thank you for supporting their families. May God bless you, the VFW, and the United States of America. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION BY THE ADJUTANT/QUARTERMASTERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Will the Department Adjutant/Quartermasters come forward and line up.

COMRADE STEWART BILLEY (Department of Michigan): Good morning. On behalf of the Adjutant/Quartermasters Association, my name is Stewart Billey. I am the newly-elected President of the Adjutant/Quartermasters Association. We have a check for the National Military Service in the amount of \$2,500. This is in memory of Jim Rowoldt, who unfortunately lost the battle with cancer a few months ago.

He was President of the Adjutant/Quartermasters Association and the Adjutant/Quartermaster of the State of California.

So, on behalf of the Association, I would like to present this check to the Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you very much. And I thank all of you very, very much.

COMRADE PRICILLA WILKEWITZ (Department of Louisiana): A lot of us knew Jim, but we did not realize that he was that ill. So, it is an honor to present this in memory of him.

Next, we have a little surprise, if Allen "Gunner" Kent would come forward. I know how he absolutely hates to listen to the Adjutant/Quartermasters, and we know he is retiring, so he doesn't have to listen to us, but we are just going to give him heck until he does retire. We thought about giving him something that he could use. We thought about a coffee cup, a coffee pot, because I don't think you ever saw Allen "Gunner" Kent without some coffee.

We decided on another type of gift. I am going to have Roy Grona to tell you about the gift.

COMRADE ROY GRONA (Department of Texas): We are proud to present "Gunner" Kent with this gift, and they are not here yet. Unfortunately, it takes a long time to build custom-made Lucchese boots. I will tell you they are in the mill, "Gunner", a size ten and a half double wide J toe boots. They are handmade by the Lucchese Company.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Thank you very much.

COMRADE PRICILLA WILKEWITZ (Department of Louisiana): The boots did cost a certain amount, and the rest of the money, and it came from all the Departments, all the AQs from the Department 2012-2013, and it came from all the Adjutant/Quartermasters who have served under "Gunner".

"Gunner" served in '94-'95, and I can say that "Gunner" has always been of the troops, for the troops. He might have given us hell, but he was always thinking about the Veterans of Foreign Wars. We hope when you wear these you will be thinking about the rest of us who have stood beside you during the years, "Gunner". Here is a monetary gift also so you can enjoy.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: If I knew they were going to be so nice to me, I would have retired a long time ago. Thank you very much. (Laughter)

INTRODUCTION OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS – GENERAL ERIC SHINSEKI

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It is now my honor to introduce the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, General Eric Shinseki.

The General is a 1965 West Point graduate who served two tours in Vietnam, first with the 25th Infantry Division from 1965 to '66, and then with the 5th Cavalry Regiment from 1969 to 1970.

Twice he was wounded, yet he soldiered on to rise in rank and responsibility to command a squadron, a brigade, the 1st Cavalry Division,

the 7th Army, and then in 1999, as the 34th Chief of Staff of the United States Army.

He retired in June 2003 after successfully leading the Army during the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Today, he leads the second largest federal department that is solely tasked with honoring a nation's promise to her veterans.

In his four years at the helm he has added new Agent Orange presumptions, eased the PTSD claims process, and greatly increased programs to better care for women veterans, rural veterans, and those who are homeless.

Through his leadership and vision, he continues to transform the way his department conducts business, most especially inside the Veterans Benefits Administration, and though the VA still has many challenges, he always does what is right for America's veterans and their families.

I am proud to say the VA has no stronger advocate than the VFW on Capitol Hill, in the White House, and in all 1,400 communities where there is a VA facility.

Comrades, I present to you a fellow combat veteran, the recipient of two Purple Hearts and three Bronze Stars with Valor, the former Chief of Staff of the United States Army and now Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki. (Applause)

REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - ERIC SHINSEKI

SECRETARY SHINSEKI: Commander-in-Chief John Hamilton, many thanks for that kind introduction. More importantly, John, thank you for devoting yourself for so many years to the service of veterans. Your leadership of VFW has been inspiring. I wish you God speed as you pass the mantle of leadership to Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Bill Thien. And to Bill, many thanks for your service as well, and congratulations on your new responsibilities. I and all of us at VA look forward to working with you.

Let me also knowledge some of your other National leaders:

Executive Director Bob Wallace, to whom I owe genuine thanks for standing up with this Secretary in what we are trying to accomplish for all veterans.

Likewise, to National Adjutant "Gunner" Kent, and National Veterans Service Director Bill Bradshaw, my thanks for your leadership and support as well.

Leanne Lemley, President, VFW National Ladies Auxiliary, congratulations on 100 years of the Auxiliary's devotion to veterans and their families. Thank you for serving those who have served the Nation, and best wishes to the Auxiliary on the next 100 years.

Let me further acknowledge a special group of veterans this morning, those who fought in Korea. This week marks the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice. Six decades ago the guns fell silent all along the DMZ. We know what our country asked of you and we also know how magnificently you all delivered. We are all indebted to you. Let me invite all our Korean War veterans who are here this morning to stand, if able, to accept our respect and admiration. Thank you all very much. (Applause)

Other fellow veterans, other VA colleagues, I know there are a few in the audience, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

I am especially honored to be speaking with you once again. When I first spoke with you in 2009, I observed that the average Secretary of Veterans Affairs served about 3.5 years. So I said then that we had to move quickly to get as much done as possible, in the time we had.

I needed help to take on really tough issues: (1) Increasing veterans access to VA's benefits and services; (2) Eliminating, not reducing, not better managing, but eliminating the backlog in disability claims, and then finally (3) Mobilizing a national initiative to end veterans' homelessness in this country. I asked for your assistance and you gave it to me, and you continue to do so today. I am grateful for your support.

I am also grateful for the opportunity to work all these initiatives along with my friend Chuck Hagel, from whom you heard yesterday. Chuck's credentials as a veterans advocate are without peer – combat veteran out of Vietnam, educated on the GI Bill, former-Deputy administrator of the VA, former-CEO of the USO, co-sponsor of the new 9/11 GI Bill, and a genuine American patriot.

Since he assumed office last February, he and I have met multiple times to discuss issues common to both of our departments. Secretary Hagel's partnership on behalf of those who wear and have worn the uniforms of our Nation has been uplifting. I look forward to our continued collaboration in bringing our two large departments closer together than ever before.

In the four-and-a-half years since January 2009, the leadership of the President, the support of the Congress, the advice and assistance of veterans service organizations, like the VFW and the Legion, and a close partnership with Secretaries of Defense Bob Gates and Leon Panetta, and now Chuck Hagel, has enabled VA to make some significant achievements.

VA's budget grew by \$40 billion over the past four and a half years, at a time of economic difficulty nationally and fiscal constraints across the federal government.

Outreach and access initiatives brought in more than 940,000 new enrollees to the VA.

For four years running now, clean financial audits have been rendered on VA's financial management system by an IG-appointed, external, independent auditor, during which material weaknesses were reduced from four to one, and significant deficiencies from 16 to one.

Sixty-six new community-based outpatient clinics have been opened, as well as a medical center in Las Vegas, Nevada, our first major VA Hospital in 17 years.

More than 10,800 caregivers have been trained to care for and sustain the well-being of seriously-injured Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

More than a million veterans and family-member students have received educational assistance and vocational training from VA.

An average of 113,000 veterans a year have been laid to rest in our national cemeteries, our national shrines, all of this handled by the number one customer-satisfaction organization in the entire country and that's our National Cemetery Administration.

Veterans' homelessness was reduced 17 percent from 2009 to 2012, and we estimate perhaps another 10 percent reduction this past year. We will know the final tally as soon as our partners at HUD, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, complete the verification of the homelessness count.

And we fielded VBMS at all 56 VA regional offices, VBMS being Veterans Benefits Management System, a new automated claims system. We are transitioning out of paper and into electronic processing. This is a major cross-over year for disability claims processing.

The challenges of the past four and a half years have been daunting, but with your help we have stayed clearly sighted on what's best for veterans. More remains to be done, this is true, but this will always be true if you pursue continuous improvements and that's what we are doing.

Today, I would like to address two issues that have been in the news much lately, mental health and the claims backlog. Some have criticized VA as being uncaring and unhelpful on both issues. Neither is correct, so let me address them both. First, mental health.

I have witnessed in my time in uniform monumental changes in the way we wage war, greater speed, greater agility, greater precision and greater stamina in all aspects of the use of force. Perhaps less noticed, among those tremendous changes, have been the Department of Defense's amazing advances in battlefield medicine, coupled with the creation of a world-class military medical evacuation system, hours to days from the battlefield to stateside medical care, rather than the weeks and months for past generations. More troops are surviving combat today because of those advances; but for some, the injuries are much more serious and complex, requiring prolonged hospitalizations, months and years of surgery, pain, recovery, uncertainty.

As these patients are released from military service, the seamlessness of a warm hand-off from DoD to VA assures them the continuity of care they must have. This is why the Secretary of VA and the Secretary of Defense have worked these issues personally for four and a half years now. It is that important. And if we get it right for these veterans and families, we will be in a better position to begin getting it right for everyone else.

Now, many combat veterans also carry with them what I call, the baggage that comes with combat, PTS, Post-Traumatic Stress, which can include nervous anxiety, increased irritability, feeling numb, suffering flashbacks, and even feeling depressed. Most of us are able to work through PTS on our own, with help of strong families and a good support structure. Some, not all of these veterans incur the "D" – disorder. PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and that requires professional care, and people generally get better with treatment over time.

But in tough economic times, as we have experienced for the past five years, any prolonged unemployment exacerbates stress, extending the transition home for those with PTS, and extending the period of treatment for those with PTSD. We want to address these issues directly and early, before complications begin a downward spiral towards job loss, depression, substance abuse, anger management, a breakdown in relationships, homelessness, finally and sometimes suicide.

The biggest war in our history and higher survival rates have driven increased concern for the mental well-being of service members and veterans, including the need for more sophisticated methods for identifying and treating their issues.

In the past, we often thought in terms of the “normal and healthy,” on the one hand, and the “mentally ill and unreliable,” on the other, creating an obvious stigma against seeking help. If you were among the “normal and healthy,” you didn’t seek professional help for mental or emotional issues because just seeking help moved you over into the “mentally ill and unreliable” category. And once there, it was difficult going back.

Today, we know much better than to sort people into two mutually-exclusive categories based on mental health. We know that mental wellness is an issue for many people and we all, at times, could use some professional counseling in dealing with life’s uncertainties and difficulties. Try being Secretary of Veterans Affairs for a week. So, at VA and DoD we made it easier for veterans and service members to get treatment without being ostracized for seeking help. The bottom line: PTS, PTSD, TBI, and even depression, our veterans are not damaged goods. What they need are jobs and education and quality health care, a shot at the middle class to help rebuild our economy.

Now, with the strong leadership of President Obama and the support of Congress, we continue to improve access to mental health services. The President’s budget requests between 2009 and 2014 increased VA mental health funding by nearly 57 percent. For this year, fiscal year 2013, VA mental health funding totaled \$6.5 billion.

Mental health staff levels have increased to keep pace with veterans’ needs. A year ago, the President issued an executive order directing the hiring of 1,600 additional mental health professionals. Since then, VA has exceeded that goal by hiring over 1,660 additional clinicians. We have also hired more than 420 support specialists towards our year-end goal this year of 800.

Last month, the President hosted a National Mental Health Summit at the White House to focus on the need to work together to demystify the issues surrounding mental health, especially overcoming the stigma associated with treatment. The White House followed up with a conference two weeks ago, focusing specifically on the mental health needs of veterans and military families.

At VA, we know that when we identify and treat, people do get better. So, to maximize our opportunities for identification and treatment, we are increasing our collaboration with local agencies and community partners. In the next two months, VA will host local Mental Health Summits at each of our 152 medical centers, to broaden the dialogue between clinicians and stakeholders. The first will be held in San Francisco tomorrow, with the remaining 151 Summits occurring out through September. We are also partnering at the local level on 24 pilot projects with federally-qualified community health centers in nine states.

By partnering with local communities and other federal agencies, we intend to get the most out of our resources. By collaborating, we also seek to reduce the stigma against accessing needed mental health care which today, in many ways is available.

One of our most successful efforts is our Veterans Crisis Line. DoD knows it as the Military Crisis Line, same number, same trained VA mental health professionals answering the phone, 24/7, at no cost to DoD, an example of our partnering to deliver optimal care to service members and veterans.

Since start-up in 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered over 800,000 phone calls from veterans in need. Most importantly, 29,000 of those callers were rescued from suicides that were in progress because our mental-health providers were standing by to help.

Chatting and texting appeal to those who are comfortable with technology. So, in 2009, we added an on-line chat service, and in 2011, a texting service. Since then, we have engaged almost 94,000 people on-line chats and another 7,000 by texting. Our Crisis web page is averaging about 37,000 hits per month. I think the bottom line here is, we have veterans who need help engaging with us, we stand a better chance of helping them before the onset of crisis.

And for example, with DoD, we developed a new mobile app called the "PTSD Coach" to help service members and veterans manage their readjustment challenges in real time and to access to mental-health assistance anonymously.

Now, the backlog, let me be clear. No veteran should have to wait to receive benefits that have been earned. The claims backlog is real. And the claims backlog is the reason I agreed to continue my service as Secretary. We have said all along it would take time to solve this correctly, and we are not going to leave this for another Secretary or President to wrestle with. The President wants this fixed and we are on track to eliminate the backlog in 2015.

We started out four years ago with a plan, and we have stayed with it. First, we were determined to take care of some unfinished business, three new diseases attributed to Agent Orange exposure, primarily for Vietnam veterans, nine new diseases associated with Gulf War illness, and service-connected PTSD for combat veterans from all of our wars.

Doing these "right things" for veterans of previous wars was bound to increase the total number of disability claims in our system, that only stood to reason. At the same time, we predicted that the number of those claims that would become backlogged claims, claims older than 125 days, a 125 days is a standard we created to measure ourselves, was also going to increase. Again, logical. We testified to these projections three years ago in announcing these decisions and why we would move forward with them.

It was the right thing to do then and the right thing to do now. And I would make the same decisions over again. But we also promised that we would develop an automation system that would enable us to eliminate the backlog. And we have done that as well. As mentioned earlier, VBMS, Veterans Benefits Management System, is now fielded in all of our 56 Regional Offices, and we are six months ahead of schedule. We projected three years ago that the backlog would increase and peak in 2013, then begin to recede.

And that is also underway, the backlog is now declining. We are somewhat behind where we predicted and would have wanted to be in terms of backlogged claims as a percentage of the total inventory, but that

percentage will shift downwards quickly as the oldest claims leave the system. In the past 90 days alone, the backlog has dropped from roughly 600,000 claims to 515,000. Claims over two years old have dropped from 42,000 to about 1,700. Claims over a year old have dropped from 210,000 to 175,000. So the end of this year, we expect most of these claims that over a year old to be fully out of our system. Today, the VA has the lowest total claims inventory since August 2011. Barring any changes in entitlements, this number will continue to decline, and VA remains committed to eliminating the backlog in disability claims in 2015. That was the backlog.

This is the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice in Korea. A short story from Korea:

“Jerry Murphy grew up in Pueblo, Colorado. After finishing high school in 1947, he went straight to college and graduated four years later, so about 1951. Then, as now, the nation was at war, and so right after graduation, Jerry Murphy joined the Marine Corps. In a few short months, he was in Korea commanding a platoon in combat.

“In February, 1953, Murphy’s platoon was held in reserve while the rest of the company attacked a heavily-fortified hill. During the assault, most of the company’s officers and non-commissioned officers were killed or wounded. The battered company was leaderless at the hilltop and taking more casualties.

“From below, in his reserve platoon position, Murphy could see that something had gone wrong. He immediately seized the initiative and led his platoon up the hill. Arriving on the objective, Murphy found a significant number of Marines dead, dying and wounded. Rallying his fellow Marines in the midst of a raging battle, Murphy began evacuating the wounded, carrying many of them himself off the hill. And then reorganizing to conduct a withdrawal under fire. He manned a machine gun to cover the withdrawal, and then led a small group of volunteers back up the hill to recover more dead Marines. Wounded twice, he refused medical attention until he had accounted for every Marine on the hill and led his rescue party to safety.

“Murphy was the last man to leave that bloody hilltop. For voluntarily risking his life to serve his fellow Marines, Second Lieutenant Jerry Murphy was awarded the nation’s highest award for valor, the Medal of Honor. But his record of service didn’t end there.

“Jerry Murphy went on to serve with VA for 23 years as a counselor and Director of Veteran Services in New Mexico. And then after retiring from VA, he chose again to serve veterans for another eight years as a volunteer at the Albuquerque VA Medical Center.

“Upon his death in 2007, Jerry Murphy insisted on being buried, not in his dress blues, but in his VA volunteer’s jacket. Jerry Murphy was first and last a selfless servant, dedicated to the well-being of others. It was his devotion to follow Marines that led him back up to that hilltop in Korea. But he didn’t stop serving others or being a hero or being a great citizen that he was when he left that hilltop. He lived the rest of his life that way. The same shared sense of humanity that drove him up the hill, time and again in search of fellow Marines, also motivated his years of service to others.”

VA's accomplishments will always be delivered by its good people who work hard every day to do the right things for our nation's veterans. We have this in common, VA and VFW, good people serving veterans.

God bless the VFW, and God bless all who serve and have served our nation in uniform. And may God continue to bless this wonderful country of ours. Thank you very much. (Applause)

EMPOWER PROCESSING CHECK PRESENTATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Empower Processing, represented today by Carson Kainer, Empower Corporation Relations Manager, has been associated with the VFW since June 2011.

Many of you know Empower, and know Carson, as the "Credit Card guys." But Empower does more than help VFW Posts accept credit cards for payment.

In the last 24 months, Empower has donated over \$130,000 of their net revenues to various veteran-support organizations.

More recently, Empower named the Veterans of Foreign Wars their charity of choice because of its persistent and dedicated effort toward helping those who have served and are still serving.

The VFW is pleased to have such a strong relationship with Empower Processing, and today, they help demonstrate their strong commitment to VFW's mission by presenting this check for \$25,000. Please give a warm welcome to Carson. (Applause)

REMARKS BY MR. CARSON KAINER

MR. CARSON KAINER: Thank you for your time, ladies and gentlemen. This is the third convention that Empower has been able to attend, and every convention we go to we get more and more interest in what Empower has to offer the VFW Posts, the VFW Departments, the VFW members.

I say this in all due respect. When I come to these conventions, it reminds me a lot of my grandfather. Like I said, I say that with all due respect. He was a navigator in World War II. I finally remember the words that were spoken the day we laid him in the ground and they mentioned his consistency to his family, to his church, to his comrades, to his community, and when I work, I see a lot of familiar faces out there. When I work with VFW Posts and Departments, I see that same type of commitment, the same consistency that you bring to your communities, to your families, to your comrades, and I am proud and honored to be able to manage this relationship with Empower and be able to try to create a consistency of my own.

Like I said, it is a proud moment for Empower to be able to present a form of financial support. It is presented to the VFW Posts, we present it to the National program, but without the work of the VFW members at the Post level, at the Department level, the National level, we wouldn't be able to create these type of financial assistance programs, these types of support.

So, ladies and gentlemen, I want to say thank you for your consistency to our nation. May God bless you all. Safe travels back home. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Carson, very much.

CLOSING CEREMONIES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Sergeant-at-Arms, we will have the Closing Ceremonies.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, please rise.
Comrade National Chaplain.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: Let us pray. Almighty Father, who overseeth all that we think and do, as we adjourn, we thank you for the opportunity to deliberate the course of our actions as Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Dismiss us with Thy blessings until we meet again. In Thy holy name, we pray. Amen.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, your order has been obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. We are recessed until 8:00 o'clock a.m. tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the Convention was recessed at 11:30 o'clock a.m., to reconvene on Wednesday, July 24, 2013, at 8:00 o'clock a.m.)

THIRD BUSINESS SESSION
WEDNESDAY, JULY 24, 2013

(The Third Business Session of the 114th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, meeting in the Kentucky International Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, was called to order at 8:00 o'clock a.m., by Commander-in-Chief John E. Hamilton presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I will now reconvene the 113th VFW National Convention.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will please conduct the Opening Ceremonies.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, please rise for the Opening Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Comrade National Chaplain.

OPENING PRAYER

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: Eternal Father, in whom we live and move and have our being, we come together again in the hope and faith in whom we are as Americans and what we can do as war veterans.

We ask Thee, O, God, to guide us on the path of unity and harmony that we best serve the needs of our military organization and the citizens of our great nation, at home and abroad.

In keeping with Thy will, we pray. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

(Whereupon, National Sergeant-at-Arms O'Brien led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance at this time.)

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

INTRODUCTION OF LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT
LEANNE LEMLEY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.

Now, I am extremely pleased that here to visit our convention today is a woman with whom I was proud to serve during the past year. Leanne Lemley has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Ladies Auxiliary for many years and has left an incredible legacy for others to follow for years to come. I admire her deeply. She is a true compatriot and an outstanding leader. Please welcome a wonderful woman from West Point, Iowa, Leanne Lemley, National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. (Applause)

GREETINGS – LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT LEANNE LEMLEY

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT LEMLEY: Thank you so much. Before we begin, Commander-in-Chief Hamilton, there is business that needs to

be conducted. Last night my pledge of \$200 for the Mane Event, I present to you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you so much.

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT LEMLEY: Also, at the Ladies Auxiliary session, we had one of our heroes, Brian Anderson who is working with USA Care, who gave us a presentation and presented me with a book to present to you, so on behalf of Brian Anderson.

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

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT LEMLEY: Thank you so much, Commander-in-Chief Hamilton. National Officers, VFW members, it is a privilege for me to be with you this morning and have this opportunity to greet you one more time as National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

My great thanks to each and every one of you who helped make this year so amazing for me and for the Ladies Auxiliary. Just as I am sure our Commander-in-Chief has seen, I have witnessed our incredible membership close all year. We have seen we do amazing things together. Everything from awarding student scholarships to helping veterans with VA claims, you have done it all. I am extremely proud to be a part of the VFW family.

I have never been more committed to my mission than I am today. Though my term is nearly at an end, why, because our work is not complete, nor will it be completed until every veteran is taken care of based on the standards that suit the heroes of our country.

None of us will rest until we have done everything we can to make sure they are honored, respected and listened to and held to the fullest extent. That's why we belong, that's why we spend millions of dollars collectively and give millions of our hours of our time. That is why, because someone has to, and we are the right ones to do the job.

Commander-in-Chief, congratulations on a job well done, and best of luck to you in your new position. It has truly been an honor and a pleasure to serve you and to represent the 500,000-plus member of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

To every veteran in this room, thank you for your service when you wore the uniform of our country. Thank you for the service that you give now to our organization. May God bless you and may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you so much. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF MIKE DeROSA, BURGER KING FRANCHISEE OWNER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Our next guest is a great friend to the VFW and an avid supporter of our military. In 2007, while serving as President of Burger King Restaurants Mie-America Franchisee Association, Mike DeRosa and his wonderful wife, Sherry, developed and had been the driving force behind an incredibly successful fund-raising program for the VFW Foundation.

Their enthusiasm in supporting our nation's heroes has led them to rally the support of hundreds of respective managers and enthusiastic employees in their quest to help VFW provide vital financial assistance to service members and military families in need.

To date, the superlative Burger King team has raised more than \$2 million for VFW's Unmet Needs Program, a truly astounding number!

Our heartfelt thanks goes out to everyone who has played a part in this wonderful and magnanimous endeavor. Here to give us an update on how Burger King franchisees are continuing their effort to support the Unmet Needs Program, please welcome back Burger King franchise owner and member of the VFW Foundation Board of Directors, Mr. Mike DeRosa. (Applause)

REMARKS – MR. MIKE DeROSA, BURGER KING FRANCHISEE OWNER

MR. MIKE DeROSA: Thank you, Commander, for those kind words. It is always a pleasure to be here and greet you folks. My wife wasn't able to make it at this convention. On Sunday, we got a call that our daughter was in the hospital in Boston. She is doing fine, but when you get a call from your daughter and says, "Mom, come out and help me," that always takes precedence. I said, "Should I go with you?" She said, "No, go see our friends at the VFW and I will take care of our daughter. You will just be in the way." Anyway, she would be absolutely right.

Again, thank you for those kind words and the kind words from last night at the Mane Event. I get asked a lot since I am not a veteran why I do this. I am sort of surprised at that, because I do it simply because you inspire me. The VFW inspires me. What you did for your country and what you still do for your country inspires me. What we did last night with the Mane Event was an inspirational situation.

Maybe you don't really look at it that way, but it was. I was amazed in 45 minutes you raised almost \$30,000 for the VFW, for fellow vets. You deserve a round of applause for that. (Applause)

I am going to tell you three stories that happened to me just in the last four weeks about how you and the VFW has inspired people. It is really simple, and it is just amazing. I want you to think about the inspiration that you are for people, as we move forward to raise even more money for the VFW.

There is a country western concert called "Country Jam" that goes on in my hometown of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, every year. They draw about 70,000 people over a weekend. It was just this past weekend that they had it there.

They called me, because last Friday was Military Day honoring our military. They knew about the Unmet Needs Program and my involvement, and they knew about the VFW. This is the first time this has ever happened. They said, "We have got Military Day. Will you come out and do you want to do something?" I said, "Sure, I do."

So, Friday night in front of tens of thousands of people, my good friend, Leroy Jansky from District 9 in Wisconsin and I showed that \$2.1 million check to tens of thousands of people. We got a great round of applause, of course. But it shows you that the VFW inspires people because they called me.

Three weeks ago, I got a call from a Burger King franchisee in Beaumont, Texas, a good friend of mine by the name of Donald O'Brian. He said, "The Texas franchisees have raised money for scholarships." I said, "That's great. Where do I come in?" He said, "Well, we want to give

it to the VFW. They want their money to in some way, shape or form go to the VFW for scholarships, not necessarily through 'Unmet Needs', but scholarships," because you inspired the Texas franchisees and they remembered.

They could have given it to any organization for scholarships, but they wanted it to go to the VFW. He said, "Could you help?" I said, "Sure, no problem. I will make some phone calls." I said, "By the way, how much money is it?" He said, "\$70,000."

So, they are doing a magnificent job and they are willing to give it to the VFW because of you and the inspiration you provide. Then, finally, for my friends from Indiana -- where is Indiana? Right in front. That's great. I probably saw all of you guys about a month ago at your convention in Indianapolis. At that convention we honored a Burger King franchisee out of South Bend, a good friend of mine, by the name of Daniel Fitzpatrick.

Now, Dan is a little larger franchisee than myself. I have 13 units. At the beginning he had 121, and he now has 177. So he is a little larger than I. But he started with us in 2008, because he was inspired by what we did. It also helped the fact that his father, and I didn't know this about Dan until recently, his father was a Seabee in World War II and in the Korean War.

When he found out about what the VFW is doing, he joined us in Unmet Needs. Every year his company has donated over \$100,000 to Unmet Needs. So, that check of that \$2.1 million, a half million dollars of it is thanks to Dan.

But here is the inspirational piece. Dan just bought 55 Burger Kings in Tampa. So, he came to me. He said, "You know what I want to do, I want to put a flagpole in front of every one of my restaurants to fly the flag, and I want to be able to call the VFW Post to come on out and help me." I said, "Hey, don't worry about it, make your phone call and they will help you." Then he says to me, "I want to make sure those extra stores, those 55 stores help this coming November on Unmet Needs."

Now, based on his average, that is another \$55,000 we can probably bank, thanks to your inspiration inspiring him to be helpful.

It gets even better than that. He said to me, "I went to the Burger franchisees in the rest of the state." There are 550 Burger Kings in the State of Florida. He said, "I am going to get them all for us." Now, we only have about 800 stores that participate on a regular basis. Dan will almost double that because when he puts his mind to it, it gets done. They are doing that because of what you do. They are doing that because of what you did and the inspiration that you provide.

So, on behalf of all the Burger King franchisees and our crews that work so hard to raise the money, we want to thank you for your inspiration to keep this going, your inspiration to keep us motivated to do this. So, thank you, and God bless. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Well, there is a guy that gets it, believe me. Like I said yesterday and always say, if you are going to go to a hamburger joint, no offense, if you are going to go to a hamburger restaurant, make it Burger King. Go get a Whopper. They are supporting us and let's support them. It is the right thing to do.

You might want to pop into your local Burger King and say, "Thank you for helping us." Go talk to the manager. If you find out that they are not one of the Burger Kings and some Board wasn't supporting the

program, you might tell them, "Why don't you call this guy named Mike up there in Wisconsin and talk to him." He will sure tell them.

Betty Gripp, are you here for the Final Credentials Report?

FINAL REPORT ON CONVENTION CREDENTIALS

COMRADE BETTY GRIPP (Department of Arizona): At the close of business, 4:00 p.m. yesterday, July 23rd, 2013, the total delegates registering their credentials are:

Total delegates, 14,740.

Total Department Commanders, 49.

Total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 28.

Total National Officers, 55.

That is for a grand total of 14,872.

Commander-in-Chief, this is my Final Credentials Report. It has been a pleasure to serve you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you very much. I will call on Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent at this time.

INTRODUCTION OF THE 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 sincere appreciation to this 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 now my privilege to introduce the National Sergeant-at-Arms.

Bryan P. O'Brien is a Life Member of Post 2394, in Melrose, Massachusetts. He has been a member of the Sergeants-at-Arms for 14 years. He is a Past All State Post Commander, Past District Commander and Past County Council Commander.

In 1982, Bryan was named the VFW's National Young Veteran of the Year and he is the Department of Massachusetts State Chief of Staff.

He is a member of the Massachusetts Policemen's Association and has worked for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation for 29 years as a senior controller and supervisor in Boston. Bryan is simply an outstanding leader with ultimate character and integrity.

Gary Barringer has been a Sergeant for 19 years. He is a Life Member of the VFW, Military Order of the Cootie, DAV, AmVets, and the National Guard Association. He is also a member of the American Legion and the VVA.

He is retired from the North Carolina National Guard after 34 years of service. Gary is also retired from Norfolk Southern Railroad after 22 years. Gary is the VAV's representative for the Department of North Carolina at the W.G. "Bill Hefner" VA Medical Center in Salisbury, North Carolina.

Gary is a Past Department Commander of North Carolina, and he is the State Sergeant-at-Arms.

He has been the Quartermaster of Post 9134 in Rockwell, North Carolina, for over 30 years. Gary is a member of the Rockwell Rural Fire Department where he is also a medical responder. He works as a security guard part time. (Applause)

Joy Ausman has been a member of the Sergeants-at-Arms for 17 years and is a Life Member of Lewiston, Idaho, Post 10043 and Cloquet, Minnesota, VFW Auxiliary to Post 3979.

She is a Past District Commander and Quartermaster, and Past Post Commander. She is employed by Clearwater Paper Corporation as the Director of Health and Safety. (Applause)

Joe Schirmers is our resident golden boy because he has been a Sergeant for 51 years -- that's right, 51 years -- and that deserves a separate applause. (Applause) That is before a lot of you were even born.

Joe is a Life Member of Post 4847 in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. His volunteer work spans decades: Minnesota State Surgeon General for 19 years, State Chaplain for 14 years, Big Ten Sergeant-at-Arms for 53 years, and District 6 Officer-of-the-Day for 53 years.

He retired from Burlington Northern Railroad with 35 years of service. As a result of more than 49,000 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. (Applause)

Jim Galen has been a Sergeant for 12 years and is a Life Member of Post 6802, Richmond, Michigan. He is a Past All State Post Commander and Past All State Post Quartermaster. He served as the Post Quartermaster for 18 years. Currently Jim is serving as Michigan's VOD, Patriot's Pen and Teacher of the Year Director. He is also a Past District 5 Commander. He retired after 30 years of service from General Motors. (Applause)

Lonnie Garza has been a Sergeant for eight years and is a Life Member of Post 3413, San Marcos, Texas. He earned All American Post Commander honors four times and the National Recruiter Century Award 16 times. (Applause)

Lonnie retired from the Army in 1987 with 22 years of service as an infantryman. He presently works for the National Guard's "A" Company of the 636 Military Intelligence Detachment in New Braunfels. (Applause)

Keith MacDonald has been a Sergeant for 19 years and is a Life Member of Post 2275 in El Cajon, California. He is retired from the U.S. Navy after twenty-three and a half years as a Senior Chief Petty Officer. Keith is a past All American Post and District Commander. (Applause)

George Lott has been a Sergeant for three years and is a Life Member and Past Commander of Lieutenant Robert A. Madden Post 10152, Ogdensburg, New Jersey, and a Past District 21 Commander. He is a former United States Army Drill Sergeant.

George currently serves as the Department of New Jersey Sergeant-at-Arms and has held that position for the last 23 years. George was employed as a police officer in Ogdensburg for 34 years and retired in 2008 as the Chief of Police. (Applause)

These are the comrades we depend on so much. 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 superlative job for all of us.

I am very 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 the entire organization, thank you again very much for your service.

As a personal note, I think the Sergeants-at-Arms are probably the cream of the crop of this organization and all of you should thank them very heartily whenever you have a chance. They are the best of the best. (Applause)

ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS OF THE NATIONAL BUDDY POPPY CONTEST

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Now to announce the 2013 National Buddy Poppy Contest winners is Dan Parker, Director of Programs.

COMRADE DAN PARKER: The Buddy Poppy is, without question, one of the most recognizable symbols around the world. To VFW members it symbolizes the commemoration of our war dead and our service to living veterans. For decades, VFW members have distributed the beloved Buddy Poppy to millions of Americans each year.

Today, we are taking a few moments to honor those who have taken the Buddy Poppies to the next level. These are individuals and Posts who have used our Buddy Poppies in the creation of inspirational and exceptional works of art and display.

The entries were judged by the National VFW Programs Committee Chairman Curtis "Doc" Bohlman, National VFW Programs Committee members George Barlett, Kenneth Davis, Wayne Paulson and Charles Sutter, as well as Cheryl Sutter, and the 2012-2013 and 2013-2013 Ladies Auxiliary Veterans and Family Support Directors, Kathleen Birch and Deborah Tweet, respectively.

The displays were judged on effectiveness, clarity of theme, suitability, originality, beauty and the number of poppies used.

Category I is for the Public Promotion of a Poppy Campaign.

Honorable Mention goes to Lake Granbury Memorial Post 7835 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Granbury, Texas.

Third Place goes to Factory City Post 8078 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Kewanee, Illinois.

Second Place is Ladies Auxiliary to the General Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller Post 1503, Woodbridge, Virginia.

First Place goes to E.E. Streets Memorial Post 5118 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Easton, Maryland.

Category II is for the use of poppies in a Memorial or Inspirational Display.

Honorable Mention goes to Thibodaux Memorial Post 5097 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Thibodaux, Louisiana.

Third Place is Ladies Auxiliary to the Charles L. McGaha Post 10558, Cataula, Georgia.

Second Place goes to Roscoe Post 2955 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Roscoe, Illinois.

First Place is Hugo Matejcek Post 3723 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Owatonna, Minnesota.

Category III is for the Artistic or Decorative Use of Poppies.

Honorable Mention goes to Mattheyer-Jordan Post 1719 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Chandler, Oklahoma.

Third Place is Carl L. Gill Post 3018 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Fredonia, Kansas.

Second Place is Ladies Auxiliary to the George Dokken Post 2118, Brookings, South Dakota.

First Place is Crawford County Post 4549 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Robinson, Illinois.

Category IV is for using poppies in a Memorial or Inspirational Display by a Junior Girls or Sons of the VFW Unit.

Honorable Mention goes to Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the Columbia Heights Post 230, Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

Third Place is Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the Foreign Service Post 1857, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Second Place is Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the Pontiac Post 886, Pontiac, Illinois.

First Place is Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the Renis Barrett Post 5376, Calhoun Georgia.

The Director's Award is given to the Buddy Poppy display that, in the judges' opinion, most creatively and effectively represents the intent of the Buddy Poppy Program.

This year's recipient of the Director's Award is: Category I, E.E. Streets Memorial Post 5118 and Ladies Auxiliary, Easton, Maryland.

Category II, Roscoe Post 2955 and its Ladies Auxiliary, Roscoe, Illinois.

Category III, Overland-St. Ann Memorial Post 3944, St. Louis, Missouri.

Category IV, Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the Renis Barrett Post 5376, Calhoun, Georgia.

SILENT AUCTION DONATION TO THE VFW NATIONAL HOME

This marks the 13th consecutive Silent Auction we have had at the Convention. This year, 52 Departments donated items, many reflective of their home states and commonwealths. The purpose of the auction is to raise money for issues that are close to the hearts of the VFW and its Auxiliaries. And this year's recipient will be the VFW National Home for Children.

I am very proud to announce that this year's auction garnered a total of \$6,878, and I am pleased to present this check to Commander-in-Chief Hamilton on behalf of the VFW National Home for Children. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE UAW-GM CHECK

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: General Motors has a long-standing and rich tradition of employing veterans, and it has an equally impressive history of supporting the United States Military.

During World War II, Detroit, home to GM, became known as the "Arsenal of Democracy" as GM plants were converted to the production of critical war material. This effort played a significant, yet often unheralded role in our great victories both in Europe and the Pacific, and over the

years, GM has stayed committed to all those who have served our nation in times of war and peace.

GM and United Auto Workers-GM have shown an enduring corporate commitment to the VFW. Over the past several years, they have presented the VFW with several extremely generous donations in support of VFW programs that have then substantially benefited veterans, service members and their families.

Please welcome General Motors Doug Waite and UAW-GM's Sal Morana here with us today to share the rich history of veterans support. (Applause)

REMARKS – MR. SAL MORANA

MR. SAL MORANA: Good morning, everybody. My name is Sal Morana, UAW International Staff Rep assigned to the Quality Network Department at UAW-GM Joint Facility known as the Center for Human Resources.

On behalf of UAW Vice-President Joe Ashton, I bring greetings. He is sorry he could not be here today, and I am very proud to be here in his place. I am here with Doug Waite, a very impressive guy. He works in what is known as the GM Proving Grounds in Milford, Michigan. He is President of the GM Veterans Affinity Group.

This organization advises General Motors on meeting the needs and hiring of veterans. The UAW and GM partner in many activities. For example, we partnered to make sure our plants are the safest in the world, which by the way our UAW representing GM plants are the best bench workplace environment. We also partner to build the best cars, trucks and crossovers right here in the USA. I believe that is important to all of us. I hope you all use your GM military discount when you purchase a GM car.

As I hope you saw, we have the GM Silverado First Responder truck on display, and it honors the fire, police and EMS technicians that were at the rescue scenes at the World Trade Center, New York, Washington, D.C., and Shanksville on September 11th, 2001.

This vehicle was a result of over four months of work to create the story of what happened that day. The powerful artwork is stunning images, which convey the horror of 9/11. It also lists the names of the 431 first responders who died trying to help others.

I hope you all had a chance to see it. The UAW and GM have long supported active-duty military and retired veterans. Through our efforts, we have been able to sponsor free call days, and as a veteran recently said to us calling home may seem like a small thing, but it is big to a soldier.

We proudly support the VFW National Home for Children. I know I don't have to tell the crowd about what kind of work this place does. We are very proud of the house we built and named after former UAW President Steve Yokich. By the way, the UAW-GM didn't just write a check, our skilled trades folks did all the work, laying the brick, running wire and many more. It was a labor of love.

We also recently hosted the Navy Week at the UAW-GMC HR. That was a great event. Is anybody out there a military mom? I don't see many women in here today. Are they all in the Ladies Auxiliary? We have got one. So, UAW-GM thinks that the military moms are very special people. I

hope you convey that to the rest of the moms. We also host an annual lunch to honor the military moms.

Again on behalf of the UAW-GM, I am very honored to be here with you. I would like to now turn the mike over to Doug. (Applause)

REMARKS – MR. DOUG WAITE

MR. DOUG WAITE: Good morning, everybody. I always wanted to talk with one of these tele-prompters up here. It doesn't have my speech on it, but it looks pretty good to look at them occasionally, it is a photo op.

As Sal mentioned, I am a General Motors employee. I am a Technician at the Medford Proving Group. More importantly, I am a lot like you, I am a VFW member of Linden Post 4642 in Michigan. I served 29 years in the Navy, active duty and Reserve. I just retired this past June as a Senior Chief Petty Officer, by the way.

How many Chiefs do we have out there? It is good to see you, brothers and sisters. When I was here in 2009, I got to tell you that GM was back. Well, we are back with a vengeance. Our Chairman and CEO, Dan Akerson, is a Navy veteran. He is a graduate of the Naval Academy, and he set the standards pretty high for us. The goals he set with our organization, we have been able to achieve them in partnership with our UAW partner.

Our products are second to none. I am sure that you saw the latest J.D. Power results. Eight GM vehicles led the respective segments, including five Chevrolets, one model each from GMC, Cadillac and Buick.

Here is what David Sargent, J.D. Power Vice-President of Global Vehicle Research states: "If you would have asked me the question, "what corporation has the best quality in the entire industry?" the answer would be General Motors. It is not bad. That is a pretty good turnaround.

We have had a long proud history of supporting active military and our veterans. As long as we have been in business, and that has been over 100 years, we have stood behind our employees and our nation.

Today, nearly 5,000 UAW and General Motors employees are veterans. Additionally, about 250 employees are in the Reserve and many of those are serving on active duty right now overseas.

Throughout the years, more than 60,000 GM employees have served the military, and to say thanks to them we go well beyond what is considered the legal requirement to protect their seniority and their wages. I can attest to that, because I have been deployed twice since 9/11 with General Motors. For employees called to active duty related to the Homeland Security, as well as those on short-term military leave in the Reserve and the Guard, we continue to protect their benefits and the pay difference between what they make in the military and their civilian jobs. We are recognized by USGR in 2007 with the Freedom Award for that. In short, we are with them when they put on the uniform and when they come home.

We have very close to 3,000 veterans working with us today, close to 500 of them have been hired in the last couple of years, and so far to date we have hired over 200 veterans in General Motors.

We are very committed to hiring our veterans and putting them back to work. As you well know, our veterans are some of the best employees

that we have. They are better trained than their civilian counterparts, they are very dedicated, and we are proud to have them.

In closing, I would just like to say it has been an honor to represent the men and women of General Motors here one more time. My great-grandfather was a World War I veteran and he gave me some of the items he had. One was his World War I Victory Medal, which I still have. Another in the same case was his VFW pin, which I still have and wear proudly. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Judge Advocate General Dave Norris, do you have something?

PRESENTATION BY JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL DAVID NORRIS

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL DAVID NORRIS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, it gives me great pleasure to make this cash donation from the Women's Veterans Committee, God, Country and Veterans. It was through the coins that we sold to the women veterans and the Women's Veterans Committee wants to make sure that this got in your hands.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Well, thank you very much. Thank you, Committee.

I will turn this over to our Quartermaster General. Thank you, sir.

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL NORRIS: Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF MOC SUPREME COMMANDER GERALD CONSTABLE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Every year, members of the Military Order of the Cooties spend thousands of hours bringing comfort and company to our hospitalized veterans. Their devotion is a grand tribute to the service and sacrifice of all veterans. The service they provide to our nation's heroes, to those who have laid it all on the line, it is certainly admirable and inspiring.

Our next guest was elected Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie at the organization's 93rd Supreme Scratch in Reno last July.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States of America, Gerald Constable, from the great state of Ohio. (Applause)

REMARKS BY MOC SUPREME COMMANDER GERALD CONSTABLE

MOC SUPREME COMMANDER CONSTABLE: I know you-all can do it better than that. That's better. Chief, greetings to you. Thanks for allowing me to be here.

To the National Officers, I have had the fun of traveling a little bit with a few of the officers to different locations around the country. Comrades, the staff here, friends, guests, thank you for allowing me to come in today. It has been a heck of a ride this year.

We have had an excellent year in the Cooties. We are out there doing the work that we always wanted to do, which is supporting the veterans and supporting our Commander-in-Chief's mission that no one does more,

and the Cooties live up to that motto every day supporting the veterans out there.

His support for the Cooties has helped us this year. We were honored this year for the first time in a number of years, the Commander-in-Chief was able to attend Tomb Trek with us in November. It was truly an honor to be there with the Chief as you put the wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and then I got to put the wreath right behind him.

His leadership and mentorship has been outstanding. While it has been a large number of Marines traveling through the chairs here on the VFW side, we have a lot of Air Force on the other side. Just to let you know, Chief, I do speak Marine and I appreciate your mentorship, because my father is a retired staff sergeant from the U.S. Marine Corps. I understand Marines and I appreciate the mentorship and leadership, and it makes it easier for me.

The service to the veterans, Chief, just thank you for the mission you have done this year, the passion with which you have led this organization with has carried right through our organization down to the lowest Cootie, and it has really made a difference this year how we attacked and did our mission for you.

My theme this year was to "Honor and Serve." Service is the key to everything we do. We talk about it, it is service to the veterans. That is what we are here for, service to the country, service before self, and just making sure that we are taking care of those veterans and honoring them through that service in everything that we do. This is the honor degree of the VFW. In fact, you vote first to make sure that we are who you want as Cooties. We don't just become Cooties because we want to become a Cootie. We are a Cootie because you recognize that work and you recommend us to come to that organization. We thank you for that.

So, I will ask you, I know there are a number of folks out there, because one thing when I am traveling across the country, you run into veterans and VFW members, some will say, "What is a Cootie?" I mean, when you were ten years old, nobody wanted them, and everybody said she has got cooties or he has got cooties, and you didn't want them then. I think we want them now. The truth behind this is you have put it in letters of what is a Cootie. Cooties are courageous. We are veterans and heroes just like every other veteran out there. We have got the courage to stand up and fight for what we believe in for our veterans.

We are a little bit outlandish. It takes a little bit of outlandishness in your character to stand there with a pup tent on your head and some of the outfits we wear in an attempt to cheer up those veterans and make them have a better day, those that are in the hospitals.

We are outstanding. You are picked to become Cootie. We don't just have every veteran as a Cootie. It is less than one percent of the whole organization that makes up the Cooties. They are outstanding members. They are also team players. They are the people that are standing here and doing the work. I would venture to say that probably a good portion of the VFW members that are here today, these comrades are actually Cooties as well. If you need to know, just check the back of their collar and look for a bug.

Get involved. That is why they became Cooties. They are involved in the organization, they are involved in the VFW and the Post side; they are

involved in the programs to support the veterans at all levels. That's why they are a Cootie.

Above all, they are exceptional people. They are exceptional in what they do and in their beliefs. The amount of energy they bring forth, because I have never seen a Cootie who wasn't involved in the Post and had dual jobs in both. They have held more jobs and worn more hats because they are exceptional.

Our goal for this year was established early on, and I then added some goals at the end. We met a good number of our membership goals that we wanted. We actually tried to keep from losing membership more than anything else this year. We tried to sustain the membership goal. We picked up seven new Pup Tents in seven different states this year. That's an outstanding increase. We have not picked up seven Pup Tents in a year in probably 15 years. So, thank you for that.

Our hospital work, the previous year we had done \$3.6 million in hospital credits. This year we crossed \$4.2 million in hospital work just in the Cooties. And there is only 15,000 Cooties out there right now. So, that is an enormous number for them. We recruited somewhere between 6,600 and 7,000 veterans for this organization to help strengthen the rolls there and provided checks to the National Home between the MOCA and the MOC for over \$16,000 to support both the medical and dental programs that are continuous programs at the National Home for Children.

It has been a fantastic year. I thank you for that support. I am hoping that everyone will support our incoming Supreme Commander for next year, Mark Newman out of the Grand of Delaware, and Linda Campbell. So, thank you so much. Thanks, Chief, it has been a great year. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Jerry. Thank you for your hard work. Let me announce before I get "Gunner" up here how the figure actually turned out, we have a little more money, so that wasn't added in from our little undertaking last night. With the new haircut that

Mr. Newberry is sporting this morning, it kind of looks like that guy at the Boot Camp, at the barber shop getting his hair cut, and he was in shock last night.

I get excited as I always do. Sometimes I say things that are not correct, and I will try to sometimes kind of maintain my control a little bit better. I get fired up and emotional as you guys know about the issues. Sometimes I use a word that I shouldn't, too, so forgive me. Our total now is \$33,276.56. Jerry owes us 12 bucks for the haircut. (Applause)

So, without further ado for announcements and introductions, I will call on Adjutant General "Gunner" Kent.

INTRODUCTION OF PAST COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: The following Past Commanders-in-Chief are attending this Convention:

1974-1975 - John J. Stang - Kansas

1976-1977 - R.D. "Bulldog" Smith - Georgia

1977-1978 - Dr. John Wasylik - Ohio

1980-1982 - Arthur J. Fellwock - Indiana

1983-1984 - Clifford G. Olson, Jr. - Massachusetts

1984-1985 - Billy Ray Cameron – North Carolina
1985-1986 - John S. Staum - Minnesota
1988-1989 - Larry W. Rivers - Louisiana
1989-1990 - Walter G. Hogan - Wisconsin
1991-1992 - Robert E. Wallace - New Jersey
1992-1993 - John M. Carney - Florida
1993-1994 - George R. Cramer - Illinois
1994-1995 - Allen F. "Gunner" Kent - Arizona
1995-1996 - Paul A. Spera - Massachusetts
1996-1997 - James E. Nier - Texas
1997-1998 - John E. Moon - Ohio
1998-1999 - Thomas A. Pouliot - Montana
1999-2000 - John W. Smart - New Hampshire
2000-2001 - John F. Gwizdak - Georgia
2003-2004 - Edward S. Banas, Sr. - Connecticut
2004-2005 - John Furgess - Tennessee
2005-2006 - James Mueller - Missouri
2006-2007 - Gary L. Kurpius - Alaska
2007-2008 - George J. Lisicki - New Jersey
2008-2009 - Glen M. Gardner, Jr. - Texas
2009-2010 - Thomas J. Tradewell - Wisconsin
2010-2011 - Richard L. Eubank - Oregon
2011-2012 - Richard L. DeNoyer - Massachusetts

Let's give a good round of applause for the Past Commanders-in-Chief. (Applause)

NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL HOME TRUSTEES

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: I will now read the nominations for the National Home Board of Trustees:

There are two nominations for District One for 2013-2019, representing Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont:

David Ouellette of Pelham, New Hampshire. David has been a VFW National Home Life Member since March 13th, 2006, and is endorsed by the VFW Department of New Hampshire.

Richard DeNoyer of Middleton, Massachusetts. Richard has been a VFW National Home Life Member since August 26, 1999. He is endorsed by the VFW Department of Massachusetts.

There are two nominations for District Two for 2013-2019 representing Europe, New Jersey and New York.

Steven Ward of Landstuhl, Germany, has been a VFW National Home Life Member since October 19, 1994. He is endorsed by the VFW Department of Europe.

Warren George of Pemberton, New Jersey, has been a VFW National Home Life Member since April 25, 2003, and is endorsed by the VFW Department of New Jersey.

PRESENTATION OF LEGION OF HONOR BRONZE MEDAL
FROM CHAPEL OF FOUR CHAPLAINS TO
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON

PAST NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Commander-in-Chief,
National Officers, Comrades:

On January 3rd, 1943, the USAT Dorchester carrying troops left New York harbor bound for Greenland. Just after midnight on February 3rd, an enemy submarine fired a torpedo that struck the Dorchester, destroying the electrical supply and releasing clouds of steam and ammonia gas.

Many on board died instantly. Some were trapped below deck. The testimony of the survivors tells us that the sole order and fragment of hope during this chaos came from four chaplains, who calmly guided men to their boat stations.

They opened the storage locker and distributed jackets. When the supply of life jackets was exhausted, the four chaplains either gave away or forced upon other young men their own life jackets.

As the Dorchester sank, the chaplains gathered together and led the men around them in prayer and a hymn, and they linked their arms together in brotherhood, and with their heads bowed in prayer they sang "Beneath the Waves."

It was a heroic act and it was especially significant because of the identity of the four young men: two Protestant ministers, a Catholic priest and a Jewish rabbi.

The Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia serves as a memory of these brave men and carries their message of inter-faith, cooperation and selfless service to every part of our country.

To recognize and encourage acts of volunteerism, brotherhood and sacrifice among Americans of every age and every station in life, the chapel established the Legion of Honor Program. The Legion of Honor Award is given in recognition of exceptional selfless service on the part of an individual which contributes to the well-being of his or her community, and to a spirit of inter-faith cooperation.

As a representative of the Chapel of Four Chaplains, it is my proud honor to present the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion Award to our Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. It reads, "Presented to John E. Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States." (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

PRESENTATION - 2012-2013 DEPARTMENT COMMANDERS GIFT TO
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: The 2012-2013 State Commanders are now gathering here on the stage for a special presentation. Past Nevada State Commander Joe Rigsby is the representative.

PRESENTATION BY JOE RIGSBY, PAST NEVADA STATE COMMANDER

COMRADE JOE RIGSBY (Department of Nevada): Good morning. Mike Ferguson from Arizona called me about three months ago and said, "Hey, we need to do something for the Commander-in-Chief, so he came up with this idea. Since Mike is a Marine, this Chief is a Marine, always a Marine they say, would put this together. What it is, is a Marine clock with all of our state pins on it. (Applause)

Earl Faulk, the Past Commander from California, has batteries. Those batteries have to be bought at the Navy Exchange or they won't work. (Laughter)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: It just never ends, does it? He just gave me some more money. There is another \$100 for the Mane Event. That goes to the Mane Event. Our Past Commanders also made an additional donation to the National Home, \$160 for the National Home. Thank you very much. I appreciate it very much.

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER JAMES KOUTZ, AMERICAN LEGION

The American Legion is a veterans service organization I am sure you are familiar with, and many of you indeed may be a member of as well. Today, the organization is active throughout the United States, supporting current military personnel and veterans, sponsoring American Legion Baseball, Boys State, Oratorical Contests and other activities for youth. While we may be separate organizations, we share many of the same goals and fight on the same side in our battle for veterans' benefits and wellbeing.

James E. Koutz of Boonville, Indiana, was elected National Commander of the American Legion on August 30, 2012, during the organization's 94th National Convention in Indianapolis.

James entered the United States Army in August 1969. He attended basic training at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and Advanced Infantry training at Fort Ord, California.

In January 1970, he reported to Vietnam and served an extended tour of duty with Company C 169th Engineer Battalion. He was honorably discharged with the rank of Specialist 5 in March 1971 and quickly joined the American Legion.

He is a member of Boonville American Legion Post 200. James was honored as a Life Member of his Post in 1991 and served as its Post Commander for nine years.

He retired from the Amax Coal Company in 1995 after 21 years of service, and he was appointed by the Warrick County Commissioners in January 1995 as Service Officer for the Warrick County Veterans Affairs Office. The Governor of Indiana appointed him Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2005 where he served as President of that Commission in 2007. Then in January, 2009, he was appointed to serve four more years.

James has held elected and appointed offices in the American Legion at the Post, County, District, Department and National levels. As Indiana

State American Legion Commander, he achieved an all-time high membership during his tenure in 1990-1991.

At the National level, he served on the Foreign Relations Commission and as Chairman of both the Economics and Legislative Commissions. Additionally, he is a member of the Citizens Flag Alliance and also served on the Veterans' Planning and Coordinating Committee.

He was awarded the State of Indiana Council of the Sagamore of the Wabash in 1991 by former Governor Evan Bayh and recognized for Outstanding Community Achievement of Vietnam Veterans by President Jimmy Carter.

He received the Elk's Distinguished Citizenship Award from the Grand Lodge of the Order of the Elks and Boonville Elk's Lodge No. 1180.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the National Commander of the American Legion and VFW Post 3418 Life Member, James Koutz.

REMARKS BY AMERICAN LEGION COMMANDER KOUTZ

COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much. I see Indiana down here. Hello, Indiana. Yes, I am a Life Member of 3418 Boonville, Indiana. It is great to be here, Commander-in-Chief John. It is great to be here and I want to say a special greetings to the – I think I heard 28 Past National Commanders-in-Chief in the audience. Thank you for your service also.

Let me just say a few words about why I am here. It is twofold. One is to bring greetings from the 2.4 million members of the American Legion. Secondly, to be here, and it is my honor to be here to see the election of your next National Commander-in-Chief, Billy Thien, a great friend of mine. I will have to tell you something, probably this has never happened, that he is from Indiana, I am from Indiana, he is from the Eighth District and I am from the Eighth District. That is two National Commanders of the two world's largest veterans organizations will be Commander and Commander-in-Chief at the same time. (Applause)

Let me say just a little bit about something I think that we need to start doing. That is working together. Can you imagine what five million voices would do in Washington, D.C.? We could do a lot. I think it is time that we work together for all our veterans' issues, veterans' families and the children and disabled veterans. It is time that we start doing that. I think we can start and do it together, and we can make a difference on Capitol Hill.

Let me just say a little bit about my project, and I know you have probably heard about it this year, but what I chose was Operation Comfort Warriors. Operation Comfort Warriors is something I thought we ought to do to take care of our wounded, seriously ill and severely-injured soldiers when they come back from Iraq and Afghanistan while they are in these military hospitals getting rehabilitated or treated for their wounds.

I can say firsthand, just coming back yesterday from Washington, D.C., and Walter Reed in Bethesda, where we had a picnic for the wounded soldiers and many of them thanked me for Operation Comfort Warriors for buying their comfort items.

You know, these soldiers today, thousands of them, and I saw hundreds of them yesterday, are amputees. We must take care of the soldiers because they are going to be in there for a long time. This is why I chose this project to raise a half million dollars. We raised that half million

dollars before May, so I raised my goal up to \$750,000, and as of today we have about \$631,000. I think we will make that goal by National Convention in Houston the last week of August.

I am hoping we will reach a million dollars, because I think that is our duty to take care of our soldiers who have sacrificed so much. That is when I say it is our duty, everybody in this room, and it is everybody in America, it is their job to take care of my soldiers, to get the comfort items they might want. It is not something that we just take a truckload to them. It is something they request. We are doing as many requests as we can a week. So, I want to thank you, the ones in this room, and I know some of you have donated to Operation Comfort Warriors and I appreciate that.

So, with that let me say how great it is to be here. I look forward to the rest of the afternoon and tonight and to be here with all of you people. I want to thank you very much for the hospitality that was given to me in the Indiana Hospitality Room last night. It was almost too much hospitality, but we had a good time. I want to say thank you for everything you have done and thank you so much for this invitation.

The last thing I want to leave with you is my slogan, and most of you probably have heard what my slogan is. "Every Day is Veterans Day." Thank you all so much, and God bless. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THIEN: Let me tell you what the American Legion National Commander Jim did. He was in Washington, D.C., doing the business of the American Legion. He got on an airplane in D.C. last night, flew to Indianapolis and drove to Louisville to be here for this occasion. We thank you, Jim.

I have got a little something that he could have used earlier in the year. Jim, we would like to present you just a little token of our esteem for the work you have done for our veterans of this country.

"The American Legion National Commander James E. 'Jim' Koutz 2012-2013, Louisville Slugger."

MOTION - PROCEEDINGS BE SUBMITTED TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: I move that the Proceedings of the Veterans of Foreign Wars 114th National Convention be submitted to the Speaker of the House for printing as a House document in accordance with Public Law 620, of the 90th Congress, approved October 2, 1968, and entitled as Title 44, United States Code, Section 1332.

COMRADE JERRY NEWBERRY (Post 2492 – Michigan): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you. You have heard the motion and the second. Any discussion or question on the motion? All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

NOMINATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

Nominations are now open for Commander-in-Chief.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF EDWARD BANAS: Good morning, comrades. I am Ed Banas, Past Commander-in-Chief, and a delegate from Post 10004, Connecticut, of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. My purpose here is to nominate the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, William A. "Bill" Thien, for the highest office that can be attained in our organization, and that is the office of National Commander-in-Chief for the membership year 2013-2014.

Following in the footsteps of the 105 Commanders-in-Chief who led our organization before him, starting in 1899 with names that are etched in our written history, Putnam, Romanis, Woodside, Means, William Thien is prepared, capable, and ready to lead our organization.

Bill is a veteran of the United States Navy, serving from 1969 to 1974. He has earned the right to wear the Vietnam Service Medal, the Vietnam Campaign Medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for his service in Korea, the National Defense Service Medal, and several from his later service in the National Guard.

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Thien studied at the University of Indiana Southwest, and worked for years in a supervisory position for the Duke Energy and now is fully retired.

Bill joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1971 and is a proud Legacy Life Member of Post 3281 in New Albany, Indiana, and resides with his wife, Linda, in Georgetown, Indiana.

Dedicated to our motto that "No One Does More for Veterans," Bill Thien has shared a big part of his life with the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

His past positions are many. However, those that must remain close to him are earning the coveted position of All American Post Commander, All State District Commander, and during the years 2003-2004, becoming an All American State Commander. By the way, his Commander's theme that year was, "If Not Us, Then Who?"

Continuing to aspire through our ranks, Bill then served proudly in our National ranks, to include some of the following Committees: Legislative, the POW/MIA Committee, the National Youth Development Chairmanship and Recognition, Vice-Chairman of our Citizen Education and Community Service Program, and as a National Council member from District 5, and at that time he was assigned to the National Budget Committee.

Serving as your Junior and Senior Vice Commanders-in-Chief, he has traveled on behalf of us to Brussels, Belgium for NATO briefings, traveled to Germany for the purpose of visiting our wounded warriors, who are transported down range with injuries and the clothes on their backs, stabilized at Landstuhl Medical Center prior to being returned to the United States.

He has been briefed by J-PAC at their headquarters in Hawaii, and then traveled to Vietnam to work with J-PAC at a 1966 aircraft crash site north of Hanoi, a very, very important mission to us and to him.

Continuing in our organization's behalf, Bill and his delegation has traveled to China for meetings with some of their ministers regarding archival research and having talks regarding POWs and MIAs. He toured their archives, viewed legends of information that could aid in the search for our missing.

He stated to me in part that the Chinese were more than willing to assist in this task, especially as it applies to our World War II missing. Although change, my friends, can be hard to accept. Bill Thien is fully aware that the motto of our organization is forever changing and allowing us to maintain the competitive edge that is required for us to sustain our mission.

Again, I am proud to stand before each and every one of you and nominate William A. Thien for the position of National Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The Chair recognizes Past Commander-in-Chief Art Fellwock.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ARTHUR FELLWOCK: My name is Art Fellwock. I am a member of VFW Post 1114 in Evansville, Indiana, and 33 years ago I was Commander-in-Chief. It is a pleasure for me to nominate Billy Thien as Commander-in-Chief. He is a person who knows how to get results, he knows what comradeship means, and he has a tremendous love for this great country of ours.

Knowing all of this, I am glad and proud to second the nomination of Billy Thien for Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The Chair recognizes Gregory Baker, Department Commander.

COMRADE BAKER: My name is Gregory Baker. In 2003, when I was a Post Commander and Bill Thien was our State Commander, it was a really eye-opener to me in observing the real workings of this great organization. With 100-percent drive, dedication, honesty, integrity, and all of the qualities of an individual to lead this country's Veterans of Foreign Wars, it was obvious to me Bill was up to this task.

On behalf of the great state of Indiana, it is with utmost honor and pleasure I second that motion of William "Bill" Thien for the high office of Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Are there any other nominations for the Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for Commander-in-Chief? Comrades, the nominations are closed.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DAVE HAVELY: I am Dave Havelly, Post 5864 in Greenwood, Indiana, Department of Indiana. I move that the nominations be closed and that the Adjutant General cast one unanimous vote for Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: You have a motion to cast one unanimous ballot for Bill Thien as Commander-in-Chief. Is there a second?

COMRADE JERRY HERKER: I am Jerry Herker, Department of Washington Council member. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The motion has been made and seconded. All those in favor will say "aye"; the motion carried.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: By the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Bill William Thien, Commander-in-Chief, 2013-2014.

REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT THIEN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT THIEN: Thank you so much. Please be seated. It is humbling enough as it is. Please be seated. Let me just say thank you, thank you, thank you for the honor and the privilege of serving this great organization. I understand I am going to have an opportunity to share some thoughts with you a little bit later. So, with that, I will close and we will get on with the rest of the nominations and elections. Thank you. (Applause)

NOMINATION OF SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Nominations are now open for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. I will recognize Gary Kurpius, Past Commander-in-Chief.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARY KURPIUS: I am Gary Kurpius, Past Commander-in-Chief and a member of VFW Post 9365, Wasilla, Alaska.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, National Officers and Delegates to this 114th National Convention, I am pleased and honored to place the name of John Stroud in nomination for the high office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the ensuing year. John has done an outstanding job serving as your Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief on the Hamilton-Thien-Stroud team.

I have been honored to know and work with John for many years. I was lucky to have John serve as one of my State Commanders on the Veterans First Team, and proved himself to be a natural leader. John is intelligent, hyper-energetic, a comrade who is not afraid to let anybody know what is right for our veterans and our country. He will ensure that his voice and the views of the Veterans of the Foreign Wars of the United States will be heard.

John is a VFW Gold Legacy Life Member of the VFW, a Life Member of the VFW Military Order of the Cootie, and a Life Member of the VFW National Home for Children. He is also a member of the American Legion and the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks.

John has the necessary knowledge, experience, education, and most importantly the dedication to our country and our veterans, and our Veterans of Foreign Wars organization.

John and his wife, Mary, reside in Hawthorne, Nevada. Please join me in supporting John for the position of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the ensuing year. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Richard Eubank, Past Commander-in-Chief.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RICHARD EUBANK: Comrades, I am Richard Eubank, Past Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and a delegate from Post 3965, Springfield, Oregon. I am proud and honored to second the nomination for John Stroud for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: 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?

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE BRUCE HOLLINGER: I am Bruce Hollinger, Post 8336, Logandale, Nevada, a delegate to this convention.

I move that the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for John Stroud for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.

COMRADE RAY THOMAS: I am Ray Thomas, a delegate from Post 3632, Arizona. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you very much. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: By the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for John W. Stroud, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, 2013-2014.

REMARKS BY SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT STROUD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT STROUD: Well, comrades, that was a quick year. I thank you for the confidence and trust you placed in me by your support. I want to thank Commander-in-Chief John Hamilton for his leadership this year and for letting me be on the Hamilton-Thien-Stroud team. It has been exciting and I know you are going to excel in your next endeavor.

Commander-in-Chief Bill Thien, I pledge to you my loyalty, dedication and every ounce of energy that I have got. We are going to get this done. The Western Conference, thanks for your friendship and support.

The Department of Nevada, District 4 and my Post 2313, I promise I am coming back one of these days.

On the stage with me today are a couple of special people, my big brother Bill, United States Navy Veteran, two tours of Vietnam. Bill, thanks for being here today. You don't know it, but when you were in Vietnam, this eight-year-old kid watched Walter Cronkite every day to see if you were okay.

Everybody that knows me well knows that I have a great deal of love for the Ladies Auxiliary, and also up on the stage today is the Department of Nevada Ladies Auxiliary President, my best friend, my soul mate, my wife, Mary. (Applause)

Also some special people here today. According to Betty Gripp's report, 14,872 of you. Thank you for the support. You are why we are here, you are why we do what we do, because we are the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and no one does more for veterans. God bless you and your families, God bless our beloved VFW, God bless every soldier, sailor, airman, Marine, Coast Guardsman, National Guardsman and Reservist guarding the gates of freedom today, and may God continue to bless these United States of America. Thank you so much, comrades.

NOMINATION OF JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We will have nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

I recognize Past Commander-in-Chief Cliff Olson.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OLSON: Good morning, comrades. I am Cliff Olson, a delegate from Post 8699, Bryantville, Massachusetts. Many years ago, I made it a point that I would never stand before this convention and nominate any comrade that I felt could not be an excellent Commander-in-Chief. So, today I come before you to nominate a man for the office of Junior Vice Commander for the years 2013-2014, and if he is elected, he will in two short years become our Commander-in-Chief.

He is a family person. I firmly believe that this comrade is the most qualified and dedicated comrade that we in the Eastern Conference have ever endorsed. His qualifications and experience far exceeds those that have gone before him.

He gained his eligibility while in the United States Army from 1967 through 1970, serving with the 7th Infantry Division in Korea. While still serving our country, he became a member of VFW Post 418 in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, where he maintains his membership as a Gold Legacy member. His VFW and professional background is superb, and time limitation has forced me to omit many of this comrade's achievements and qualifications.

He has served in all chairs of his Post, and attained the distinction of being named as an All State Post Commander, and later as an All State Post Quartermaster. He also continues to serve as the registered Post Service Officer.

He continued to serve and held all chairs, including Commander in both the VFW Allegheny County Council, and District 29. On the Department level, he served as the State Chief of Staff on two separate occasions, the VOD Chairman for five years, the Loyalty Day Chairman for seven years.

He served on the Veterans Service Committee, the Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission, along with the State Law Veterans Council. These positions were held as he progressed through the chairs of the Department and attained the office of State Commander in 2002-2003, a year in which he was named as an All American Department Commander after reaching 100-percent membership in the organization's largest Department.

This comrade has served the National Organization in many capacities, including Youth Activities Chairman, Vice-Chairman of Military Affairs Committee, while also serving on many National Committees, and just recently as our National Inspector General. The man of which I speak is eminently-qualified for the position he seeks.

He is a retired educator from the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, serving on the Board of Education as Chairman of the Social Studies Department at Langley Teaching Academy. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Cum Laude Degree along with a Master's of Education Degree from the University of Pittsburgh.

He was the recipient of a Fulbright-Hays Scholarship for study in West Africa. He has won many, many awards for his teaching excellence and also found time to be an outstanding baseball coach, guiding the school's

Langley Mustangs to back-to-back City of Pittsburgh Championships. This comrade has been named as the VFW's National Young Veteran of the Year. He has received the Presidential Proclamation from President Carter for Outstanding Community Achievement of the Vietnam Era Veterans.

He is a Life Member of the Military Order of the Cootie and a Life Member of our National Home for Children. He has been married 44 years to his wife, Betty Jean, who is a Past President of the Department of Pennsylvania Ladies Auxiliary, and presently is serving as its National Council member.

They have one son, John, III, an attorney practicing law in western Pennsylvania, and they are proud grandparents of two grandchildren.

Comrades, it is with a great deal of pride, pleasure and humility that I place before you a man that I am sure will in two short years become a tremendous Commander-in-Chief. I am very proud to place in nomination for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief from the Department of Pennsylvania, the name of John A. Biedrzycki, Jr. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I recognizes Allen Jones, Past Department Commander and Past National Council member.

COMRADE ALLEN JONES: I am Allen Jones, Past Department Commander and a member of VFW Post 21, Pennsylvania. This is my sixty-third National Convention and nobody could be prouder than I am to stand here and say a few words about John. The only thing that I want to say, it has been a great venture with John for the last two years.

Let me advise you one thing about John. If you ever want the ride of your life, get up at 5:30 in the morning in the State of Maine, and start home on a Sunday morning. John does not know what the speed limits are in any state.

I want to say that they tell us that we can only have two people second a nomination. I want to prove to all of them that they are so wrong. I ask all of the Eastern States to stand up, Conference member to stand up, and point your right hand at the podium and repeat after me: "I proudly second the nomination of John Biedrzycki for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States."

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The Past Department Commander and National Council member, Bob Eiler.

COMRADE ROBERT EILER: Good morning, comrades. I am Robert Eiler, Department of Pennsylvania, a member of Hopewell VFW Post 8805. It is a great honor, too, for me to stand and second the nomination for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief John A. Biedrzycki, affectionately known as "Big" John. I assure you that "Big" John will grab hold of those timbers like the song reflects and hold up this organization so you comrades can go out and do your mission. Thank you very much. God bless America.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: 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?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RUSSELL CANEVARI (Post 5544 - Department of Pennsylvania): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move that the nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief be closed and that the

Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for John A. Biedrzycki as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the year 2013-2014.

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

COMRADE RUTH FAIRCHILD: For the purpose of a second, I am Ruth Fairchild, Past Department Commander, and a delegate from Post 315, New Castle, Pennsylvania. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have a motion and a second on the floor. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye". The motion carries.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: By the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for John A. Biedrzycki, Jr., for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2013-2014.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.

REMARKS BY JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BIEDRZYCKI

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BIEDRZYCKI: I have got to catch my breath. What a parade. My heartfelt thanks to all the delegates of the 114th National Convention for the honor, the trust and the confidence you have placed in me. I wish to congratulate and pledge to our new Commander-in-Chief Bill Thien of Indiana and our new Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Stroud of Nevada, and all of you here today my spirit, my strength and my commitment in the service of America's true heroes, our nation's veterans and their families.

It is said that family and friends are the true measure of a man's wealth. If that is correct, then surely I am the wealthiest man alive.

With your indulgence, I wish to recognize and introduce those who I consider the riches of my life. To the officers and delegates of the Eastern States Conference, Past Commanders-in-Chief Paul Spera, George Lisicki, Bob Wallace, John Smart, Ed Banas, Richard DeNoyer, and especially Uncle Cliff Olson for nominating me, thank you. Thank you for your support, your guidance and your friendship.

To my Post, Post 419 in McKees Rocks, to District 29 of Pennsylvania and its Ladies Auxiliary, and to all the officers and delegates and Past State Commanders and Presidents of the Department of Pennsylvania, not only the VFW but its Ladies Auxiliary, and especially to Past State Commander Allen Jones. I did give him the ride of his life that morning in Maine. We tested out that new car on a new highway, and when we rode past that police officer, who was sleeping, I knew I was lucky. It was three digits, too. We were going that fast.

I especially want to thank Bobby Eiler, Past State Commander, and my National Council member, what a friend, what a supporter, what a comrade. I am going to try this, to my son who is not here, for his understanding and support of my VFW activities, because they are watching it live stream on computer this morning. Happy birthday to my grandson, Max. He is six today. Hello to my granddaughter, Molly, watching at home on the computer.

Finally, to my wife, Betty Jean, whose unwavering love and unconditional support for the past 44 years is more than a man could deserve. That's right, she is a Past State President and she is serving as a

National Council member for the Ladies Auxiliary of Pennsylvania, which she truly has been the "Wind Beneath My Wings."

Comrades, we face many challenges, but the real answer is we will march together, we will be victorious, we will have a great new team, and we will spend this year working hard for America's true heroes, our veterans and their families.

Thank you and God bless every one of you for being here, and God bless this nation. (Applause)

NOMINATION OF QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Nominations are now open for Quartermaster General.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JIM NIER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I am Jim Nier, Past Commander-in-Chief and a delegate from Post 8919, Texas.

Comrades, I am honored this morning to place in nomination for the position of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the name of a comrade currently serving in the position.

Bob Greene was elected Quartermaster General by the National Council of Administration in April 2012, and was re-elected by the VFW membership in July 2012 at the National Convention in Reno.

For the last 15 months, he has served with distinction and with confidence, and the expertise to continue to perform the myriad of duties of his most responsible position. Most importantly, he has earned the respect and the trust of his fellow employees, and the general membership.

His VFW eligibility is as a result of service with the United States Army from May 1970 to October 1971, with a tour of duty in Vietnam and with the 101st Airborne Light Weapons Infantry Unit.

He was awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Bronze Star, the Air Medal and the Vietnam Service and Campaign Medals. He is a Legacy Life Member of VFW Post 7397 in Lenexa, Kansas.

He earned a degree in Business Administration in 1977 from the University of Missouri, Kansas City, and came to work for the VFW National Headquarters in 1978.

Since his first employment as an Administrative Assistant, he has held three Directorships, was Chief Information Officer, and was Assistant Quartermaster General for seven years.

In his capacity as Assistant Quartermaster General, he managed either directly or indirectly every Department reporting to the Quartermaster General's office.

I think that we would all agree that with the challenges that we face in the VFW, both today and tomorrow, that it is imperative that we have a Quartermaster General with the experience and the leadership capabilities to meet those challenges and turn them into opportunities.

Bob Greene has that experience with 35 years at the National level of our organization. Due to his many years of exemplary employment, he has proven to be results-oriented. The VFW has been strengthened and our members have been better served.

His passion for the success of our organization, his vision for the future, his personal attributes of loyalty and integrity, along with his

professional on-the-job experience makes him uniquely qualified for this position. Simply put, he is the man for the job.

He and his wife, Teresa, have twin daughters and reside in Lenexa, Kansas.

It is with much honor and personal pride that I nominate Comrade Robert B. Greene, Post 7397, Kansas, for the position of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2013-2014. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The Chair recognizes Past Commander-in-Chief John Stang.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN STANG: I am John Stang, a member of VFW Post 3147, LaCrosse, Kansas. To you, Commander-in-Chief and to my fellow members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, when Bob Greene asked me to second his nomination, I was very honored and pleased, and he said, "Would you keep it short?" I said, "Why?" He said, "Because I know you are an attorney and they usually charge by time." And that proves why we need him to stay on as Quartermaster General, because he respects the dollar and he guards it, and has for his entire time with the VFW.

I have known Bob Greene since the '70s. He first worked for Quartermaster Al Cheatham, who many of you senior members like myself remember well. I don't know too much about his bartending abilities, but I do know he has done a fine job in every position he has held, and he has

held all the Quartermaster General's management positions for Directors reporting to him over 35 successful years with experience in the exact area for which we are electing him today.

As a fellow Kansan, I am very proud to second the nomination of Robert Greene for the position of Quartermaster General. Bob, thank you for the many years and services you have provided for the VFW. I am proud of all of your accomplishments as is your lovely wife, Teresa, family and your predecessor, Larry Maher.

Last but not least, thank you for writing this wonderful speech about you. (Laughter) Thank you, Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir. He has still got it. Any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Any other nominations for Quartermaster General?

I recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Commander-in-Chief, I am Lynn Rolf, Department of Kansas Commander, and a member of Post 56. I want you to know that Bob Greene is going to be the first Quartermaster General ever to receive a tweet at the same time of my motion. I move that the nominations cease for Quartermaster General and a unanimous ballot be cast by the Adjutant General for the office of Quartermaster General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE J.T. PLUMMER: I am J.T. Plummer, a registered delegate from Post 8873, Stockton, Kansas. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye". The "ayes" have it. The motion is carried.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, by the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Bob Greene for Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the year 2013-2014.

REMARKS BY QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT GREENE

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT GREENE: Comrades, Sisters and special guests, thank you for the trust you have placed in me by electing me Quartermaster General. I will do the best I can to live up to that trust. I will do everything I can to ensure that this organization has a secure financial future.

I want to thank John Hamilton for his leadership this year, and I look forward to working with John as he steps into his new shoes in just a day or two from now. I also want to thank Allen "Gunner" Kent for his leadership, his support and his friendship over the past eight years. I want to wish "Gunner" and his wife, Becky, the best of everything as they step into their new shoes. (Applause)

I look forward to working with Bill and his three Johns, no jokes, please, in this upcoming year. I want to again thank the delegates to this convention for the confidence you have placed in me. I also want to thank the Department of Kansas for all of their support, and particularly my Post 7397 in Lenexa, Kansas

If any of you ever have a question, a comment, concern or complaint, please call my office. Call me or call any of my staff. We want the opportunity to live up to the trust you have placed in us. Thank you very much. (Applause)

NOMINATION OF NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Nominations are now open for National Chaplain.

Jim Nier, Past Commander-in-Chief.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES NIER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I am Jim Nier, Past Commander-in-Chief and a delegate from Post 8919, Texas. I am honored to place in nomination for the position of National Chaplain for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the name of Comrade Robert Dickerson, a proud Life Member of Post 9186 in San Antonio, Texas.

A 24-year Army veteran, his eligibility for the VFW was established when he served 19 months in Vietnam with headquarters and Headquarters Company 145th Combat Aviation Battalion, and also the 1st Aviation Brigade Headquarters from January 1971 to August 1972.

He joined the VFW in 1993 in El Paso, Texas. Chaplain Dickerson served for five years as Post Chaplain of Post 2451, and two years as District 10 Chaplain, both in El Paso.

At the 93rd Department Convention in Corpus Christi, Texas, last month, he was re-elected and installed to serve a sixth term as State Chaplain for the Department of Texas. Chaplain Dickerson's initiatives and passion for his job have resulted in the implementation of many effective

and many programs at the Post, District and Department levels, particularly at the Department level.

He has established a Memorial Team, a Prior Warrior Group, Chaplain Seminars, an electronic devotional ministry, distress reporting procedures and has handled many Memorial Services, programs for counseling veterans and visiting of Wounded Warriors at Fort Sam Houston.

He has served as Chaplain of the Brooks County Church, the Brooks County Base in San Antonio, ministering to active military veterans and their families.

He also served as Chairman of the Memorial Service Committee during the 112th VFW National Convention in San Antonio in August 2011. He was ordained as a minister over 30 years ago by Bethel Second Baptist Church of Las Cruces, New Mexico.

He holds two Master's Degrees from Webster University. Having known Chaplain Dickerson for nearly 30 years, two words can describe this comrade's character. He truly is a class act. Those of us who know him are very proud of him, because we know that to him everyone matters.

He and his wife, Marion, reside in San Antonio. Comrades, it is an honor and privilege for me to nominate Chaplain Robert Dickerson, Post 9186, San Antonio, Texas, for the position of National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the year 2013-2014. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: The Chair recognizes Roy Grona, Adjutant/Quartermaster of Texas.

COMRADE ROY GRONA: I am Roy Grona, a delegate from VFW Post 3377, Texas. It gives me great pleasure to second the nomination of Robert Dickerson.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Are there any other nominations for Chaplain? Are there any other nominations for Chaplain? Are there any other nominations for National Chaplain?

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DAN WEST: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Dan West, a delegate from Post 3413, San Marcos, Texas. I make the motion that nominations for National Chaplain be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Robert Dickerson for National Chaplain for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

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

SISTER SYLVIA SANCHEZ: Commander-in-Chief Hamilton, I am Sylvia Sanchez, a delegate from Post 8936, San Antonio. I am proud to second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: We have a motion and a second. All those in favor will signify by the sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it and the motion is carried.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: By the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Robert Dickerson for National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2013-2014.

REMARKS BY NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT DICKERSON

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT DICKERSON: Good morning to everyone. Briefly, let me say that I am not here this morning to represent myself. I am here to represent one who died for me on a cross, on a hill far away 2,000 years ago. To him, I give thanks.

I also would like to thank Past National Commander-in-Chief and my good friend, Jim Nier, for his steadfast resolve and constant encouragement to me to consider serving our veterans as National Chaplain when the time presented itself. I would like to thank my beloved Department of Texas for their support as well. I would like to thank the members of our Southern Conference for their support and you, the members of our National Convention for your support as well.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my wife and best friend of 40 years, Mary Dickerson, for her support. Thank you for the opportunity to serve our veterans, and I will do it. You can count on it. (Applause)

NOMINATION OF JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Nominations are now open for Judge Advocate General.

COMRADE WILLIAM SCHMITZ, SR.: Good morning, comrades. Commander and your leadership on the dais, my compliments to the leadership here. These elections are not about an individual, but they are about you, me, us.

I stand before you to place in nomination the name of Harold Burke, also known as Hal, for National Judge Advocate General. He and I have had several conversations in the past. I have decided to not go through the regular bio. The bio kind of speaks for itself when it comes to Hal. It speaks of his accomplishments throughout the VFW and in the civilian life. It speaks to his commitments.

I would like to speak to you from the heart. As you progress in leadership, as you all well know, it requires dedication, commitment and time, a lot of your personal time, and unfortunately a lot of your personal money.

Hal on several occasions has helped several Posts, several people. He is a knowledgeable man, but one of the smartest things that a knowledgeable man knows is what to say or a person knows what to say is, "I am not quite sure. I don't know. That's a smart individual.

He has always strived to find out information to share his knowledge, his contacts and the National Organization, as well as his State Department, District level, Post level, with other comrades who need assistance. He doesn't always tell you in the past of what you want to hear, but he told you the rules and regulations and how it really is, and then helps you work through them.

Hal is a Mason like I am. One of the three core values of a Mason is God, family and country. He considers the VFW to be an extended family and acts as if it is. It is an honor to speak before you and it is an honor to place my friend Hal Burke's name before you for consideration in this election. Thank you very much for your time.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Past Commander-in-Chief Cliff Olson.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OLSON: It is still good morning, comrades. Chief, I am Cliff Olson, a delegate from Post 8699, Bryantville, Massachusetts. It is my honor and a privilege to second the nomination of Hal. Hal is not from my state, but he is from the Eastern States Conference.

I first met Hal in the mid-'90s, and I was very impressed with his knowledge and dedication to this organization. As you have just been told, he has a very impressive record of achievement in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He is very qualified for this position by virtue of his 38 years as a Safety Review Officer at Lockheed Martin Corporation, and as an instructor at the New York Office Training Institute for over 16 years. He has gained additional experiences as President of a National Hearing Board, along with many disciplinary committees at the State level.

But what we ask for in a Judge Advocate General is legal assistance and counsel to the Commander-in-Chief and the National Council of Administration, along to the National Convention. In that light, he is eminently qualified to render that service. I am proud and honored to second the nomination of Comrade Harold Burke, Jr., for the high office of Judge Advocate General for the years 2013-2014. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, Cliff.

The Chair recognizes Marlene Roll, Junior Vice Commander of the Department of New York.

COMRADE MARLENE ROLL (VFW Post 7967 – New York): Good morning, comrades. I am very honored to have the opportunity to come up here and nominate Hal Burke, Jr., for National Judge Advocate General. You have heard some of the accolades already from two comrades before me, and quite honestly I was going to go down through a list as well, but you know what it takes to get up here, they have to go through their Posts, through the County Council, through your District, through your Departments. That is not really why I wanted to come here and speak on behalf of him.

He is passionate about what he does, he is detail-oriented, he loves our parliamentary procedures, he loves our by-laws, he likes to see how we function with them, and he, in fact, is a keeper of them.

I have learned much from him, and I think he is the best candidate for National Judge Advocate General. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: 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?

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE MICHAEL PASCAL: I am Michael Pascal, Department of New York Commander, a member of Post 9486, and a delegate from that Post. I move that nominations be closed for Judge Advocate General and that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for Harold Burke, Jr., for Judge Advocate General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, comrade. You have heard the motion. Is there a second?

COMRADE JIM DURKIN: Commander-in-Chief, I am Jim Durkin, Past State Commander of New York, Post 7414. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you. You have heard the motion and the second. Any discussion or questions on the motion? If not, all those in favor will signify by the sign of "aye". The motion carried.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: By the power and authority vest in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Harold Burke, Jr., for Judge Advocate General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the year 2013-2014.

REMARKS BY JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT BURKE

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT BURKE: Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, distinguished guests on the dais and my fellow comrades of the 114th National Convention: Thank you so very much for electing me to the high office of National Judge Advocate General. I am very indebted to a number of people to be able to stand before you today.

I would like to tell you about the first comrade that I met back in 1979. His name was Bill McMillan. He was a Navy veteran. He wanted to be the first Vietnam Veteran Commander of my Post. He gave me an application, chased me around for six or eight months before I finally joined, and to be very honest with you, I never, ever in my wildest dreams thought I would be standing here at this podium.

My very special friend for many years, he, too, was a World War II veteran, sitting home right now, and it goes without saying he is a great American. His name is Jim Wilson. Jim Wilson stood by me through thick and thin, advising, prodding me and instructing me, pushing me through the many facets of the organization. Jim, there are no words of expression for the gratitude except to say thank you.

Another great friend and supporter who is no longer with us, but he was a great comrade, and that is Past State Commander William Bossidy. If he was with us today, we would be sitting out in the back toasting this great achievement.

Also just to name a few great Past State Commanders, Jim Longendyke, Norm Garrett and Past State Commander Phil Schiffman. All I can say to them is thank you for all your guidance and help.

To my Post 1895, my County Council, my District and especially to my comrades of New York State, the Department of New York State, thank you for the confidence you placed in me and helped me achieve this great goal.

To the officers and comrades of the Eastern States Conference, thank you so very much for your support.

As our Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief said, we have a great, great group of leaders and mentors in our conference. To Past National Commander-in-Chief Cliff Olson, who seconded my nomination, I appreciate that very much, Cliff. Thank you.

Past National Commander-in-Chief Robert E. Wallace, who is currently the Assistant Adjutant General and Executive Director of our Washington Office, Past National Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera, Past National Commander-in-Chief John Smart, my Past National Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas, Sr., and a great friend from New Jersey, George Lisicki, Past National Commander-in-Chief.

Last, but not least, Richard DeNoyer who just completed serving his term last year. Additionally, I would like to thank our Past National Surgeon General and also our Senior Vice Commander William Schmitz and the Junior Commander-in-Chief Marlene Roll, thank you.

Certainly, I cannot go without thanking my lovely bride of 42 years, which we will celebrate our anniversary next month. If it wasn't for her patience and diligence and talking sometimes, I probably wouldn't have moved forward in this great organization.

Commander Thien, never in my wildest dreams did I ever think we would be on the same team again. In 2003, we served as State Commanders together, and it is certainly an honor and pleasure to serve with the Thien-Stroud-Biedrzycki team this year.

To you and all the National Officers, I pledge my sincere allegiance. I would like to thank all of you for this honor. May God bless this great nation, our men and women now serving in the greatest veterans organization in the world, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Thank you.

NOMINATION OF SURGEON GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Nominations are now open for Surgeon General.

The Chair recognizes Past Commander-in-Chief Richard Eubank.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF EUBANK: Comrades, I am Richard Eubank, Past Commander-in-Chief and a delegate from Post 3965, Springfield, Oregon. It is my distinct honor to place in nomination the name of Peter Buchanan for the high office of VFW Surgeon General. Peter served seven years nine months in the United States Navy and earned his VFW eligibility through three tours of Vietnam. Peter has completed the Naval Hospital Corpsman School, Class A and Class B, and served with the Marines and Navy, and I believe on a couple of occasions the U.S. Army, and also with the River Boat Patrols in combat as a Corpsman.

Peter's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal of Combat, V-Device and three Purple Hearts, among others. Peter is a member of Post 1771 in Colorado. He is qualified for the position of National Surgeon General, and he is truly a veteran that cares and believes in helping veterans and their families. His hard work and perseverance identifies Peter as a true leader and best qualified as a comrade for the National Surgeon General.

He is retired, ready and willing and able to serve the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Again, I am honored to nominate Peter Buchanan for the high office of Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the ensuing year 2013-2014.

COMRADE BRUCE DOLAND (Post 7945 – Colorado): I am here to second the nomination of Peter Buchanan for the high office of Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. No one does more for veterans, it is more than just a motto, it is a promise. Peter is up front in helping us to keep that promise. I am honored to second his nomination. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Are there any further nominations for Surgeon General? Are there any other nominations for Surgeon General? Are there any other nominations for Surgeon General?

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE KIRK ROSA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Kirk Rosa, a delegate from Post 12009, Department of Colorado. I make a motion to close the nominations and instruct the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot for Peter Buchanan for National Surgeon.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JIM LAFFERTY: Jim Lafferty, a delegate from Colorado, Post 3411. I second the nomination of Peter Buchanan.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: You have heard the motion and second. Any questions on the motion? If not, those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye". The "ayes" have it.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: By the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Peter Buchanan for the office of National Surgeon for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year 2013-2014.

REMARKS BY NATIONAL SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT BUCHANAN

NATIONAL SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT BUCHANAN: Well, we are at the end. I have a short speech, but I am going to speak from my heart. I thank all of you, each and every one that is here, and certainly I have got to thank my Department, my Post, my District, all those that supported me both financially and with the encouragement that I was given on my trip to this chair. I wish the best for all of you, I wish good health for all of you. My motto has been for 50 years focusing on vets, and that's my commitment to you. Have a safe trip home.

PRESENTATION OF CAPS AND BADGES TO NEWLY-ELECTED COUNCIL MEMBERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I will now call upon the Adjutant General to announce the newly-elected National Council of Administration members and the Commander-in-Chief-Elect will now present caps and badges to the newly-elected Council members.

ADJUTANT GENERAL KENT: They are as follows:

California - Denis Wells
Connecticut - Richard DiFederico
Delaware - John R. Morrow
District of Columbia - Herman C. Salley
Europe - Peter J. Mascetti
Maine - Raymond R. Lupo
Maryland - Eugene L. Stewart
Massachusetts - George D. Murray
Missouri - Jessie Jones
New Hampshire - Paul J. Lloyd
New Jersey - Manuel Almeida
New York - James F. McNally
Pennsylvania - Robert C. Eiler
Rhode Island - Allen C. Wagonblott, Jr.
Vermont - Ronald Tallman

ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENTS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Let me please call on Commander-in-Chief-Elect William Thien for his announcement of appointed officers for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT THIEN: My appointments for the term for which I am elected are:

Adjutant General, John E. Hamilton of Florida

Chief of Staff, David G. Havelly of Indiana

Inspector General, Terry W. Vance of Illinois

Sergeant-at-Arms, Bryan O'Brien of Massachusetts

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: At this time I will discharge, having no further responsibilities, the General Resolutions Committee.

We will now have the Installation of Officers. First, is there any other business to come before this Convention? If not, we will proceed with the Installation of Officers.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, will you escort the Installing Officer to a position on my right.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I have the honor to present Comrade Past Commander-in-Chief James Mueller, who has been officially appointed the Installing Officer.

(Whereupon, Past Commander-in-Chief and Installing Officer James Mueller assumed the podium at this time.)

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

INSTALLING OFFICER MUELLER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the term for which you and your subordinate officers were elected or appointed has now expired. It is my duty to ascertain the following. Have officers for the ensuing year been duly elected?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER MUELLER: Have the books of the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General been examined and approved by the National Council of Administration?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER MUELLER: Does the Adjutant General have on file proof of eligibility for all officers to be installed during this installation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: He does.

INSTALLING OFFICER MUELLER: Are the funds in the hands of the Quartermaster General and ready to be turned over to his successor when duly installed?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: They are.

INSTALLING OFFICER MUELLER: Have you the Charter in your possession?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: I have.

INSTALLING OFFICER MUELLER: You will now surrender the gavel to me.

Commander-in-Chief John E. Hamilton, 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 your duty and privilege to counsel and otherwise assist your successor through the experiences you have gained during your term of office.

You will now station yourself at my right.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now present the officers-elect at the altar, as the Assistant Adjutant General reads the list of officers to be installed.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL NEWBERRY: They are as follows:

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief – John W. Stroud

Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief – John A. Biedrzycki

Adjutant General – John E. Hamilton

Quartermaster General – Robert B. Greene

Chaplain – Robert Dickerson

Judge Advocate General – Harold Burke

Surgeon General – Peter Buchanan

Chief of Staff – David G. Havelly

Inspector General – Terry W. Vance

Sergeant-at-Arms – Bryan O'Brien

NEWLY-ELECTED COUNCIL MEMBERS

California - Denis Wells

Connecticut - Richard DiFederico

Delaware - John R. Morrow

District of Columbia - Herman C. Salley

Europe - Peter J. Mascetti

Maine - Raymond R. Lupo

Maryland - Eugene L. Stewart

Massachusetts - George D. Murray

Missouri - Jessie Jones

New Hampshire - Paul J. Lloyd

New Jersey - Manuel Almeida

New York - James McNally

Pennsylvania - Robert C. Eiler

Rhode Island - Allen C. Wagonblott

Vermont - Ronald Tallman

Commander-in-Chief - William A. Thien

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Installing Officer of the National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the officers-elect are in proper position for installation.

INSTALLING OFFICER MUELLER: National Officers-Elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I will administer to you the Officers' Obligation. You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, the Officers' Obligation was given at this time by Installing Officer Mueller.)

As you were. Parade rest.

Comrade Chaplain.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BLEILER: 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 art ever present amongst

us, grant wisdom unto them, so that in their deliberations they continue to favor Thee, our glorious country and to better our 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 MUELLER: As you were. National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now escort the officers to their respective stations.

National Officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, you now occupy the position of honor to which your comrades have elected you. Learn well the responsibilities entrusted to you so that you may intelligently discharge the duties you are to undertake.

The By-Laws and Ritual of our organization prescribe in detail the duties of your respective offices. By virtue of the confidence placed in you, through your election or appointment, we assume that you will acquaint yourselves thoroughly with your duties. You may be seated.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will escort the Commander-in-Chief-Elect to the rostrum.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief-Elect William A. Thien, 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, and at the end of your term of office you will deliver it to the officer appointed to install your successor.

It is your duty to see that all National Officers perform their duties to the best of their ability. You shall keep yourself informed of all proposed legislation which may affect the welfare of potential and actual comrades of this organization. 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 Congressional Charter, 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 your efforts and accomplishments bring credit to your administration and to our organization.

Comrade William A. Thien, are you willing and ready to assume your solemn Obligation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT THIEN: I am.

INSTALLING OFFICER MUELLER: You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand, give your name as I touch your hand and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, the Obligation was given to Commander-in-Chief-Elect Thien at this time.)

I now place in your possession our Charter. Also, I present you with this gavel, which is the emblem of your authority. Use it firmly, but with discretion.

All National Officers, please stand, stretch forth your right hand and repeat after me:

“Comrade Commander-in-Chief William A. Thien, 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 good working order for the ensuing year. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF WILLIAM THIEN: At this time I said there were 28 Past Commanders-in-Chief, but very shortly there is going to be 29. I would like to present the Past Commander's Pin to John E. Hamilton. I would like to present to Past Commander-in-Chief John Hamilton his Gold Life Membership Card.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Comrade Past Commander-in-Chief, myself as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief and your Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Bill, would like to give you this Bronze Cap. (Applause)

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Now, at this time I would like to pass along a tradition that has gone on each year, the Commander-in-Chief's Lapel Pin.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THIEN: Since we are passing things out, I am going to give this pin to the next Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. (Applause)

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THIEN

Good morning, and thank you, comrades. Thank you this great honor to lead the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I am truly humbled by your trust. I pledge to do my absolute best to continue bringing our great organization into the 21st Century.

Being elected Commander-in-Chief is a dream come true for me, and it's the direct result of the great support I have received over the years from family, friends and certainly from my mentors in the VFW.

First off, I want to thank Past Commanders-in-Chief Richard Eubank, Richard DeNoyer and John Hamilton for welcoming this old sailor into what seemed like a "Marines Only" party for years.

I also want to publicly thank still another Marine, Past Commander-in-Chief Allen "Gunner" Kent, who steps down after eight years of faithful service and dedicated service as our Adjutant General. We will miss his smiling face up here, but know his voice will continue to be heard loud and clear.

I want to congratulate John Stroud from Nevada for moving up the ladder to Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and welcome aboard "Big John" Biedrzycki from Pennsylvania as your new Junior Vice, as well as Dave Havely as my Chief of Staff, and Terry Vance as Inspector General. They have vast amounts of knowledge and are certainly an asset to the Organization!

I send my warmest centennial congratulations to new Ladies Auxiliary National President Sissy Borel from Louisiana, and to all of her officers for what you and your organization do daily for veterans, the troops and their families. There is no question we are a better Organization because of our Ladies Auxiliary.

To Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller for installing me into office, Past Commander-in-Chief Art Fellwock who has been a mentor to me for many years, and Past Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas for accepting

nominating duties. A special thank you to all for the leadership and guidance you continue to bring to our great organization. Thank you to Greg Baker, Indiana's State Commander, for your kind words on the nomination's second.

To the Big Ten Conference, Department of Indiana, District 8 and my Post 3281 in New Albany, thank you for your years of friendship and support.

To three mentors who are no longer with us, former Indiana Department Commanders Dave Cole and Wes Farnsley, Post 3281 Commander and 8th District Commander Joe Yost, thank you, comrades. I will never forget the reason why the VFW exists. I suspect they are looking down and wondering what Billy has got himself into now.

To my family down in the front row, children Denise, who is not here as she started a new job, Melissa, Tawnya and John, son-in-laws Tim, Joe and Ryan, and grandchildren Kira, Joey, Marissa, Ridge, Johnathon, who is also working, and our newest addition, Claire, who is just over a year old and already she has Grampa wrapped around her little finger; plus our close friends Mary Lou and Roger Wise, neighbor Donna Edwards, and fellow Hoosier National Commander of the American Legion, Jim Koutz; my sincere appreciation to all of you for making this great day even better.

And last but certainly not least, to my wife, Linda, thank you the most for your strength, your compassion, your love, and especially your patience. Just one more year and I promise to finally cut the grass and fix the broken stuff around the house.

Comrades, I am using this opportunity to preach to the choir about who we are as the nation's oldest and largest veterans' organization. It is my hope that you take the message to those that are not here or don't fully understand our mission.

I want to reinforce everything that is right about the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and for you, and those watching on the internet via live stream, to spread the word far and wide that the VFW is open for business.

We were founded in 1899 by returning Soldiers, Sailors and Marines from the Spanish-American War and later, the Philippine Insurrection. These wars represented the first time America would deploy large numbers of troops to fight on foreign soil.

Our founders returned home to a government that provided no healthcare or rehabilitation programs for their service-connected wounds, injuries or illnesses. So these veterans banded together to create an organization to change the way our nation treats those she sends to war, and 114 years later, our fight still continues.

After the Spanish-American War when the troops came home, Teddy Roosevelt gave a farewell address to his Rough Riders. I will quote part of his address: "The world will be kind to you for ten days. Everything you do will be all right. After that you will be judged by a stricter code. If you prove worthless, you will have been considered spoiled by war!" How right he turned out to be!

A private was given two months pay at \$15.60 a month and the clothes on his back, period!

Can you just imagine how tough it was for our forefathers to get our VFW started? In 1898-99, the troops coming home from the Spanish-

American War, many were sick and poor, living on the streets and begging for food. That's exactly why there is a Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to make sure that doesn't happen again.

To the VFW, a nation that creates veterans has a sacred obligation to care for them when they return home. The Veterans of Foreign Wars intends to ensure that America's obligation is kept.

Using that as our guiding principle, the VFW grew to become the most respected and powerful veterans' voice inside the White House and Congress, as we advocate on behalf of the interests of 22 million veterans, more than 2 million active-duty military, Guard and Reserve members, and all their families.

This we successfully accomplish in an environment where you have 30,000 registered lobbyists who represent 20,000 individual clients whose primary interests differ from ours.

You hear us talk often about our legislative record of successes to create, protect and enhance virtually every Quality of Life program provided by the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

It was the VFW that got the president to make the Star-Spangled Banner our national anthem. It was the VFW that led the Bonus Army, helped to create the Department of Veterans Affairs, and all the other military and VA quality of life programs that range from improved healthcare and benefits to disability compensation, military pay raises, new GI Bills, traumatic injury insurance, hazardous substance exposure compensation, family caregiver support, and better care and services for women veterans.

What we do on Capitol Hill is one of the many things that's right about the VFW, comrades, and that message must be reinforced in every member and told to every prospective member.

That's my VFW! That's the one I want to belong to.

Let me say we have far too many military people and veterans who believe that it's the Pentagon or the President or the Congress who are responsible for their military and disability pay increases or other Quality of Life issues. We have to tell our story.

You tell them that every new program, pay or benefit that they now enjoy is due to the lobbying we do to create them, and the VFW National Organization didn't do it alone.

Of tremendous assistance are our sister organizations, as well as the grassroots community support provided by tens of thousands of VFW Action Corps members, who most recently forced the military services to reinstate the Tuition Assistance Programs.

Your voice also got the proposed Distinguished Warfare Medal eliminated, and I hope your united voice will soon force the Pentagon into keeping the existing military retirement system intact, to stop pushing a measly one-percent military pay increase, and to quit using military retiree healthcare premiums to balance the Pentagon's budget problems.

Trust me, comrades, when I tell you how much power a single voting constituent has, when they contact their Congressman or Senator on VFW business.

Just ask any National Legislative Committee member. The politicians know almost 4,500 VFW and Auxiliary members reside in every Congressional District, plus they know we vote at a higher percentage than

the general population. That is the influence and respect we cannot take lightly or abuse.

The VFW Washington Office also trains and oversees our nationwide network of more than 1,200 VA-accredited service representatives, who last year helped 125,000 veterans to recoup an organizational record of \$3.7 billion in compensation and pension from the federal government, plus our win rate at the Board of Veterans Appeals that is the highest among all major VSOs, and exceeds lawyer-assisted appeals.

We also expanded our service work to more than 18 of the military's largest installations and regions through a Defense Department program that authorizes our service officers to directly assist transitioning military members with their VA paperwork before they separate or retire. Plus we expanded this claims assistance through the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment to assist previously discharged wounded, ill and injured Marines with their VA claims and appeals. That's the VFW I want to belong to!

And just this year we expanded it again through the Student Veterans of America to assist student-veterans with GI Bill claims or other VA claims on more than 800 college and university campuses across the country, to include 12 campuses here in Kentucky and 24 across the river in my home state.

Speaking of the SVA, as you may know the VFW and SVA signed a Memorandum of Understanding earlier this year at their Conference. It has already paid dividends. In New York, for example, Post 2940 in West Seneca, one of the largest Posts in New York, the youngest member was 72 years old and they were having trouble filling key positions. Several Daemen College SVA members were at the SVA Conference.

Upon their return and after hearing what the VFW does, they became involved with Post 2940. Thanks to the assistance from the Department of New York and Comrade Marlene Roll, over 20 joined the Post and several took Post offices. Marlene also held an officers training program for them.

The one student veteran program you will hear about, it basically helps student veterans navigate the mounds of red tape involved in securing a loan or a student-veteran educational benefit.

Many thanks to Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier, Director of Programs Dan Parker and Deputy Director of National Legislative Services Ryan Gallucci for their work on this important relationship.

I joined VFW Post 3281 in 1971 after I got back from Vietnam, because it was the expected thing to do, and because there was nothing like a Student Veterans of America chapter around that might have better served my age group. My Post welcomed me into the fold, but I won't say it was all roses, because it was run by World War II veterans who were very old school, and I was only in my twenties.

Like many of you, I paid my dues to become an active member of my Post. I volunteered at Bingo, recycled cans, helped with building maintenance projects, delivered Christmas baskets, and visited the VA Hospital.

It was a struggle sometimes, being active while raising a young family and working full-time, but many of us younger veterans knew that some kind of change was needed in order for the Post to grow, and grow we did,

from 350 members in the 1970s to over a thousand in the 1900s, thanks to a huge influx of Desert Shield and Storm veterans.

But that was 20 years ago and this is now. My question is how does the VFW now need to change in order to better accommodate a new generation of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, along with the post-Vietnam veterans?

All agree our great organization and all of our wonderful programs cannot survive without a huge infusion of post-9/11 veterans, coupled with veterans from Desert Shield and Desert Storm and many other smaller combat operations since the end of the Vietnam War. Vietnam veterans are now considered Old School. What are we willing to change to meet this new generation's needs?

The overall theme of this acceptance speech is "What's right about the VFW?" But, comrades, you know as well as I that there are some Posts out there who aren't pulling their weight, who wouldn't know the difference between a community service report from a parking ticket, who might think good publicity is how many times the police show up on a weekend.

Comrades, if your Post or a Post you are aware of is nothing more than a local bar, then you either need to clean it up or take down the Cross of Malta off the building. It's that simple. There are way too many good, honest and hard-working Posts out there to let one knucklehead Post ruin all you have accomplished.

After 114 years of service and two decades of declining membership, we absolutely cannot afford to have the VFW's household name associated with anything other than great service work for others. Seven years ago we had 8,500 Posts. Today, we are down to 7,100.

That equates to 1,400 communities who are now worse off because there is no VFW service officers to file their claims or help care for their veterans, to talk to them about patriotism and national service and sacrifice, to organize local Memorial Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day parades, to volunteer down at the local VA, or to award a Patriot's Pen or Voice of Democracy scholarship to a deserving teenager.

Comrades, Vietnam veterans have a tight hold on the operation of this organization at every level. If we don't loosen our grip and give the younger folks free rein, we are going to choke off their participation, and we all know where that ship is headed.

We need new leaders like Sylvia Sanchez, a Desert Storm veteran, who last month became the Commander of the Department of Texas, Renee Simpson, a Bosnia veteran, and the new Commander of the Department of Wisconsin, and the thousands of other post-Vietnam veterans who are now in positions of leadership to help put the wind back into our sails.

Our job is to help them succeed. We, who has the knowledge, experience and understanding of our organization, have a responsibility and obligation to mentor those future leaders of our organization.

Our new tagline, "No One Does More For Veterans" is something we accomplish nationally through our legislative and service officer support, and locally by organizing and participating in thousands of community, military and veterans' outreach events.

This includes:

Volunteering more than 11 million hours annually at 1,400 VA facilities.

Awarding \$3 million annually in 7th through 12th grade patriotic scholarship competitions that you support through your Patriotic Pen and Voice of Democracy contributions.

Providing 7.2 million free telephone connections between deployed personnel and their families.

Hosting 2 million military and their families at departure and homecoming ceremonies.

And through the VFW Unmet Needs program, providing \$4.6 million in grants to help more than 3,300 military families through emergency financial situations.

These are just a few of the great things the National Office helps to facilitate, but what you folks do locally is truly what we are all about. Like Ohio Posts 3035 and 5803, who raised \$40,000 in donations and sent generators to help New York Posts 260 in Broad Channel and 5199 in Rockaway Beach that were severely damaged by Hurricane Sandy last October.

Like VFW Post 3819 in Reno, Nevada, who donated \$35,000 to the VFW Foundation in February to continue all these great troop support programs. Or VFW Post 308 in Newtown, Connecticut, their community took a tremendous blow last December, so they raised more than \$10,000 for the families and first responders, and then did it again in May to help fellow VFW members and other tornado victims in Moore, Oklahoma. That's my VFW and I hope it's yours also!

These are just a few examples about all that's right about the VFW, about how a congressionally-chartered veterans' service organization serves those who faithfully serve our nation.

Every returning war veteran inherits a solemn duty to make things better for following generations, and for 114 years, your Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States continues to lead the fight to ensure that a nation that creates veterans takes care of them when they return home.

That is what is right about the VFW, and it is this message that you have to communicate with potential members. By joining us today, you help the VFW continue its fight on Capitol Hill and in every state legislature.

With your help, the VFW can continue our veteran and military support programs. And by joining us today, it will ensure that there will be a VFW for generations of new war veterans to come. Right now, less than one percent of the population serves in uniform, and only about eight percent of the population has ever worn the uniform of our nation.

That's why a strong and vibrant VFW and a Ladies Auxiliary is so important. Look around the room right now and ask yourself one question. If not me, if not us, then who?

Comrades and Sisters, this is our VFW, and everything about our organization is great. Yes, we have challenges, but very few things in life are worse than witnessing war, or feeling hopeless when our warriors return home changed.

What the VFW has helped to create over the past 114 years is the envy of the world, and that's why this National Convention may have seemed like an international convention. Many times I have been asked

why go overseas? I think most everybody in this room understands. Only at the VFW National Convention will you meet military veterans from Russia, its former Soviet bloc allies, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, countries we allied with during World War II but who later would become our enemies during Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War.

And if I have been asked once, I have been asked a thousand times, why are they here? To learn how we take care of our veterans. And in return, we want their governments to help provide more information regarding our 83,000 missing and unaccounted-for servicemen from our nation's wars. We visit these countries and tell them that every year, but showing someone is always more important than telling them.

Our support to bring our fallen home is unquestionable, as is our support to their families who continue to burn a candle of hope that one day, soon, their loved one will finally return from their wars. If we can help to bring closure to one family of our missing, then all our efforts and energy and money is well worth it. If it were your mom or dad, brother or sister or son or daughter, or your next door neighbor, wouldn't you want the VFW assisting in efforts to bring them home?

What makes the Veterans of Foreign Wars great is the quality of our people who unselfishly dare to make a personal difference in the lives of fellow comrades, communities and nation. That caring for others, comrades, is what makes the VFW so great, and I hope you continue to spread the word to everyone.

In closing, our organization has had many notables, Generals Bradley, McArthur, Pershing, Patton, Westmoreland, and Admirals Coontz and Nimitz; Presidents Kennedy, Truman, Roosevelt, Bush, Sr., Ford, Eisenhower, Nixon and Johnson, and Medal of Honor recipients Alvin York and Audie Murphy, among others.

That was great for the Veterans of Foreign Wars to have such distinguished Americans on the roles, but we who have not made such an elite and high-profile list, please know that you are the engine that makes the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary, what it was in the past, what it is now and what it will be in the future. You are indeed the VFW's soldiers.

It is your work, dedication, your love for the veterans and families, active-duty defenders and their families that's important. I don't know if the organization found you or you found the organization, but either way I am glad you have dedicated your time and talents to the organization and I am proud of each and every one of you in this room.

We may not be as young as we once were, as thin as we once were or as healthy as we once were, but we are as dedicated to taking care of our veterans and their families as we ever were.

God bless each and every one of you, our Organization and the greatest country on the face of this earth, the United States of America!! Thank you so much. (Applause)

CLOSING OF THE CONVENTION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: A great job, Chief. At this time, we will entertain a motion to adjourn the convention.
Microphone No. 2.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

COMRADE KEVIN JONES: Commander-in-Chief, Kevin Jones, Post 7356. 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 114th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States be closed sine die.

COMRADE JERRY HERKER: (Post 3386 – Washington) Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Jerry Herker, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: You have before you a motion, properly seconded, to close the 114th VFW National Convention. Is there a question on the motion? Is there a question on the motion? Is there a question on the motion? Hearing none, all those in favor will please signify by the usual sign of “aye”; all opposed “no”. The “ayes” have it. The motion carries.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will proceed with the Closing Ceremonies.

CLOSING CEREMONIES

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

Captain of the VFW National Honor Guard, advance and retrieve the flag of the United States of America.

(Whereupon, the Colors are retired at this time.)

Comrade Chaplain Holland, the Benediction, please.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOLLAND: Almighty God, the hour has come when we must part. We commit ourselves to Thy care.

Thou, who art our strong tower of defense and our protection, grant that in life's battles we may be strong and brave, living such lives of stains integrity as shall reflect honor upon our country and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and glorify Thy great and holy name.

May Thy good providence shield us from all harm, watch over those who even now guard the gates of freedom and bring us together again in true comradeship and peace. Amen.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Closing Ceremonies for the 114th National Convention have been completed.

ADJOURNMENT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAMILTON: Thank you. On the way out, don't forget to get your tickets for this afternoon's reception.

The 114th National Convention is closed. We are adjourned sine die.

(Whereupon, the 114th National Convention was duly adjourned at 11:55 o'clock a.m.)

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF
PROCEDURE & RITUAL CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL
BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL
114TH NATIONAL CONVENTION, JULY 20 – 24, 2013
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY**

B-1 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**Table of Contents
ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION**

Amend Article VI – National Convention, Table of Contents, by deleting “Convention” from the title. (Approved)

C-1 (Proposed by Department of New Jersey)
**CONGRESSIONAL CHARTER
Sec. 230101 – Organization.**

Amend Sec. 230101 – Organization., Congressional Charter, under (a) **Federal Charter.**, by replacing “men” with “veterans”. (Rejected)

M-1 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**ARTICLE I – MEMBERS
Sec. 104 – Member Dues.**

Amend Sec. 104 – Member Dues., Manual of Procedure, by replacing the entire section with the following: “(See Section 104 of By-Laws)” (Approved)

B-2 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**ARTICLE I – MEMBERS
Sec. 105 – Members in Good Standing.**

Amend Sec. 105 – Members in Good Standing., National By-Laws, by replacing the entire section with the following:

“A member whose current dues are paid through their anniversary date is in good standing and, unless suspended or terminated, is entitled to all membership rights in accordance with the National By-Laws.

A member whose dues are unpaid after their anniversary date ceases to be a member in good standing and loses all rights of membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.” (Approved)

B-3 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 106 – Former Members.

Amend Sec. 106 – Former Members., National By-Laws, by replacing the entire section with the following:

“A member whose dues are unpaid ceases to be a member in good standing and loses all rights of membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

A former member may be restored to membership as prescribed in Section 106 of the Manual of Procedure.” (Approved)

B-4 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS Sec. 109 – Right of Appeal.

Amend Sec. 109 – Right of Appeal., National By-Laws, in the first paragraph by replacing the first word “any” with “the”.

Amend the second paragraph, first word of the second and last sentence, by replacing with “The”. (Approved)

M-2 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS Sec. 109 – Right of Appeal.

Amend Sec. 109 – Right of Appeal., Manual of Procedure, in the first paragraph, by replacing the first word at the beginning of the sentence with “The”.

Amend the sixth paragraph titled **Appeals to the District Commander;** in the last paragraph and last sentence, by replacing the first word with “The”.

Amend the seventh paragraph titled **Appeals to the Department Commander;** in the last paragraph and last sentence by replacing the first word with “The”.

Amend the eighth paragraph titled **Appeals to the Commander-in-Chief;** in the second paragraph and second sentence, by removing “made to him”. In the last paragraph and last sentence, by replacing the first word with “The”. (Approved)

B-5 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS Sec. 211 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Amend Sec. 211 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter., National By-Laws, by replacing the second paragraph with the following:

“Establishment of an Administrative Committee. Upon the imposition of any suspension under this section, the Department Commander shall establish an administrative committee as prescribed in Section 211 of the Manual of Procedure.” (Approved)

M-3 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 211 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Amend Sec. 211 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter., Manual of Procedure, under no. **3. Actions by the Department Commander – Suspension.**, a., in the first sentence, by replacing “trustees” with “an administrative committee” and in the second and third sentences, by replacing “trustees” with “committee”. (Approved)

B-6 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 215 – Eligibility to Office.

Amend Sec. 215 – Eligibility to Office., National By-Laws, by replacing the third and fourth paragraphs with the following:

“Any officer or committee member whose membership is not in good standing by reason of failure to pay current dues by their anniversary date shall forfeit eligibility to hold any office in that administrative year.

Any member who is suspended from membership, pursuant to Article IX, shall forfeit eligibility to hold any office during the period of suspension.” (Approved)

B-7 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 216 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Sec. 216 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees., National By-Laws, by replacing the entire section with the following:

“(a) The officers of each Post will consist of a Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster, Adjutant, Chaplain, Judge Advocate, Surgeon and three (3) Trustees.

(b) The Post shall elect the Commander, Senior Vice Commander, Junior Vice Commander, Quartermaster, Chaplain and three trustees.

(c) The appointed officers of each Post shall consist of at least an Adjutant, Judge Advocate, Surgeon, Officer of the Day, Service Officer and Guard to be appointed as prescribed in Section 216 in the Manual of Procedure.” (Approved)

M-4 (Proposed by Department of Pennsylvania)

ARTICLE II - POSTS

Sec. 218 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 218 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under **(a) Officers.** (7) **Chaplain.**, by deleting “of him” in mid-sentence. (Rejected)

M-5 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 218 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 218 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under (11) **Trustees.**, in the first sentence of the first paragraph, by replacing “chairman of” with “an elected officer, Adjutant or on”. (Approved)

B-8 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE II – POSTS

Sec. 220 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.

Amend Sec. 220 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members., National By-Laws, by replacing the last paragraph with the following:

“Any Post officer removed by the Department Commander, by reason of failure to pay current dues or under the provisions of this section shall not be eligible to serve in any Post office in the same administrative year in which the officer is removed.” (Approved)

M-6 (Proposed by Department of Virginia)

ARTICLE II - POSTS

Sec. 220 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.

Amend Sec. 220 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members., Manual of Procedure, under **Vacancies.**, by adding the following as a third paragraph:

"Should a vacancy occur in any other elected office, the Commander will, at the next regular meeting declare the position vacant and announce the intent to hold nominations and elections at the subsequent regularly scheduled or special meeting of the Post. If it is the intent to conduct said nomination and election at a special meeting, the Commander will ensure compliance with Section 203 of the National By-Laws." (Rejected)

B-9 (Proposed by Department of Montana)

ARTICLE IV - DISTRICTS

Sec. 401 – Formation, Institution and Chartering.

Amend Sec. 401 – Formation, Institution and Chartering., National By-Laws, in the first paragraph, by removing “and 750 members” at the end of the second sentence. (Rejected)

B-10 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

Sec. 411 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Amend Sec. 411 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter., National By-Laws, by replacing **(c) Establishment of a Trusteeship.**, with the following:

“(c) Establishment of an Administrative Committee. Upon the imposition of any suspension under this section, the Department Commander shall establish an administrative committee as prescribed in Section 411 of the Manual of Procedure.” (Approved)

M-7 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

Sec. 411 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Amend Sec. 411 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter., Manual of Procedure, under 1. **Actions by the Department Commander – Suspension.**, a., in the first sentence by replacing “trustees” with “an administrative committee” and in the second and third sentences, by replacing “trustees” with “committee”. (Approved)

B-11 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

Sec. 415 – Eligibility to Office.

Amend Sec. 415 – Eligibility to Office., National By-Laws, by replacing the third and fourth paragraphs with the following:

“Any officer or committee member whose membership is not in good standing by reason of failure to pay current dues by their anniversary date shall forfeit eligibility to hold any office during that administrative year.

Any member who is suspended from membership, pursuant to Article IX, shall forfeit eligibility to hold any office during the period of suspension.” (Approved)

M-8 (Proposed by Department of Pennsylvania)

ARTICLE IV - DISTRICTS

Sec. 418 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 418 – Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under (a) **Officers.** (8) **Chaplain;** by replacing the second sentence with the following:

“The Chaplain shall perform such other duties as may be incident to the office or as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of this organization or lawful orders from proper authority.” (Rejected)

B-12 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 511 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Amend Sec. 511 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter., National By-Laws, by replacing (b) **Establishment of a Trusteeship.** with the following:

“(b) **Establishment of an Administrative Committee.** Upon the imposition of any suspension under this section, the Commander-in-Chief shall establish an administrative committee as prescribed in Section 511 of the Manual of Procedure.” (Approved)

M-9 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 511 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter.

Amend Sec. 511 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter., Manual of Procedure, under 1. **Actions by the Commander-in-Chief – Suspension.,** a., in the first sentence, by replacing “trustees” with “an administrative committee” and in the last two sentences, replacing “trustees” with “committee”. (Approved)

B-13 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 515 – Eligibility to Office.

Amend Sec. 515 – Eligibility to Office., National By-Laws, by adding the following after the first sentence in the first paragraph:

“Elected committee members are not Department officers and accordingly may concurrently hold an elected Department Office as provided for in section 516 of these by-laws.”

Amend the second and third paragraph by replacing with the following:

“Any officer or committee member whose membership is not in good standing by reason of failure to pay current dues by their anniversary date shall forfeit eligibility to hold any office during that administrative year.

Any member who is suspended from membership, pursuant to Article IX, shall forfeit eligibility to hold any office during the period of suspension.” (Approved)

M-10 (Proposed by Department of Pennsylvania)

ARTICLE V - DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 518 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 518 – Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under (a) **Officers.**

(6) **Chaplain.**, by replacing the second sentence with the following:

“The Chaplain shall perform such other duties as may be usually incident to the office or as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.” (Rejected)

M-11 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 518 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 518 – Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under (a) **Officers.** (4) **Quartermaster.**, by replacing i. with the following:

“i. Comply with, and perform all 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.”

Amend k. **Budget.**, at the end of the second sentence by replacing “August” with “November”.

Amend m. by removing in its entirety. (Approved)

B-14 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL
Sec. 606 – National Dues.**

Amend Sec. 606 – National Dues., National By-Laws by replacing the entire section with the following:

“The National Organization dues shall be \$21.50 for every member (except Life Members) of a Post in good standing, which includes an annual subscription to the VFW Magazine.

When collected, \$18.50 of the National Dues will be retained by the National Organization, \$1.00 will be rebated back to the Department to which the member belongs and \$2.00 distributed as outlined in Section 606 of the Manual of Procedure.” (Approved)

M-12 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL
Sec. 606 – National Dues.**

Amend Sec. 606 – National Dues., Manual of Procedure, by replacing the first sentence with the following:

“Nineteen dollars and fifty cents (\$19.50) of the \$21.50 National Dues will be distributed as set forth in Section 606 of the By-Laws.” (Approved)

B-15 (Proposed by Department of Pennsylvania)

**ARTICLE VI - NATIONAL
Sec. 618 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.**

Amend Sec. 618 – Officers: Duties and Obligations., National By-Laws, under (h) **Chaplain;** by replacing the second and third sentences with the following:

“The Chaplain will be familiar with the Ritual and shall conduct the annual memorial service held in connection with the National Convention. The Chaplain shall perform such other duties as may be incident to the office or as may from time to time be required by the laws and usages of the organization or lawful orders from proper authority.” (Rejected)

B-16 (Proposed by Department of California)

**ARTICLE VI - NATIONAL
Sec. 623 – National Council of Administration, Department Members–
Election, Vacancies and Removal.**

Amend Sec. 623 – National Council of Administration, Department Members-Election, Vacancies and Removal., National By-Laws, by replacing the last paragraph titled **Vacancies**; with the following:

“Vacancies: All other vacancies occurring in the office of National Council of Administration, if within thirty days of the Department Convention, will be filled by the vote of the delegates of the Department Convention, at all other times will be filled by the Department Council of Administration in accordance with section 520 of the Manual of Procedure.” (Rejected)

B-17 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS
Sec. 709 – Control of Units.

Amend Sec. 709 – Control of Units., National By-Laws, by replacing the second paragraph with the following:

“Any Post, County Council, District or Department owning and/or operating, directly or by reason of a holding company or other entity substantially controlled by the Post, County Council, District or Department or its members, a canteen, clubroom or other facility available to members or guests must maintain general liability insurance, including, if necessary or appropriate, liquor liability insurance. Such insurance must be of a type and amount sufficient to protect the Post, County Council, District or Department and must name, as additional insureds, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the Department in which such Post, County Council, District or Department is located.”

Amend third paragraph, mid-section, by adding a period after “Quartermaster”.

Amend fourth paragraph, mid-section, by adding a period after “organizations” and capitalizing the “n” in “nor” in the next sentence. (Approved)

B-18 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IX – DISCIPLINE
Sec. 901 – Discipline of Members.

Amend Sec. 901 – Discipline of Members. National By-Laws, in the first paragraph, by adding “and specifications” after “advised in writing of the charges”.

Amend the second paragraph by replacing the second word “initiated” with “executed”. (Approved)

M-13 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IX – DISCIPLINE
Sec. 901 – Discipline of Members.

Amend Sec. 901 – Discipline of Members., Manual of Procedure, in the first paragraph and first sentence, by adding “and specifications” after “such charges”. (Approved)

B-19 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE IX – DISCIPLINE
Sec. 907 – Penalties.

Amend Sec. 907 – Penalties., National By-Laws, no. 3, by removing “or privileges”. (Approved)

M-14 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

ARTICLE XIII – MENS AUXILIARY
Sec. 1301 – Organization and Disbandment of Mens Auxiliaries.

Amend Article XIII – Mens Auxiliary and Sec. 1301 – Organization and Disbandment of Mens Auxiliaries., Manual of Procedure, by replacing “Mens” with “Men’s”.

Amend Sec. 1301 - Organization and Disbandment of Mens Auxiliaries., Manual of Procedure, (f) **Discipline of Members.**, under 1. Offenses., by replacing with the following:

- “1. Offenses. Members who have committed offenses recognized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States may be subject to disciplinary action and may be assessed the penalties provided in this Article. Offenses recognized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States are:
- a. Disloyalty to the United States of America.
 - b. Failure to fulfill the obligations taken at time of application and admission or the obligations taken upon installation of any office.
 - c. False representation or deliberate concealment concerning eligibility to membership, office, or acquiescing in or permitting ineligible persons to become members or officers.
 - d. Disobedience or disregard of the provisions of the Congressional Charter, By-Laws (at all levels), Manual of Procedure, Ritual, General Orders or any other laws and usages of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States or any order of the Commander-in-Chief.

- e. Conviction of, or entering a guilty or no contest plea to a felony, or to a misdemeanor or ordinance violation involving moral turpitude, in any court in the United States.
- f. Conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline or conduct unbecoming a member in his relations to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States or other members.
- g. Divulging any of the private business of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States with the intent or effect of embarrassing the Veterans of Foreign Wars or members thereof.
- h. Preparing or signing any false record, return, regulation, order or other official document of or concerning the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, knowing it to be false, or making any other false official statement with the intent to deceive.
- i. Selling or otherwise disposing of money or property without proper authority or, willfully or negligently damaging, destroying or losing any such money or property belonging to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, or any Post, County Council, District, or Department.
- j. Aiding, abetting, counseling, concealing, commanding, conspiring, soliciting, procuring or causing to be done any act which, if done, would be punishable under this Article.
- k. Knowingly making or causing to be made a false entry in or false alteration of a government record. Knowingly conveying or causing to be conveyed in any form false information concerning one's military record.
- l. Knowingly providing false information or statements in connection with the initiation of charges against another member."

Amend no. 2. Procedures for Disciplinary Actions and Appeals., in the first sentence, by removing "and the Procedural Guide for Disciplinary Actions,".

Amend no. 5. Penalties., by replacing with the following:

- "5. Penalties. Penalties for offenses recognized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be:
- a. Termination of membership.
 - b. Suspension from membership for a specified period of time.
 - c. Suspension of certain rights of membership for a specified period of time.
 - d. Suspension or removal from office.
 - e. Reprimand.
 - f. By other administrative action deemed appropriate."
- (Approved)

M-15 (Proposed by Department of New Jersey)
ARTICLE XIII – MENS AUXILIARY
Sec. 1302 – Eligibility.

Amend Sec. 1302 – Eligibility., Manual of Procedure, by adding the following at the end of the sentence:

“those applicants who have served in the United States Military and received an Honorable Discharge and are not eligible for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.” (Rejected)

R-1 (Page 15) (Proposed by Department of Pennsylvania)
RITUAL
OPENING POST CEREMONIES – PRAYER

Amend Chapter Title – Opening Post Ceremonies – Prayer, Ritual, under **Chaplain;** in the fourth paragraph and second sentence, replace “widows” with “surviving spouses”. (Rejected)

R-2 (Page 69) (Proposed by Department of Pennsylvania)
RITUAL
MEMORIAL SERVICE

Amend Chapter Title – Memorial Service, Ritual, under the first **Commander-in-Chief;** in the first paragraph, by replacing “have met” with “meet”. (Approved)

R-3 (Page 72) (Proposed by Department of Colorado)
RITUAL
MEMORIAL SERVICE – PRAYER

Amend Chapter Title – Memorial Service, Prayer, Ritual, under **National President of Auxiliary;** by adding a comma after “wreath”.

Add the following after the paragraph **National President of Auxiliary:**

“(This addition may be used at the discretion of the Commander-in-Chief, Department, District, or Post Commander)

National Chaplain: Brothers of the Mens Auxiliary, have you a tribute to offer to the memory of our departed comrades?

Mens Auxiliary Member*: This yellow flower represents the depths of our sorrow and respect for our comrades, sisters, and brothers who have passed.

(Places yellow flower)

*Mens Auxiliary member to be chosen by Commander-in-Chief, Department, District or Post Commander.” (Rejected)

**RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND
INTERNAL ORGANIZATION AT THE 114TH NATIONAL CONVENTION,
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY**

Resolution No. 201 (Submitted by Department of West Virginia)

**“THE AUXILIARY” OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES**

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States honors the service and sacrifice of all military service members, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or gender; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States recognizes the sacrifice made by the dependents of our military service members, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or gender; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States appreciates the significant contribution our Ladies and Men’s Auxiliaries make to our veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, two nationally recognized, but separate auxiliaries has divided our dependents with questions of disparate treatment, and requires significant duplication of administrative effort, resources, and manpower; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the Commander-in-Chief sponsor a By-Law amendment that will abolish Article XIII, the Men’s Auxiliary, amend Article XI, Section 1102, eligibility requirements to include males, and change the organizations name to “The Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States”, to be voted on by the members of the National Convention no later than the close of the 117th National Convention.
(Rejected)

Resolution No. 202 (Submitted by Department of Virginia)

RESTRUCTURE OF PROPOSED DUES INCREASE

WHEREAS, the National Council of Administration of the Veterans of Foreign Wars has voted to increase annual dues by ten dollars per member; and

WHEREAS, there has been little in depth information provided to the membership of this organization detailing why the increase is needed, and how it will be used; and

WHEREAS, many annual members are struggling to pay their dues in a lackluster economy; and

WHEREAS, the National Council of Administration could at least make an attempt to curtail unnecessary spending; and

WHEREAS, after diligent efforts are made to curtail unnecessary spending, the increase, if still needed, should be implemented over three years; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that if the proposal to increase dues by \$10.00 passes at the 2013 National Convention, annual dues shall be increased by three dollars and fifty cents per year for two consecutive years, and three dollars in the third year. (Rejected)

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 301 (Submitted by Department of North Carolina)

SUPPORT THE ERECTION OF A MEMORIAL TO DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM VETERANS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

WHEREAS, the proposal for such a memorial has already been presented to the United States Senate in Senate Bill 5995 and the United States House of Representatives in HR503; and

WHEREAS, the project will be totally funded from private donations; and

WHEREAS, the only item needed from the federal government is an appropriate piece of public property on which to construct the monument, whether on the National Mall or not; and

WHEREAS, to add impetus to beginning this project, the support of a major Veterans Support Organization is desirable; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, declares its support of such a monument to the veterans of Desert Shield/Desert Storm. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 302 (Submitted by Department of Michigan)

JOINT INSTALLATION

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America has established a procedure for the Installations of a Post, Districts, and Departments in the Veterans of Foreign Wars Rituals; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America Posts, Districts and Departments, try to hold Joint Installations with Auxiliaries, without a uniform protocol or procedure; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America, shall create a standard protocol and procedure that may be used for a Joint Installation, in the Veterans of Foreign Wars Ritual.
(Rejected)

Resolution No. 303 (Submitted by Department of Arizona)

SUPPORT EFFORTS TO INCLUDE 74 SAILORS KILLED ON USS FRANK E. EVANS ON THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL "WALL"

WHEREAS, Public Law 96-297, (94 Stat, 827), authorized the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to construct a memorial to honor and recognize armed forces service in the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, the memorial fund relied upon the Department of Defense to compile the list of names and the criteria for those persons to be memorialized; and

WHEREAS, as of February 1981, the Department of Defense established four distinct criteria for names to be included on the memorial; and

WHEREAS, Secretary of Defense shall decide (as defined in Section 101 (2), of Title 38 United States Code), veterans who died as a direct or indirect result of military operations in Southeast Asia and whose names are eligible for inclusion on the memorial. Congressman Adam B. Schiff presented evidence and petitions in an audience with the Secretary Of The Navy Mabus. The evidence documented the tragic accident that destroyed the Frank E. Evans and killed 74 of her Sailors on June 3, 1969. The evidence included actual position, course, and, reason for being there, Secretary Mabus whole heartedly agreed. He is currently petitioning the Secretary of Defense, whose office serves as the final decision authority, to review the case and consider the points we have raised; and

WHEREAS, the date of the collision corresponds to the criteria for the Vietnam Service Medal and the USS Frank E. Evans was awarded the Vietnam Service Medal for the dates 2-6 June 1969 along with the ships that came to her rescue. The ships that came to the Evans aid were USS Everett F. Larson DD830, USS Kearsarge CVS 33, USS Walke DD723, USS James E. Kyes DD787, plus tug Tawasa ATF 92. The tug was sent to pull the remaining after half of the ship to Subic Bay. The ships, the men on the ships, and the sailors killed on the Evans because where they were and why, are entitled to Vietnam Service Medal. The criteria for Vietnam Service Medal are identical to the criteria for inclusion on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial "Wall"; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we fully support a favorable decision from the Department of Defense to include the 74 names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Passage of this resolution in no way commits any liability or costs to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 304 (Submitted by Department of New York)

COLD WAR SERVICE MEDAL

WHEREAS, many men and women of our Armed Forces have served in many lands during the “Cold War” representing the United States; and

WHEREAS, these men and women have been all but forgotten; and

WHEREAS, these individuals should be justly recognized and awarded for their service for the period covering September 2, 1945 – December 26, 1991; and

WHEREAS, if any of these service personnel served on active duty for at least 24 consecutive months during the above period, or if they were deployed outside the continental United States for at least 30 days, or performed other Cold War Service’s as the Secretary of Defense/DOD may have prescribed; and

WHEREAS, Bill number H.R. 1968 (latest title of Cold War Service Medal Act of 2011) was introduced on 5/24/2011 with 17 co-sponsors; and

WHEREAS, a related bill S: 402 has also been introduced and has been referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, goes on record (with other Veteran organizations), asking that the Secretary of Defense expedite the design of a (Cold War) Medal, as well as be responsible for its issuance to eligible members. (Approved)

Resolution No. 305 (Submitted by Department of New York)

AWARDING THE VIETNAM SERVICE MEDAL FOR OPERATION END SWEEP

WHEREAS, Operation End Sweep in Vietnam waters occurred between 24 February and 18 July 1973 by the sweeping of minefields in Haiphong Harbor and later the Vinh water-ways; and

WHEREAS, the Secretary of the Navy presented the MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION to the Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 165 for their participation in Operation End Sweep; and

WHEREAS, 28 March 1973 was the cut-off-date for awarding the Vietnam Service Medal although it was offered to “evacuation” vets 28 years later; and

WHEREAS, those participating in Operation End Sweep after 29 March 1973 were denied the Vietnam Service Medal; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition Congress to enact legislation that will provide for the awarding to those veterans that participated in Operation End Sweep after 29 March 1973 the Vietnam Service Medal. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 306 (Submitted by Department of South Dakota)

RELEASE OF 1st Lt. MICHAEL BEHENNA

WHEREAS, 1st Lt. Behenna was charged at an Article 32 hearing of Premeditated Murder of a known Al Qaeda operative Ali Mansur while in custody; and

WHEREAS, 1st Lt. Behenna was ordered to return known al Qaeda operative Ali Mansur to the Operational area (AO) and release him in accordance with the "Catch & Release" program of suspects not having enough evidence to continue to hold them in custody for prosecution; and

WHEREAS, 1st Lt. Behenna took the known al Qaeda operative back to the AO in handcuffs. Once inside the AO, he removed the handcuffs, stripped the suspect, and began to question the known al Qaeda operative at gunpoint (in order to maintain control) as to his knowledge of the recent IED attack that had cost 1st Lt. Behenna the lives of two of his men, and two more seriously wounded; and

WHEREAS, according to 1st Lt. Behenna, Ali Mansur lunged at the lieutenant; whereupon the lieutenant fired two control shots, killing the known al Qaeda operative Ali Mansur; and

WHEREAS, the Army claimed 1st Lt. Behenna lost his right to self-defense as a result of pointing a firearm at the suspect for control, having removed the handcuffs from the suspect. Also in question was whether the suspect was executed in a sitting position or was attempting to disarm the Lieutenant, and cause bodily harm to 1st Lt. Behenna and others; and

WHEREAS, the dispute and credibility factor surrounded the fact of whether the known al Qaeda operative was in a defenseless sitting position or in an aggressive attack mode? The dispute came down to the unwavering statement of 1st Lt. Behenna, and that of the Iraqi interpreter who because of the darkness and distance from the culvert could not provide a definitive statement as to what happened at the moment of the shooting; and

WHEREAS, the prosecution sent home their expert forensic witness whose testimony would have proven to be exculpatory evidence of self-defense on the part of 1st Lt. Behenna; and

WHEREAS, lacking the exculpatory evidence of the prosecutions forensic expert on blood splatters and bullet trajectory; 1st Lt. Behenna was denied a fair trial, up to and including the request for a writ of Certiorari from the Supreme Court; the final attempt at his Constitutional right to Due Process; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support 1st Lt. Behenna and because he was convicted under such questionable circumstances of an alleged crime in a fast-moving and fluid combat zone against a member of the most feared enemy in the world, we desire that 1st Lt. Behenna be released from prison immediately to attempt to pick up the pieces of his life. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 307 (Submitted by Department of Kentucky)

PURCHASE OF U. S. MADE PRODUCTS

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U. S. during 2012-13 solicited funds from the membership to support VFW National Veterans Service along with a decal reading "Hands Off Veterans' Benefits!" in an envelope stating "Designed in USA, Made in China"; and

WHEREAS, many members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U. S. served in Korea and Vietnam and fought against Chinese troops, equipment and munitions; and

WHEREAS, the use of the "Made in China" decal is an insult to those Korean War and Vietnam War veterans; and

WHEREAS, use of products "Made in China" serves to assist that nation in building its military to a level that is a threat to the United States; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the 10th District, Department of Kentucky, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States at its General Meeting held on January 20, 2013 at VFW Post 8666, Carlisle, Kentucky, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U. S. and its entities use only U. S. made products, prizes and/or premiums in its solicitations for funds and require same in contracts with vendors; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be adopted by the Department of Kentucky, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States at its 2013 Department Convention and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States at its 2013 National Convention. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 308 (Submitted by Department of New Jersey)

ACCEPT THE HONOR AND REMEMBER FLAG FOR THE AMERICAN
GOLD STAR MOTHERS AND FAMILIES

WHEREAS, it is in our nation's best interest to promote awareness of American lives lost in defense of our country; and

WHEREAS, the American flag is the main symbol promoting aforementioned awareness, it shall never be replaced at any funeral, ceremony, celebration or event of any kind; and

WHEREAS, the Honor and Remember flag has been created by a Gold Star family out of the pain of the loss of their hero. It is to be only an additional remembrance and comfort for the Gold Star families, while assisting the American flag in heralding the cost of freedom; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America, that we accept the Honor and Remember Flag solely as an additional support to the American flag in promoting the awareness of American heroes lost defending our country, in the name of the American Gold Star mothers and families. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 309 (Submitted by Department of New Jersey)

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD ENLISTED MEMORIAL

WHEREAS, the United States Coast Guard is a branch of the United States military and is approaching its 100 year anniversary under its current designation in 2015; and

WHEREAS, since 1915 over 1500 enlisted personnel have given their lives while on active duty in carrying out their missions; and

WHEREAS, the Coast Guard enlisted Association has established the Coast Guard Enlisted Memorial foundation, a nonprofit 501 (C.) (3) organization to plan, design and build a fitting memorial that will represent the sacrifice of over 1500 coasted enlisted men and women; and

WHEREAS, the monument will be located at the Coast Guard Training Center, Cape May, New Jersey, the only basic training center for the Coast Guard; and

WHEREAS, the estimated cost for the memorial is \$500,000 with a completion date to coincide with the hundred anniversary celebration; and

WHEREAS, the Coast Guard is the smallest of our military branches with 40,000 personnel; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Coast Guard when serving abroad at appropriate times and receiving honorable discharges are eligible to be members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars; and

WHEREAS, having a significant memorial, symbolizing the sacrifice of the United States Coast Guard enlisted personnel, at it's only training, is a worthy endeavor; and

WHEREAS, with a limited personnel base it is reasonable to have support from veterans organization that Coast Guard personnel are eligible to hold membership in; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that at all approving levels give support to the creation of the Coast Guard Enlisted Memorial by making their respective memberships aware of the worthiness of the project and encouraging financial support by whatever way their respective membership desires. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 310 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

ENOURA MARU TRAGEDY COMMEMORATIVE MARKER AT THE PUNCHBOWL CEMETERY

WHEREAS, on January 9, 1945 the Japanese cargo ship *Enoura Maru* – referred to by the POWs as a “hellship” was anchored in the harbor of Kaohsiung, then known as Takao in the Japanese period, while en route to Japan transporting allied POWs from the Philippines to work as slaves for the Japanese war effort; and

WHEREAS, it was the same morning as Gen. MacArthur’s forces were landing at Lingayen Gulf, and carrier aircraft from the *USS Hornet* had been dispatched to attack Japanese bases in Southern Taiwan in an effort to prevent intervention by the Japanese based there. In addition to attacking airfields, the port of Takao was also bombed and since the Japanese did not mark their POW transports in any way to show they were carrying POWs, the *Enoura Maru* was bombed – but not sunk, resulting in the loss of more than 300 lives; and

WHEREAS, after three days with no medical care or attention provided by the Japanese, the dead were removed from the ship and buried in a mass grave on Chijin Island – the spit of land that surrounds the west side of Kaohsiung Harbor today. There they remained until the war ended; and

WHEREAS, late spring of 1946 the American War Graves Recovery Team came to Takao and removed the remains from the mass grave and tried to identify the men. Only three were identified and the remains were then sent to Shanghai to the War Graves Recovery Center. After further attempts at identification the remains of those men, plus a number of others who had first been buried in Taiwan and elsewhere – 400 sets of remains, were shipped to the Punchbowl Cemetery in Hawaii; and

WHEREAS, when no further identification was possible all 400 were buried in 20 communal graves in Section Q Section 854 of the cemetery.

There they rest in peace today, but are otherwise not identified or commemorated in any way for their sacrifice; and

WHEREAS, after the Taiwan P.O.W. Camps Memorial Society held commemorative services and built a memorial at Kaohsiung Harbor to honor and commemorate the POWs who had suffered and died aboard Japanese “hellships” in Taiwan waters, and particularly in the bombing of the *Enoura Maru*, requests from the family members of those men in the United States contacted the Society to see if something could be done to further identify the final resting place and honor the men who died on that hellship on January 9, 1945; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, after many attempts by the Taiwan P.O.W. Camps Memorial Society it is only the one word “hellship” – a common and well-known name for the Japanese POW ships, that the director of the Punchbowl and the VA are using to prevent over 300 allied POW veterans from being properly honored and remembered in the very cemetery in which they rest in peace; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States urges VFW Departments to support the Taiwan P.O.W. Camps Memorial Society in their efforts to erect a commemorative stone on the Memorial Walk at the Punchbowl Cemetery in Honolulu, Hawaii by endorsement of this resolution during the 114th VFW National Convention. (Approved)

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Resolution No. 401 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT THE TROOPS AND THEIR MISSION IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States supports the President of the United States and our military and intelligence agencies in their mission to identify and destroy terrorism in Afghanistan and elsewhere; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the Administration and Congress provide the military with the resources necessary to succeed in battle, as well as to properly care for their families and those who return home wounded, ill or injured; and

WHEREAS, it is equally critical that U.S. intelligence agencies be properly resourced in order to identify threats to U.S. security by organized extremist groups or lone individuals, both foreign and domestic; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that the Administration and Congress heed

the expert counsel of field commanders regarding future troop buildups and reductions; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the President and the brave men and women in uniform who prosecute the war on terrorism, and that we call upon the Administration and Congress to provide the military and intelligence agencies the necessary resources to secure victory.

The intent of this resolution is:
To support and fund the troops and intelligence agencies prosecuting the U.S. war on terrorism. (Approved)

Resolution No. 402 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SECURE AMERICA'S BORDERS

WHEREAS, America's security is threatened by foreign nationals intent on doing harm who enter the U.S. illegally, as well as those who enter legally but intentionally overstay their work, education or tourist visas; and

WHEREAS, physical barriers are being erected along 670 miles of our 2,000-mile border with Mexico, and are virtually nonexistent along the 7,500-mile border we share with Canada. The U.S. also needs to secure more than 12,000 miles of coastline and all 329 sea, land and air Ports of Entry; and

WHEREAS, current initiatives have increased the Customs and Border Protection workforce from 14,900 to 21,400; and almost half of America's southern border is now claimed to be under "operational control"; and

WHEREAS, increased surveillance, enforcement, intelligence collection assets and economic support to border states has reduced violent crime and led to the deportation of 4,000 criminal illegal immigrants for fiscal year 2012; and

WHEREAS, more must still be done to secure America's borders; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Administration and Congress to fast-track funding for the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice to expedite all initiatives to secure America's borders from all threats, foreign and domestic; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we insist the U.S. government continue to aggressively identify and deport illegal aliens who commit crimes.

The intent of this resolution is:

To secure America's borders from all threats, foreign and domestic, and to identify and deport illegal aliens who commit crimes. (Approved)

Resolution No. 403 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HALT ROGUE NATION WMD PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the greatest threat to American security are weapons of mass destruction—and the technology by which to make and employ them—in the hands of North Korea and Iran, as well as nonaligned terrorist organizations; and

WHEREAS, the Administration and Congress must remain suspicious of the actions and motives of North Korea and Iran, who repeatedly reject diplomatic attempts to reduce tensions and normalize relations; and

WHEREAS, North Korea continues to break earlier agreements by conducting underground nuclear detonations, test firing missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads, and by stating it would no longer honor the 1953 armistice, which is a direct threat to South Korea; and

WHEREAS, Iran has become a military dictatorship through the Revolutionary Guard's rise in economic and political power, and **Iranian** officials have confirmed that North Korea is assisting them in the development of nuclear weapons technology; and

WHEREAS, nonaligned terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda, continue to demonstrate with deadly consequences their ability to strike globally without remorse; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to do all within their power to halt the nuclear weapons development programs of North Korea and Iran, and to stop the transfer of nuclear weapons technology and material to terrorist states and organizations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support and encourage the U.S. Government to penalize all American companies and corporations that conduct business with North Korea and Iran.

The intent of this resolution is:

To halt the nuclear weapons programs of North Korea and Iran, stop the transfer of technology and material to terrorist states and organizations, and to penalize all companies and corporations that conduct business with North Korea and Iran. (Approved)

Resolution No. 404 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

KEEP DEFENSE BUDGET RELEVANT

WHEREAS, America's number one priority is to defend herself and her citizens. This is provided by a properly trained, equipped and funded military that can defeat all enemies, as well as safeguard vital U.S. interests around the globe; and

WHEREAS, the nation's economic recovery plan is forcing the Defense Department to reduce its overall budget by at least \$487 billion over the next 10 years. To rein in spending, DOD is implementing a number of proposals that would over the next few years lower the size of the active force by more than 100,000 troops—mostly soldiers and Marines—close installations, eliminate aircraft, ships and Brigade Combat Teams, reduce training, overhaul the current military retirement system, and shift more healthcare costs onto military dependents and retirees; and

WHEREAS, the military service chiefs continue to sound the alarm over the need to reconstitute and modernize the force as a result of the wear and tear on equipment after a decade of war. They and the Secretary of Defense also pledge not to break faith with the troops, but by all accounts, the troops and their families are well aware of ongoing efforts to reduce their pay and benefits, which could inevitably lead to recruiting and retention problems; and

WHEREAS, there is merit to some DOD proposals, but not the ones that ask those who sacrifice the most for our nation to sacrifice even more. Once our war in Afghanistan ends, it is inevitable that the military will shrink in terms of installations, manpower and material, but bringing the troops home will not make the world less dangerous or our enemies any more predictable. It is crucial that any proposed reduction not jeopardize America's security or break faith with those who serve or have served her in uniform; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Administration and Congress to provide the necessary funding for the readiness, training, modernization, healthcare, and quality of life initiatives for the armed forces of today and tomorrow.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge the Administration and Congress to provide necessary funding for the readiness, training, modernization, healthcare, and quality of life initiatives for the armed forces of today and tomorrow. (Approved)

Resolution No. 405 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE A NATIONAL SECURITY PRIORITY

WHEREAS, the greatest strategic threat to the United States is an attack by one or more ballistic missiles armed with nuclear or other

warheads of mass destruction. The United States today remains completely vulnerable to this form of attack; and

WHEREAS, the Russian ballistic missile threat to the United States continues to subside because of changes in our strategic relationship; however, continued modernization programs and the worldwide proliferation of technology has led other nations like North Korea and Iran to possess or develop ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear, chemical or biological warheads; and

WHEREAS, ballistic missile defense systems have a proven capability to be able to detect, intercept and destroy ballistic missiles in flight. Yet, despite the growing threat of rogue nations and unstable third world countries, the United States still has no strategic missile defense system to protect our country and her citizens from nuclear, chemical or biological attack; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the continued development, testing and deployment of ballistic missile defense systems to protect our country and our deployed military forces; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Congress to fully fund ballistic missile defense Research & Development programs as a national security priority.

The intent of this resolution is:

To support a ballistic missile defense system and urge Congress to fully fund R&D programs. (Approved)

Resolution No. 406 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

WHEREAS, the Republic of Korea is a historic and democratic ally of the United States, a valuable trading partner, and a key link in the northeast Asia defense chain. Numerous treaties are in force with the Republic of Korea concerning economic and technical cooperation, education, maritime matters, trade and commerce, and the Mutual Defense Treaty, that was enacted on November 17, 1954; and

WHEREAS, North Korea continues to maintain an extremely large and forward-deployed military force capable of launching no-notice offensive operations against South Korea;

WHEREAS, North Korea has produced nuclear material for the development of nuclear weapons, and is developing long-range missiles that could reach potential targets in the United States, particularly Alaska. North Korea has also escalated tensions in the region by test launching missiles, conducting underground nuclear explosions, and periodically

deploying armed forces along the demilitarized zone and Joint Security Area at Panmunjom; and

WHEREAS, North Korea's new "supreme leader," the 30-year-old European educated Kim Jong-un, has continued along the same aggressive path established by his father and grandfather, which makes the presence of U.S. ground and air forces in the Republic of Korea a critical deterrent to North Korean aggression; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the government of the United States to maintain a substantial military presence in South Korea, and to increase military aid and assistance through modern weaponry and technology to help promote peace and stability in the region.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge the U.S. government to keep a military presence in the Republic of Korea, and to increase military aid and assistance to help promote peace and stability in the region. (Approved)

Resolution No. 407 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

WHEREAS, the Republic of China on Taiwan is a historic and democratic ally of the United States, a valuable trading partner, and key link in the Western Pacific defense chain; and

WHEREAS, the Taiwan Relations Act (PL 96-8) codifies the policy of the United States to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character to bolster peace and stability in the cross-strait environment; and

WHEREAS, on January 1, 1979, then-President Carter terminated diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Taiwan, and instead established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in an attempt to help maintain peace, security and stability in the Western Pacific. This loss of diplomatic status prevents the President of Taiwan from receiving the same respect and courtesies afforded other Heads of State who visit the U.S.; now, therefore

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 of state-of-the-art military equipment, weapons and technology to maintain an adequate defense capability; 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 to afford the President of Taiwan the same respect and privileges due other visiting Heads of State.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge the Administration and the Congress to strictly adhere to the concepts of the Taiwan Relations Act, to support the admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan into the United Nations, and to afford the President of Taiwan the same respect and privileges due other visiting Heads of State. (Approved)

Resolution No. 408 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

LINK MILITARY PAY INCREASES TO PRIVATE-SECTOR INCREASES

WHEREAS, military pay raises are linked by law to the increase in private-sector wages, as measured by the Employment Cost Index (ECI); and

WHEREAS, annual military pay raises were capped in the 1990s at one-half percent below private-sector growth, which in 1999 resulted in a military pay gap of 13.5 percent below private-sector wages. To help close the gap, Congress directed that military pay raises from fiscal years 2000-2006 be automatically one-half percent above private-sector wage increases, and raises from FY 2007-forward would automatically match the increase in the ECI, unless Congress authorized an additional increase; and

WHEREAS, the 1.6 percent military pay raise for FY 2012 matched the ECI, as did the 1.7 percent raise for FY 2013, but the Defense Department has planned raises as low as 0.5 percent over the next few years—regardless of ECI difference—which could further widen the military pay gap; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to maintain military base pay comparability with private-sector wages by requiring DOD to match the annual ECI increase.

The intent of this resolution is:

To maintain military base pay comparability with private-sector wages by requiring DOD to match the annual ECI increase. (Approved)

Resolution No. 409 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

LOWER RESERVE COMPONENT RETIREMENT PAY AGE TO 55

WHEREAS, after a decade of conflict, the Reserve Component evolved rapidly from a strategic reserve to an operational force that provided a quarter of all ground troops and half the airlift to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, yet the retirement age requirement did not evolve accordingly. Current law stipulates that Reserve Component members who complete 20 or more qualifying years of honorable service must wait until age 60 before they are eligible to receive military retirement pay; and

WHEREAS, the FY 2008 defense bill did reduce the retirement pay age by 90 days for every 90 activated, but only for those Guardsmen/Reservists who earned active credit after Jan. 29, 2008, therefore exempting the equally honorable service of hundreds of thousands of Reserve Component members who were activated between 9/11 and Jan. 28, 2008; and

WHEREAS, the active force cannot meet its national military commitments without the 1.1 million men and women who serve in the Reserve Components—the Army and Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Naval Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve—who collectively represent one-half of America’s total military strength; and

WHEREAS, a truly seamless and integrated total force is one that does not make rigid distinctions among active, Guard and Reserve forces, and one that provides a retirement benefit equal to their contributions; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress and the Administration to lower the Reserve Component retirement pay eligibility age from 60 to 55.

The intent of this resolution is:
To support legislation that will lower the Reserve Component retirement pay eligibility age from 60 to 55. (Approved)

Resolution No. 410 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CORRECT FY 2008 NDAA RESERVE RETIREMENT PAY PROVISION

WHEREAS, since Sept. 11, 2001, America’s reliance on its Reserve Component has been unprecedented in our nation’s history. More than 840,000 Reserve Component members have served on active duty since 9/11—including more than 300,000 who have served multiple tours; and

WHEREAS, the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act allows National Guard and Reserve members to receive retirement pay earlier than the normal age 60 by three months for every 90 days served on active duty after Jan. 29, 2008; and

WHEREAS, the overwhelming majority of these Reserve Component members, however, are ineligible to credit their active service toward an earlier retirement because it occurred prior to the NDAA’s Jan. 29, 2008, implementation date; and

WHEREAS, this inequity discounts the dedication and sacrifice of our Reserve Component members serving at home and abroad; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United

States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation to retroactively grant early retirement credit to all Reserve Component members who were activated in support of a contingency operation from 9/11 forward, as outlined in the FY 2008 National Defense Authorization Act.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge Congress to retroactively grant early retirement credit to all Reserve Component members who were activated in support of a contingency operation from 9/11 forward, as outlined in the FY 2008 National Defense Authorization Act. (Approved)

Resolution No. 411 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

STOP EROSION OF MILITARY PAY & BENEFITS

WHEREAS, military pay and benefits are the Number #1 issues of concern among the troops and their families, yet the Defense Department in its annual budget submissions wants to restrain future military pay raises, increase healthcare deductibles and copayments, and change the military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, the troops are deeply concerned that DOD is putting the budget ahead of the people, and that deeper Quality of Life program cuts may still be ahead, which will factor heavily into any military career decision; and

WHEREAS, their concern is validated by DOD recommendations for scant pay increases as low as 0.5 percent over the next few years—regardless of Employment Cost Index differences—and a tripling of prescription copayments on their dependents. The troops also see DOD breaking faith with the 8.6 percent of the force who reach retirement age. Continuing proposals to almost quadruple Tricare enrollment fees on working age retirees, and to create an escalating Tricare for Life enrollment fee on retirees 65 and older—who must pay mandatory Medicare Part B premiums—are meant to produce savings by driving retirees out of Tricare and into civilian primary or secondary insurance plans; and

WHEREAS, plans to reshape the military retirement system into a more participatory, civilianized model completely disregards the upfront costs career military personnel and their families must first pay through multiple moves, deployments and children uprooted from schools, spouses unable to maintain careers, and potential age discrimination upon entering a civilian job market after first donating 20 or more years of their youth to the nation; and

WHEREAS, DOD may further attempt to balance its budget on the backs of military families and retirees through a further erosion of benefits, which will negative impact recruiting and retention, and possibly threaten the continued viability of the All-Volunteer Military; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we vigorously oppose the further erosion of military pay and benefits, increased Tricare fees, deductibles and co-pays, and all efforts to civilianize the military retirement system.

The intent of this resolution is:

To vigorously oppose the further erosion of military pay and benefits, increased Tricare fees, deductibles and co-pays, and all efforts to civilianize the military retirement system. (Approved)

Resolution No. 412 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PROVIDE FULL CONCURRENT RECEIPT OF MILITARY RETIREMENT PAY AND VA DISABILITY COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, Congress passed legislation in 2004 that allowed for the gradual phase-in of full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation for service-connected injuries or disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the passed law phases out the VA disability offset by 2014, which means military retirees with 20 or more years of service and a 50-percent or higher VA disability rating will no longer have their military retirement pay reduced by the amount of their VA disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, the law does not provide the same equity to service-connected disabled military retirees with VA ratings of 40 percent or below, or Chapter 61 retirees who were medically retired with less than 20 years, regardless of VA disability rating; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation for the full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation without offset and regardless of rating percentage.

The intent of this resolution is:

To support legislation for the full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation without offset and regardless of the rating percentage. (Approved)

Resolution No. 413 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

MST INCIDENT REPORTING AND TREATMENT

WHEREAS, the American Journal of Public Health reports that the Military Sexual Trauma rate among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans exceeds 15 percent of women and almost 1 percent of men. Still, the Defense Department's annual report on Sexual Assault in the Military Services

indicated that only 2,420 females reported being sexual assaulted in fiscal year 2011; and

WHEREAS, it is widely held that a far greater number of MST victims do not come forward while on active duty due to embarrassment, lack of command action when they do file reports, or for fear of personal and/or professional reprisal, to include perceived “red flags” in their military personnel folders; and

WHEREAS, DOD’s “Zero Tolerance” campaign has made great strides to encourage prevention efforts and tighten field reporting and managerial oversight, to include providing restricted and unrestricted options for reporting a sexual assault. DOD has begun keeping records that provide evidentiary support of the assault and its effect on service members, and has taken steps to improve the actions of first responders as well as to provide confidential counseling and other specialized treatments, yet many MST victims are not aware of such services, which could help alleviate mental health issues commonly associated with sexual assault; and

WHEREAS, although the Department of Veterans Affairs does not require MST victims to have first reported an incident or to have a VA disability rating before receiving treatment, more can still be done inside DOD with regards to prevention, treatment and reporting; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge DOD to continue strengthening its “Zero Tolerance” campaign by encouraging all MST victims to report their attacks, to provide victims with proper medical and mental health care, and to aggressively investigate every reported incident and punish their attackers as appropriate.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge DOD to continue strengthening its “Zero Tolerance” campaign by encouraging all MST victims to report their attacks, to provide victims with proper medical and mental health care, and to aggressively investigate every reported incident and punish their attackers as appropriate. (Approved)

Resolution No. 414 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PROVIDE DD-214s TO ALL RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS

WHEREAS, all active, Guard and Reserve veterans are eligible for VA medical care, as well as compensation and pension, if a service-connected injury occurred while on active duty; and

WHEREAS, eligibility for other VA benefits is based on presenting proof of active military service in the form of a DD Form 214. According to Title 10, U.S. Code, a member of the Guard or Reserve can only receive a DD-214 if they serve 90 days of continuous active duty, although Service

Secretaries have the authority to issue the forms for shorter time periods; and

WHEREAS, the Guard and Reserve constituted one-quarter of all ground forces deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan over the past 11 years, and half of all Air Force airlift, yet similar to the active force, not every Reserve Component member has had the opportunity to deploy much less be activated for 90 consecutive days; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to delete the 90-day activation requirement in Title 10, U.S. Code, and provide the DD Form 214 to all Reserve Component members who separate or retire under conditions other than dishonorable.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge Congress to delete the 90-day activation requirement in Title 10, U.S. Code, and provide the DD Form 214 to all Reserve Component members who separate or retire under conditions other than dishonorable. (Approved)

Resolution No. 415 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXPAND OPERATION WARFIGHTER PLACEMENTS

WHEREAS, Operation Warfighter is a Department of Defense program that allows wounded, ill and injured service members to intern with other federal departments and agencies while they recuperate or are on medical hold pending discharge or retirement; and

WHEREAS, there is no cost to gaining agencies, as DOD pays each participant's full military pay and allowances while he or she gains valuable federal civilian work experience for the average 20 hours per week, three-month internship; and

WHEREAS, the program has placed more than 2,500 recuperating service members with 90 different federal departments and agencies. More important, a third of them were kept offered fulltime employment after their military discharge or retirement; and

WHEREAS, current plans to reduce the size of the federal workforce will provide fewer federal employment opportunities. The Defense Department itself employs 790,000 DOD civilians, but plans to implement a hiring freeze and lower its civilian force by 160,000 will also impact the 40 percent of DOD civilians who are also veterans; and

WHEREAS, the merits of on-the-job training are proven, and opportunities to temporarily place wounded, ill or injured service members in the private sector—with the end goal being fulltime employment—will

always be far greater in the private sector than within the federal government; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Department of Defense to expand the Operation Warfighter internship program to include placing wounded, ill and injured service members with nonprofit organizations and civilian industry.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge the Department of Defense to expand the Operation Warfighter internship program to include placing wounded, ill and injured service members with nonprofit organizations and civilian industry.

(Approved)

Resolution No. 416 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ENSURE DOD COMPLIANCE WITH TAP MANDATE

WHEREAS, the goal of the military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is to ease the difficult transition from active duty into civilian life by offering job-search assistance, advice on available educational and healthcare programs, and other earned benefits; and

WHEREAS, Congress mandated TAP pre-separation counseling for all service members, and for the military to develop additional tracked curricula focused on education, employment, vocational careers and entrepreneurship in collaboration with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Education and Labor, as well as with the Small Business Administration; and

WHEREAS, in congressional testimony, the Department of Defense has said it does not regard the additional curriculum tracks to be part of their TAP mandate. In addition, not every military installation permits nationally-accredited veterans' service organizations to participate in pre-separation or TAP briefings; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge DOD to include the additional curriculum tracks in its mandatory pre-separation counseling and to incorporate nationally-accredited veterans' service organization representation in all programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we request Congress to require DOD and its partner agencies to periodically update their TAP information and procedures to maintain program relevancy.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge DOD to include the additional curriculum tracks in its mandatory pre-separation counseling and to incorporate nationally-accredited veterans' service organization representation in all programs;

and for the Congress to require DOD and its partner agencies to periodically update their TAP information and procedures to maintain program relevancy. (Approved)

Resolution No. 417 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CREATE A UNIFIED MILITARY MEDICAL COMMAND

WHEREAS, Army, Navy and Air Force medical professionals provide the highest level of care to all eligible service members, dependents and retirees, yet a 2006 Defense Department proposal to create a Unified Medical Command continues to be ignored due to interservice rivalries and perceived mission and cultural differences between the services; and

WHEREAS, military medicine operates in a joint world, from contingency and humanitarian deployments to meeting the healthcare needs of 9.6 million multiservice beneficiaries with only 59 inpatient hospitals and 364 clinics. The threat of another base realignment and closure round will also impact the number of military treatment facilities and associated manning requirements; and

WHEREAS, despite the unwillingness of the services to discuss a Unified Medical Command, some universal processes and operations have already been merged. All military medical research is aligned under the Army Medical Research and Materiel Command at Fort Detrick, Md.; all enlisted medical professionals are trained at Fort Sam Houston, Texas; all support services, such as information management and technology, facilities management, contracting and procurement, and logistical and financial functions, are being consolidated; and military medicine in major markets—like San Antonio and the National Capitol Region—are being consolidated and aligned under a single service; and

WHEREAS, the military medical commands can no longer afford a parochial attitude, not with a downsized military, reduced defense budget, threat of another BRAC, a continued high operations tempo, and the unfulfilled requirement to create one interoperable electronic medical record between DOD and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The future of military medicine is in a Unified Medical Command, and the services need to stop resisting and start discussing how to get there from here; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force to begin discussing the operational, logistical and personnel requirements necessary to create a Unified Medical Command.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge the Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force to begin discussing the operational, logistical and personnel requirements necessary to create a Unified Medical Command. (Approved)

Resolution No. 418 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CREATE A SEARCHABLE DOD MILITARY AWARDS DATABASE

WHEREAS, the Defense Department's Military Awards for Valor website (<http://valor.defense.gov/Home.aspx>) is a poor attempt to satisfy congressional concern in the aftermath of the Supreme Court overturn of the Stolen Valor Act of 2005; and

WHEREAS, the DOD website is supposed to list the top three awards for valor presented by the four military services since 9/11, but missing are photos of the recipients, hyperlinks to their medal citations and news stories, plus the omission of dozens of Army Silver Star recipients as well as a Distinguished Service Cross and a Navy Cross recipient. Also missing are the names and deeds of thousands of other heroes from previous wars and conflicts; and

WHEREAS, all military decorations are government-issued, yet there is no government-run, searchable military decorations database to properly preserve for posterity who earned what award, therefore enabling con artists to falsely claim someone else's valor for personal gain; and

WHEREAS, America's wars of past and present have produced thousands of true military heroes who were properly recognized for their selfless service and bravery, and untold more whose heroic actions died with them in battle. For those few who survived, and to the memories of those who did not, the original Stolen Valor Act was enacted to protect them against false heroes who seek public acclaim and personal gain during an era of great public respect for the military institution as a whole, and for those men and women who wear or have worn the uniform; and

WHEREAS, a searchable military decorations database is the only responsible way to properly document the medals the military issues, which would also help the Department of Veterans Affairs in their mission to provide healthcare, disability compensation and burial services to eligible veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Department of Defense to create a searchable military decorations database to properly document for posterity our nation's true heroes.

The intent of this resolution is:

To urge the Department of Defense to create a searchable military decorations database to properly document for posterity our nation's true heroes. (Approved)

Resolution No. 419 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PROTECT POW/MIA FULL ACCOUNTING MISSION FUNDING

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting of 83,000 missing Americans that include 73,000 from World War II, 7,900 from the Korean War, 1,650 from the Vietnam War, 126 from the Cold War, and 6 from Operation Desert Storm forward, as well as the safe return of the only known American POW, Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl; and

WHEREAS, the FY 2010 National Defense Authorization Act requires the Defense Department to begin identifying a minimum of 200 sets of remains by 2015; however, the congressional mandate came without additional funding or personnel. Beginning with FY 2012, the Administration began proposing significant budget increases for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, from \$104.1 million in 2012 to \$143.9 million in FY 2016; and

WHEREAS, full congressional funding for JPAC and the other DOD organizations involved in the Full Accounting Mission is critical to meeting and exceeding the congressional mandate. Full funding is even more important if recovery operations in North Korea ever resume after a now eight-year interruption due to U.S. safety and security concerns; and

WHEREAS, without additional funding to meet the expanded requirements, JPAC could be forced to postpone or cancel difficult recovery sites in favor of potentially more productive locations, such as mass burials or multi-crewman aircraft crashes. Full funding enables JPAC to efficiently plan, resource and accomplish their worldwide mission to recovery, identify and return to their families all missing American service members from all wars and conflicts; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to fully fund the requested amounts for all DOD organizations involved in the Full Accounting Mission.

The intent of this resolution is:

To call upon Congress to fully fund the requested amounts for all DOD organizations involved in the Full Accounting Mission. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 420 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PRESERVE INTEGRITY OF U.S.-RUSSIA JOINT COMMISSION ON POW/MIAs

WHEREAS, in December 2012, new Russian President Putin removed the co-chairman and almost a dozen commissioners from his side of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs. The move is similar in respect to a 2004 reduction in the size of the Russian government initiated

by then-President Putin that also resulted in the elimination of Russia's Joint Commission co-chairman position; and

WHEREAS, it took diplomatic notes passed in 2009 between President Obama and then-Russian President Medvedev to reopen their military archives to U.S. researchers, as well as increased access to potential eyewitnesses. In 2011, the VFW led seven other veterans' and POW/MIA family organizations to write President Medvedev to urge his support of the Joint Commission. This resulted in his appointment of a new Russian co-chairman and 31 commissioners less than three weeks later; and

WHEREAS, the recent unilateral action by President Putin threatens the viability and continued existence of a Joint Commission that was created in 1992 by the Presidents of the United States and the Russian Federation. The Joint Commission's purpose, then and now, is to serve as a non-political and non-bureaucratic forum through which both nations could seek to determine the fate of missing and unaccounted-for servicemen; and

WHEREAS, America's war in Afghanistan has resulted in the discovery of numerous Russian aircraft crash sites that has led to the return of remains of more than 60 Russian MIAs back to their families. Deep inside Russia's military archives could be information that could help bring similar closure to American MIA families; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon President Obama to communicate to President Putin the importance of keeping the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs intact in mission, personnel and funding.

The intent of this resolution is:

To call upon President Obama to communicate to President Putin the importance of keeping the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs intact in mission, personnel and funding. (Approved)

Resolution No. 421 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CALL FOR MORE UNILATERAL POW/MIA ACTIONS BY VIETNAM

WHEREAS, diplomatic relations between the United States Government and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam were established in July 1995 following assurances from Vietnamese officials that improved bilateral relations would result in expanded cooperation to achieve the fullest possible accounting of Americans captured, missing or killed during the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, on March 20, 2002, President Bush issued Presidential Determination 2002-11, stating that Vietnam's unilateral provision of POW/MIA-related documents and records should be improved, focused initially on archival data pertaining to Americans captured, missing or

killed in areas of Laos and Cambodia under wartime Vietnamese control. It also stipulated that the government of Vietnam must take unilateral actions aimed at locating and repatriating the remains of those who died while in Vietnamese control but who have not yet been returned; and

WHEREAS, on June 25, 2008, President Bush expressed his appreciation to Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung for Vietnam's cooperation in the joint humanitarian effort to achieve the fullest possible accounting for Americans who remain missing in action, and for Vietnam's willingness to carry out additional measures, which starting in 2011 has produced Vietnamese-led recovery operations to augment U.S. efforts; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we encourage Vietnam to continue to expand the number and frequency of Vietnamese-led recovery operations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in this cooperative effort, that we urge Vietnam to authorize its officials to locate and release immediately to the United States all records relating to Americans missing from the Vietnam War, and to urge the Vietnamese people to turn over the remains of Americans or information on American burial sites, and any reports of live American servicemen.

The intent of this resolution is:

To encourage Vietnam to continue to expand the number and frequency of Vietnamese-led recovery operations, and to request Vietnam release all documents and possible remains pertaining to Americans still missing from the Vietnam War. (Approved)

Resolution No. 422 (Submitted by Department of Michigan)

RE-DESIGNATE THE POSITION OF SECRETARY OF THE NAVY AS THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

WHEREAS, on November 10, 1775, the Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia passed a resolution directing that two battalions of Marines be raised for the service as landing forces for the fleet, thereby establishing the Continental Marines and signifying the birth of the United States Marine Corps; and

WHEREAS, Marines throughout our Nation's history have often been called upon to be the first into battle, and they have accepted this duty without hesitation and with a sense of honor and esprit de corps that is second to none; and

WHEREAS, throughout the 237-year history of the Navy and Marine Corps, they have fought side-by-side as a cohesive team against any threat that would bring harm to this Nation; and

WHEREAS, the Marine Corps is the only service in the Department of Defense without a specific service Secretary, as the Secretary of the Navy serves as both the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of the Marine Corps; now, therefore

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 the Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps.

The intent of this resolution is:

To re-designate the position of the Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps. (Approved)

Resolution No. 423 (Submitted by Department of Michigan)

INVESTIGATE ISRAELI ATTACK ON THE USS LIBERTY

WHEREAS, on June 8, 1967, the USS Liberty, while operating in international waters in the eastern Mediterranean, was the target of an attack by Israeli war planes and torpedo boats; and

WHEREAS, this attack killed 34 members of the USS Liberty's crew and wounded 171 other United States personnel on board, in addition to causing extensive damage to the ship; and

WHEREAS, the crew was threatened with prison if they spoke of the attack, and previous investigations were manipulated and controlled, and many new witnesses have come forward; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars passed a resolution on August 17, 2009, supporting an investigation of the attack on the USS Liberty and the United States Congress refuses to address this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the men of the USS Liberty filed a war crime report with the Secretary of the Army on June 8, 2005, per Department of Defense Directive No. 5810.01B; and

WHEREAS, the report has been ignored and has languished under several Secretaries of the Army; and

WHEREAS, the sailors and Marines and their families should have closure of this tragic attack and its aftermath; now, therefore

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 by the armed forces of Israel on June 8, 1967, in order to determine the truth behind the attack, and to bring closure to the families and crew.

The intent of this resolution is:

To call upon Congress to immediately investigate the attack on the USS Liberty by the armed forces of Israel on June 8, 1967, in order to determine the truth behind the attack, and to bring closure to the families and crew. (Approved)

Resolution No. 424 (Submitted by Department of South Carolina)

SUPPORT AWARD OF MEDAL OF HONOR TO WILLIAM P. COLLIER JR.

WHEREAS, Army Major William P. Collier Jr., was awarded the Silver Star on 3 November 1972 for his heroic leadership and bravery while engaged in a 54-hour combat operation in defense of his ARVN Command at Mo Duc District Headquarters, Quang Ngai Province, Vietnam, from 16-18 September 1972. At the time of the NVA siege, all U.S. combat forces in Vietnam had been withdrawn, leaving small Advisor teams throughout South Vietnam. Major Collier was the OIC of one of the Advisor teams; and

WHEREAS, Major Collier's small 120-man ARVN force, equivalent to the South Vietnamese National Guard, withstood repeated attacks by a numerically superior NVA Regiment, estimated to be well over 2,000 soldiers. Major Collier, the Senior American District Advisor, assumed command of his beleaguered Mo Duc Headquarters force at the start of the siege. The only American survivor on the ground, he proficiently demonstrated the tactical expertise and fire-support experience that allowed him to courageously lead the ferocious defense of his compound from repeated NVA ground assaults. He simultaneously coordinated all facets of air, artillery and naval gunfire support that successfully prevented the Mo Duc defenders from annihilation. This imposed upon the vastly numerically superior enemy a reverberating and crushing defeat; and

WHEREAS, through the afternoon of the first day, Major Collier withstood three enemy assaults and continual mortar, rocket and machinegun fire without any outside fire support until an ARVN battery came into range in the late afternoon, and Covey 111 and Covey 100 flew overhead in their OV-10 to provide close-air support after 2200 hours on the evening of 16 September. After the last major assault and the OV-10 was shot down on the 17th, Major Collier remained actively engaged with the enemy until the 18th, when they convoyed out during the night, just to be ambushed on the 19th prior to reaching safety at another ARVN camp in an adjacent district; and

WHEREAS, as the sole American survivor, sustaining 99 casualties out of his 120 ARVN Mo Duc District Headquarters force, 256 NVA bodies were counted directly after the last major attack. The total number of NVA estimated killed throughout the District of Mo Duc was estimated at approximately 800 to 1,100 soldiers, and the total estimated NVA killed during the 54-hour Mo Duc battle as 400 to 500. Countless wounded were dragged off by the NVA; and

WHEREAS, OV-10 FAC pilots Captain Poling and Captain Personett heard Major Collier call air and artillery ordnance on his own position, as well as coordinate other air, naval and artillery attacks on numerous other targets. Major Collier continually rallied his men from certain defeat in a ferocious life-or-death struggle where no quarter was given by the enemy; and

WHEREAS, Major Collier was awarded the Silver Star on 3 November 1972 for his heroic action at the Mo Duc battle, though not available at the time of his award were other eyewitness accounts of the battle; and

WHEREAS, Captain Poling and Captain Personett received the nation's second highest medal for valor—the Air Force Cross—for their eight-hour support of a 54-hour battle. In sworn affidavits, both pilots recommend [now retired] Colonel William P. Collier Jr., receive the Medal of Honor for a defense both describe as “The Alamo”; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we fully support all Congressional action to award the Medal of Honor to William P. Collier Jr., for his extraordinary courage under fire at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty.

The intent of this resolution is:

To fully support all Congressional action to award the Medal of Honor to William P. Collier Jr., for his extraordinary courage under fire at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. (Approved)

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE

Resolution No. 601 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ADEQUATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BUDGET

WHEREAS, there are about 22.7 million living veterans; and

WHEREAS, more than 1.4 million men and women have served in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11/2001; and

WHEREAS, more than 654,582 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have been screened for possible mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) while 123,145 veterans screened positive for the effects of TBI; and

WHEREAS, nearly 464,685 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan have been treated for psychiatric symptoms or disorders; and

WHEREAS, many of the over 9.4 million veterans over 65 years old required increased health care including long-term care; and

WHEREAS, the laws administered by the Department of Veterans

Affairs authorizing benefits for veterans, their dependents and survivors are classified into the following general categories: compensation for service-connected disabilities and death; pension for low income veterans and survivors; educational and training assistance; home loan guaranty's; service members life insurance; veterans life insurance; hospital and medical care services; nursing home and domiciliary care, including state veterans home construction funds; health manpower training; medical and prosthetic research and burial benefits; and

WHEREAS, the health care delivery facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs are aging physical plants in need of modernization through renovations and reconfiguration to meet the demands of advances in medicine and current fire, safety and privacy standards; and

WHEREAS, veterans who served in our armed forces have rendered honorable service to our great nation and are at a minimum deserving to receive timely and accurate processing of claims for veterans entitlements along with the best and most appropriate health care; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge the Congress of the United States authorize appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs which fully fund and maintain the integrity and enhancement of veteran entitlement programs and health care system. (Approved)

Resolution No. 602 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CONSIDER TREATMENT FOR A PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTED CONDITION AS A CLAIM FOR VA COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, many service members have suffered from diseases that are recognized to be presumptive; and

WHEREAS, veterans suffering from diseases which include many types of cancer, as well as diabetes and other chronic diseases may not be aware that they may be eligible for service connection, even if they are being treated in a VA facility; and

WHEREAS, many VA medical facilities are not currently staffed or equipped to provide appropriate counseling to veterans or their families on how to file a claim for service connected benefits; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation requiring that treatment by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) 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)

Resolution No. 603 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXTENDING GULF WAR PRESUMPTIONS, REGISTRY AND HEALTH CARE TO AFGHANISTAN THEATER VETERANS

WHEREAS, many service members have served in Operation Enduring Freedom; and

WHEREAS, these veterans have served under circumstances similar to those serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and the first Persian Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, Afghanistan was not considered part of the Southwest Asia theater of operations during Operation Desert Storm and the VA did not include Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, veterans of Afghanistan are suffering from similar undiagnosed conditions as those who have served in Iraq; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress and the VA must support research to verify whether service members who served in Afghanistan are subjected to the same environmental hazards as those who served in Iraq, 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; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that while research is ongoing, allow veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom access to the Gulf War Registry Health Exam. (Approved)

Resolution No. 604 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

OPPOSE VA PHARMACEUTICAL CO-PAYMENT INCREASES

WHEREAS, veterans, other than those with a service-connected disability rating of 50 percent or greater, those who are receiving medications for their service-connected conditions or those whose incomes fall below the non service-connected pension threshold, must pay a co-payment for each 30-day supply of medications obtained through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, there have been repeated proposals to raise the pharmaceutical co-payment, placing an undue hardship on many veterans; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, using his statutory authority, raised the pharmaceutical co-payment from \$8 to \$9 for each 30 day supply for priority groups 7 and 8, and authority to raise it again in the future exists; and

WHEREAS, the increase in costs of the benefit would likely cause many veterans to turn away from the VA health care system and would serve to inequitably balance the federal budget through veterans programs; and

WHEREAS, pharmaceuticals are part of the VA's standard health benefits package and must be provided to all eligible veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose increases in the VA pharmaceutical co-payment. (Approved)

Resolution No. 605 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

NURSING HOME ELIGIBILITY

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has called upon Congress to enact legislation to regulate and expand eligibility for VA health care and provide all veterans with mandated access to the full continuum of VA health care services which include nursing home care; and

WHEREAS, current VA regulations extend VA eligibility for nursing home care to those veterans who are service-connected at 70 percent or above or those seeking nursing home care for a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, the demand for VA nursing home care is increasing as the veteran population continues to age; and

WHEREAS, VA nursing home care units are VA hospital-based and provide an intensive and extensive level of nursing home care supported by the clinical specialties and other services within the host hospital; and

WHEREAS, VA nursing home care is considered the "safety net" for VA outpatient services such as residential care, respite care, hospital-based home care, adult day health care, homemaker/home health aid services and other extended care programs; and

WHEREAS, VA, through their own statements, recognizes the difference in eligibility for nursing home care and inpatient hospital care as inconsistent with the principles of sound medical practice, which support continuity of care for veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to establish a standard VA nursing home entitlement for all veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 606 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY HEALTH CARE

WHEREAS, almost 20 percent of combat casualties have sustained permanent brain damage due to Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) while serving in Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and New Dawn; and

WHEREAS, veterans with blast injuries, blunt trauma, motor vehicle accidents, and falls are at risk for TBI which often goes unrecognized; and

WHEREAS, even mildly injured TBI patients may have long-term mental and physical health consequences; and

WHEREAS, there has been universal recognition that veterans with severe TBI will need a lifetime of intensive services to care for their injuries and many VA medical facilities are not currently staffed or equipped to provide the necessary and appropriate screening, or quality health care services to veterans suffering from TBI; now, therefore

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 research pertaining to, screening methods, diagnostic tools, and more effective treatments, such as hyperbaric oxygen therapy treatment, for traumatic brain injury patients to ensure that TBI veterans are receiving quality standardized treatment and rehabilitation care available. (Approved)

Resolution No. 607 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars recognizes that it is in the best interest of veterans to have a strong and viable veterans employment and training system dedicated to the interest of our nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, Congress has recognized that veterans of all eras, especially recently separated service members, are finding it difficult to obtain meaningful employment and careers; and

WHEREAS, while there are certain employment and educational programs in place for veterans there is a great need for improvement in the quality, purpose, and accountability of these programs; and

WHEREAS, veteran employment programs need to have a proactive, long-term career focus versus an immediate and often low wage, job focus; and

WHEREAS, programs designed to encourage federal employment of veterans, assist veterans in finding employment in their communities, and encourage federal contractors to hire veterans demand reasonable funding and responsible oversight to ensure success; and

WHEREAS, state agencies who receive federal funding are not held to the same veteran hiring standards as the federal government; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support viable and effective veterans employment and training systems, such as Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPS), Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERS), and other Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) programs, which require sufficient funding and capability to assist veterans in seeking and maintaining meaningful employment and re-employment opportunities in their communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to improve and enforce federal veteran-hiring mandates for contractors who do business with the federal government as outlined in Title 38 USC 4212; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that federal veteran hiring initiatives and programs must be held accountable for the effectiveness of the services provided and funding should be adjusted to reflect abilities in creating long-term meaningful careers for veterans, and state agencies that receive federal funding must be held to the same standards and report to Congress on the success of veteran hiring initiatives. (Approved)

Resolution No. 608 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VA SERVICES FOR WOMEN VETERANS

WHEREAS, the number of women joining the armed forces of our country continues to increase every year; and

WHEREAS, women veterans comprise approximately 8 percent of the enrolled VA health care population, and 56 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan female veterans have received VA care, and female veterans use more primary and mental health services than their male counterparts; and

WHEREAS, the number of enrolled women veterans is expected to double in the next two to four years making it essential that VA is staffed and equipped to meet their specific health care needs; and

WHEREAS, many VA facilities are not currently equipped to provide gender-specific health care services to include mental health professionals trained to provide counseling and care for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) whether due to combat, Military Sexual Trauma (MST), or another

form of trauma; and

WHEREAS, the evidentiary standards for service connection of combat related PTSD have been relaxed and there continues to be significant problems with developing evidence to substantiate service connection for PTSD secondary to MST; and

WHEREAS, many women veterans are unaware of their eligibility as veterans and often do not utilize VA for benefits or health care services; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 111-163 addressed many of these critical issues and identified the needs of female veterans, yet we still await the final report on barriers to care required by the legislation; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge VA to redesign and reevaluate the type of care provided to women veterans, by improving health care and services to include privacy and security within medical facilities and providing adequate mental health care services to include individuals trained to accommodate the specific needs of women and provide care for MST and PTSD; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge VA to ensure that it has a full-time women veterans program manager at all VA medical centers and major clinics and to ensure necessary and gender-specific health care services are available to women veterans at all VA facilities; 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, allow women to choose their VA healthcare provider and offering a full-range of services designed to meet their current and future needs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge Congress to afford the victims of MST who suffer with PTSD the same relaxed evidentiary burden that is given to service members who were engaged in combat. (Approved)

Resolution No. 609 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXTEND SERVICE CONNECTION PRESUMPTION TO BLAST SURVIVORS

WHEREAS, the Global War on Terrorism has placed tens of thousands of service members in harm's way; and

WHEREAS, the nature of the conflict these men and women face is frequently guerrilla-style combat where the enemy is widely known to use improvised explosive devices (IEDs); and

WHEREAS, much of the attention has been focused on the apparent physical wounds, there are many unseen effects of blast trauma, which could include brain injuries, long-term hearing and balance issues, chronic pain, air embolisms, and injuries mistaken for personality disorders; and

WHEREAS, some effects associated with blast injuries may not become manifest immediately allowing the service member to return to the field, only to have their ability to fulfill their duty dramatically affected by the long-term effects of the blast; and

WHEREAS many injuries are difficult to diagnose and our men and women in uniform can suffer from these disabilities for many years after the blast; and

WHEREAS, a large number of veterans have been identified as having been evaluated or treated for a condition possibly related to a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) at a VA medical center from the start of OIF/OEF/OND; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to approve a presumption of service connection for the conditions associated with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). (Approved)

Resolution No. 610 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VETERAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WHEREAS, several government reports indicate that the majority of federal agencies have failed to reach their three-percent contracting goal for disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, many veterans and disabled veterans lack access to capital; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has failed to deliver adequate tools to veterans, offering the opportunity to fulfill the three-percent federal contracting mandate; and

WHEREAS, the Small Business Administration lacks the funding and staff necessary to create robust veterans programs; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars that Congress expand entrepreneurial education and networking programs for veterans via veterans small business centers funded through the Small Business Administration in order to help all government agencies reach the three-percent goal; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress expand veteran's and disabled veteran's access to capital by creating and funding a direct loan

program through the Small Business Administration in order to help all government agencies achieve the three-percent goal. (Approved)

Resolution No. 611 (Submitted by Commander-in Chief)

VA CLAIMS BACKLOG

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a backlog of 2 million claims for compensation, pension, education benefits and appeals; and

WHEREAS, due to the increasing complexity of claims, the need for compliance to Court of Veterans Appeals decisions claims, and the continued increase in the number of claims received each year the backlog has continued to grow; and

WHEREAS, because of substantial backlogs of claims and appeals cases, 71.5 percent of rating cases have been pending for more than 125 days; and

WHEREAS, it has only been in the past year that VBA began moving IT initiatives out to the field; and

WHEREAS, decades of staffing freezes and neglect within VA contributed to current backlogs and decreased timeliness; and

WHEREAS, Congress in recent years has provided increased funding for staffing at VA and improved oversight. Yet, the attrition of new hires and retirement of journeymen claims processors continues to challenge VA's ability to train and maintain a technically proficient workforce; and

WHEREAS, after decades of study, Congressional hearings, changes of VA leadership, altered workflow, amended work processes, sporadic IT development as well as countless pilot programs and experimental initiatives, it is clear that there are no easy, simple or quick solutions that lead to the rapid reduction of the backlog; now, therefore

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 the resources necessary 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; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress continues its oversight of VA IT initiatives to ensure that they are constructive, relevant and effective in streamlining claims processing and improving quality of entitlement decisions. (Approved)

Resolution No. 612 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

INCREASE THE BENEFIT LEVEL FOR DEA

WHEREAS, the Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance Program (DEA) provides educational support to eligible dependents (spouse or children) of a service member who died on active duty or a veteran who died or is permanently and totally disabled due to a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, while DEA benefits increase annually, they fail to increase at the same rate as tuition; and

WHEREAS, the average cost of tuition, fees, and room and board at a four-year public university is estimated at \$16,789 for the 2012-2013 academic year, while the DEA benefit for the same period is \$8,883; and

WHEREAS, while nothing can repay the enormity of the loss and sacrifice of military survivors, providing a quality educational benefit will provide them the opportunity to build a meaningful and productive future for themselves and their children; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to increase DEA benefits to reflect the rising cost of education, and that the benefit should be indexed to reflect the level of tuition as reported by the Department of Education. (Approved)

Resolution No. 613 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PTSD HEALTH CARE

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has indicated that treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among returning war veterans is one of its highest priorities, and the VA operates a nationwide network of more than 129 specialized PTSD outpatient treatment programs; and

WHEREAS, the early and accurate screening, diagnosis and treatment for PTSD, depression, substance use, and other mental health disorders, yields optimal patient outcomes, and statistics have shown that these conditions, left untreated or poorly treated, can lead to increases in suicide attempts or suicides among a host of other negative consequences; and

WHEREAS, a total number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans diagnosed with PTSD as of December 2012 is 239,174; and

WHEREAS, on July 14, 2011, VA's Office of Inspector General testified before Congress that PTSD was the most common disability award component for both men and women who served in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, available research has not sufficiently evaluated the clinical effectiveness of treatment programs for veterans diagnosed with and/or suffering from the effects of traumatic brain injuries, PTSD, and adequate research into the brain's response to internal and external influences that could result in mental illness has yet to be undertaken; and

WHEREAS, VA has struggled to provide female veterans the same type of care and services that their male counterparts receive for TBI and PTSD; and

WHEREAS, the Institute of Medicine highlights prolonged exposure therapy, an intensive specialized counseling treatment as being one of the few treatment programs that have been proven effective by evidence based research studies; and

WHEREAS, because of cost concerns and the lack of expertise, VA currently does not have the capacity to deliver intensive exposure therapy programs at every medical center to veterans with PTSD who need it; and

WHEREAS, VA expects an increase in PTSD conditions as Veterans return from Iraq and Afghanistan after multiple tours of duty; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to adequately staff VA mental health treatment and research programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that VA take the lead on improving women's health research, training and women's health certifications, and institute comprehensive programs for the treatment of PTSD among women veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 614 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

TINNITUS AND HEARING LOSS PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTION

WHEREAS, veterans of the armed services who served in combat or in a position (e.g. member of a gun crew on board Navy ships) or certain occupational specialties have a high incidence rate of hearing loss or tinnitus as a direct result of acoustic trauma; and

WHEREAS, many pre-service and discharge examinations, particularly for World War II and Korean Conflict veterans, were usually accomplished with the highly inaccurate whispered-voice test; and

WHEREAS, veterans, in those cases, were not afforded a comprehensive audio logical examination upon entrance and discharge from the military services; and

WHEREAS, in recent years the second leading disability granted service connection by VA was for hearing loss or tinnitus; and

WHEREAS, in 2005 the Institutes of Medicine (IOM) released a study that showed that nearly all service members are exposed to acoustic trauma at some point during their military service and that many experience hearing loss and/or tinnitus as a result, often years after service. However, "after the fact, hearing loss or tinnitus incurred as a result of military service cannot be distinguished with certainty from subsequent noise-induced hearing loss..." Given these findings, reasonable doubt must be resolved in favor of veterans who suffered acoustic trauma in service; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we urge Congress and 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)

Resolution No. 615 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

BURIAL PLOT ALLOWANCE

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pays certain burial benefits at the death of a veteran who dies from a service connected disability. VA pays a different burial benefit and plot allowance on behalf of a wartime veteran who dies from a non-service connected condition; and

WHEREAS, the cost of funeral expenses in the private sector have increased nearly seven times over since 2001 and the current VA benefit is \$2,000 for a service connected death, and \$700 burial and \$700 plot allowance for a qualifying non-service connected death; well below the cost in the private sector; and

WHEREAS, Congress should provide the resources to meet the changing needs of burial benefits and bring burial allowances and plot allowances to the same proportionate level they were when the benefits were joined in 1973; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress increase all burial benefits to what the *Independent Budget* recommends: the service connected burial benefit, non-service connected burial benefit and the plot allowance for those veterans who do not have access to a state or national veterans cemetery should be increased to \$6,160, \$1,918, and \$1,150 respectively; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the service connected burial benefit, non-service connected burial benefit and the plot allowance for those

veterans who have access to a state or national veterans cemetery but chose burial in a private cemetery should be increased to \$2,793, \$854, and \$1,150 respectively; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress should provide the resources required to meet burial needs of all veterans who have served their country so honorably and faithfully. (Approved)

Resolution No. 616 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HEARING LOSS COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, veterans of the armed services who served in combat have a high incident rate of hearing loss usually associated with acoustical trauma; and

WHEREAS, in the practice of granting disability compensation there is a long-standing precedent that ratings not be offset by the function artificially restored by prosthesis; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs has the authority to grant service connection for disabilities associated with combat-related diseases or injuries even if medically undocumented at the time of service; and

WHEREAS, many veterans have incurred extreme hardships through undocumented acoustic trauma related to combat service or occupational duty; and

WHEREAS, hearing aids are considered a prosthetic device necessary for good quality of life; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to amend the Schedule for Rating Disabilities to provide a minimum compensable evaluation for any service connected hearing loss for which a hearing aid is medically indicated. (Approved)

Resolution No. 617 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

REPEAL SBP/DIC OFFSET

WHEREAS, under current law, the surviving spouse of a retired servicemember whose death is related to a military service connected condition is entitled to Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, if the military retiree was also enrolled in the Survivors Benefit Plan (SBP), the surviving spouse's SBP benefit would be offset by the amount of DIC benefits provided by VA; and

WHEREAS, more than 57,000 military widows/widowers are affected by the loss of annuities their spouse paid for over the course of their service; and

WHEREAS, SBP and DIC payments are paid to beneficiaries for different reasons: SBP is purchased by the retiree like life insurance and is intended to provide a portion of the veteran's retired pay to the surviving spouse after the veteran's death, and DIC is a special indemnity compensation benefit paid to the surviving spouse when the veteran's service connected condition caused the premature demise of the retiree; and

WHEREAS, a surviving spouse of a federal civilian retiree who is a disabled veteran and dies from military service connected causes can receive DIC benefits without losing any of their SBP benefits due to an offset; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to repeal the Survivor's Benefit Plan and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset. (Approved)

Resolution No. 618 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HOMELESS VETERANS PRIORITIES

WHEREAS, despite a severe economic recession, homelessness among veterans has significantly decreased due to coordinated efforts across multiple agencies of government and the ambitious goals of President Obama and Secretary Shinseki to eliminate homelessness among veterans by 2015; and

WHEREAS, solving this problem has become more challenging as the number of female service members has increased within the military, as it has resulted in a growing number of female veterans experiencing homelessness, many of whom have dependents in their care; and

WHEREAS, programs operating on the federal level seek to assist local and state homeless veteran agencies and programs, partially using funds granted by the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Grant and Per Diem program and the Department of Labor (DOL) Homeless Veterans Reintegration program; and

WHEREAS, recently implemented programs such as VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and the joint Housing and Urban Development and VA's Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program are showing signs of success in not only reducing homelessness, but also in providing desperately-needed case management and other measures to prevent homelessness; and

WHEREAS, the VA acknowledges its obligation to maintain comprehensive assistance to veterans who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness to the best of its capabilities; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the President and Congress to continue addressing homeless veterans as a priority by increasing the availability of affordable housing, ensuring the opportunity to earn an adequate income through increased educational and employment opportunities and training, and by expanding access to health-care services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress should fully-fund all veteran homeless programs, to include the VA's Grant and Per Diem program, and DOL's Homeless Veterans Reintegration program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VA should periodically review the economy so as to take into account instances of inflation to adequately adjust Grant and Per Diem program rates as necessary for sufficient operation of homeless veteran assistance programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA programs extended to homeless veterans be equipped with the staffing and resources necessary to respond to the growing needs of a diverse veterans population, including women, dependents, the elderly, and disabled; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that preemptive measures to address homelessness are developed and utilized to prevent and minimize the risk of possible homelessness that current service members and veterans face; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that where a veteran/survivor has countable income in addition to Department of Veterans Affairs service connected compensation and non-service connected pension. The amount of the VA compensation and non-service connected pension should not be considered as countable income by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. (Approved)

Resolution No. 619 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

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

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

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

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

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to change the eligibility delimiting date for VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program by eliminating the 12-year-delimiting date for eligibility to Chapter 31 benefits and allow all veterans with employment impediments or problems with independent living to qualify for VR&E services for life; and

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA streamlines eligibility and entitlement to VR&E programs to provide more timely intervention and assistance to all disabled veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 620 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VETERANS AFFAIRS PENSION MANAGEMENT CENTERS

WHEREAS, the Pension Management Centers were established in 2001; and

WHEREAS, the Pension Management Centers are tasked with the processing responsibilities for live and death pension applications and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation; and

WHEREAS, this tasking is not being accomplished in a timely, accurate manner; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General Office of Audits and Evaluations conducted a review of the Pension Management Centers dated March 30, 2011 which revealed untimely processing of original death pension claims and Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration Income Verification Matches; and

WHEREAS, the veterans and dependents who depend on the benefits being overseen by the Pension Management Center are those individuals most in need; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we express our concerns about the services being delivered by the Pension Management Center and urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to return control of all pension claims to the original VA regional office of jurisdiction. (Approved)

Resolution No. 621 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

MAKE VA FEE BASIS PAYMENTS AND CHAMPVA PAYMENTS FAIR TO PROVIDERS

WHEREAS, the fees paid under the VA Fee Basis and CHAMPVA medical insurance to providers of medical services are less than the fees paid by private insurance; and

WHEREAS, these reimbursement rates are subject to a pending rate cut of over 30 percent under the Balanced Budget Act of 1997; and

WHEREAS, fees to doctors providing care for beneficiaries of the various Department of Defense TRICARE programs are also subject to this reduction; and

WHEREAS, many private medical providers will not accept Fee Basis, CHAMPVA, and TRICARE because of the inequity of payment; and

WHEREAS, the government plans are the only insurance that many 100 percent disabled and retired military personnel have and the proposed reductions will prevent veterans and their dependents from adequate medical treatment and care; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation and regulations requiring that Fee Basis, CHAMPVA, TRICARE and other plans providing medical care for retired and disabled veterans be kept competitive with private insurance providers. (Approved)

Resolution No. 622 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ENSURE VETERAN SUCCESS IN EDUCATION

WHEREAS, our nation has consistently supported the future success of our warfighters through robust veterans' education benefits, historically molding generations of proven leaders; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States helped secure robust education benefits for today's veterans through the passage

of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, offering a free in-state public education to veterans who qualify; and

WHEREAS, VA plans to enroll more than one million veterans across all G.I. Bill programs in 2013, but cannot deliver quality information to veterans on their educational options prior to enrollment; and

WHEREAS, many GI Bill-eligible students cannot attend public schools at the in-state rate because they cannot legally qualify for in-state residency; and

WHEREAS, poor information and financial hardships are driving perceptions in Washington that student-veterans are not succeeding in higher education; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States urge Congress to ensure proper oversight of VA's educational benefit programs by developing quality metrics with which to demonstrate student veteran success in higher education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress ensure veterans receive equitable access to benefits like in-state tuition and quality pre-enrollment educational information to ensure veterans are academically and financially prepared to succeed in higher education. (Approved)

Resolution No. 623 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VA MEDICARE SUBVENTION

WHEREAS, the VFW views it as essential that the VA health care system provide qualifying veterans with timely and accessible care; and

WHEREAS, the VA collects third party payment for treatment, but current law prevents VA from collecting from the Medicare Trust Fund; and

WHEREAS, a large number of VA's patients are Medicare eligible; and

WHEREAS, VA's ability to deliver health care efficiently, effectively and at lower cost than does the private health care industry ensures that Medicare will be billed at lower rates than private health care providers; and

WHEREAS, the diversion of Medicare eligible veterans from the private sector to VA will result in both lower costs to Medicare and greater reimbursements to VA; and

WHEREAS, it is now absolutely essential that VA be authorized to collect federal dollars to supplement its annual appropriations to ensure adequate funding for the Veterans Health Administration; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support enactment into law of legislation authorizing VA to collect and retain Medicare reimbursement dollars from care that is provided to non-service connected veterans who are Medicare eligible and who seek care through the Veterans Health Administration. (Approved)

Resolution No. 624 (Submitted by the Department of Michigan)

HEADSTONE AND MARKER MEDALLION

WHEREAS, Public Law 110-157, signed into law on December 26, 2007 gives the VA authority to “furnish, upon request, a medallion or other device of a design determined by the Secretary to signify the deceased’s status as a veteran, to be attached to a headstone or marker that was furnished at private expense;” and

WHEREAS, veterans who died prior to November 1, 1990, are not eligible to have this medallion or other device provided; and

WHEREAS, family headstones or monuments often do not necessarily commemorate the veteran’s military service; and

WHEREAS, many of our honored deceased veterans now lie in their final resting place without lasting testimony by our government of their service to our country; and

WHEREAS, we believe this injustice to our Nation’s veterans must be corrected; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support amending 38 U.S.C. 2306 (d) (4) to allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to furnish a medallion or other device for veterans who died prior to November 1, 1990. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 625 (Submitted by the Department of North Carolina)

SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FORT MCCLELLAN HEALTH REGISTRY

WHEREAS, Fort McClellan, Alabama, was the home of the United States Army’s Chemical Corps School and was home to thousands of soldiers in the Women’s Army Corps, the Military Police Corps, and the Chemical Corps from 1943 to its closure in 1999; and

WHEREAS, Fort McClellan is located in the immediate vicinity of the Anniston Army Depot where the U.S. Army stored and incinerated chemical munitions until 2011; and

WHEREAS, Fort McClellan neighbors Anniston, Alabama, which until 1971 was home to one of two facilities in the United States that produced

Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB), a toxin known to cause certain types of cancer, as well as immune, neurological, reproductive, and endocrine disorders; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has stated that investigations by the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, and EPA Region 4 have determined that "PCB contamination is evident in the Anniston area"; and

WHEREAS, Fort McClellan is listed by the EPA Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, also known as the Superfund, and this act is the legal framework for the identification, restoration, and transfer of contaminated property; and

WHEREAS, numerous veterans who did not necessarily serve overseas but did serve at Fort McClellan and were exposed to possibly contaminated soil, air and drinking water, appear now to be suffering deteriorating health effects that are consistent with exposure to PCBs and other contaminants; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) have not conducted any comprehensive studies on the effects of toxic exposure at Fort McClellan which would be necessary in order to justify the extension of any presumptive service connection or health care benefits to veterans who may be suffering from such exposure; and

WHEREAS, the establishment by VA of a Fort McClellan Health Registry for the purposes of study, comparison, and outreach is necessary to identify veterans who could be suffering deteriorating health effects from their service at Fort McClellan; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the establishment of the Fort McClellan Health Registry as soon as possible. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 626 (Submitted by the Department of Idaho)

MEDAL OF HONOR PENSION CONTINUATION FOR MOH SPOUSES

WHEREAS, veterans who have been awarded the Medal of Honor served our country by extraordinary sacrifice; and

WHEREAS, those Medal of Honor veterans are awarded a special pension for those heroic acts by Congress; and

WHEREAS, the Medal of Honor pension ends with the death of the recipient and their spouses often do not qualify for VA benefits upon that death; and

WHEREAS, we believe that our Medal of Honor veterans' spouses should continue to receive the Medal of Honor pension until their demise; and

WHEREAS, precedence is established by our Nation's continuation of spouses compensation benefits for members of the Grand Army of the Republic; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, urges Congress to amend the law and authorize payment of the Medal of Honor pension established in Paragraph 1562, title 38 U.S.C. to the surviving spouse of a deceased Medal of Honor recipient; in the event that the Medal of Honor is awarded posthumously, the Medal of Honor pension should be awarded to the recipients surviving spouse; and, this award should continue until the remarriage of the spouse or their death, whichever occurs first. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 627 (Submitted by the Department of Massachusetts)

EQUAL VA BENEFITS FOR SAME SEX UNIONS/MARRIAGES

WHEREAS, the Declaration of Independence, the basis in which created our country, the United States of America, states "We [the future citizens of the USA] hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness; and

WHEREAS, the Preamble of the Constitution of the United States identifies the purpose, scope and reasons for the creation of the Constitution of the United States; especially "in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility...Promote the general Welfare"; and

WHEREAS, The "Constitution of the United States of America established the rule of law for ALL citizens of America; and

WHEREAS, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt "articulated Four Freedoms that people "everywhere in the world" ought to enjoy", especially the Freedom from Want and the Freedom from Fear; and

WHEREAS, every member of the military services willingly swore an oath to sacrifice their life to honor the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, defend the laws of the Constitution, and to foster and perpetuate the Four Freedoms of people everywhere in the world; and

WHEREAS, every member of the military services, by swearing an oath to the citizenry of the United States of America, established an unbreakable covenant with all citizens of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, an eligible military service veteran is entitled to and earned benefits from Federal, State, and Local agencies, due to their honorable and faithful service; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of the United States of America endorse and legislated the prohibition of the creation of separate classes of citizens, and hence military service veterans; and

WHEREAS, both the Executive and the Legislative Branches of the Government of the United States of America removed through Executive Order and by passage of law, the policy of "Don't Ask; Don't Tell" (DADT); and

WHEREAS, state of the United States of America, enacted laws protecting same sex unions/marriages; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as an agency of the Federal Government disburses funds as an earned benefit to eligible and qualified veterans, widows, widowers, dependents, and/or survivors; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we make it an executive and legislative priority to:

1. Require VA policies to be changed and updated to implement that any veteran, as a member of a same sex union/marriage, will be eligible for and is entitled to earned benefits and disbursements equal to the earned benefits and disbursements received by any veteran as a member of a marriage; and
2. Require VA policies to be changed and updated to implement that a veteran, as a member of a same sex union/marriage and the veteran subsequently died due to a service connected disability, the surviving partner, regardless of sex, receives benefits and disbursements equal to the benefits and disbursements a surviving spouse receives as a member of a marriage; and
3. Require VA policies to be changed and updated to implement that a veteran, as a member of a same sex union/marriage and the veteran subsequently died due to a non-service connected disability, the surviving partner, regardless of sex, receives benefits and disbursements equal to the benefits and disbursement a surviving spouse receives as a member of a marriage. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 628 (Submitted by the Department of West Virginia)

PRESUMPTIVE HEARING LOSS

WHEREAS, the purpose of this resolution is to seek support of West Virginia's United States Congressional Representatives of House Bill HR 6297 to provide that the hearing loss by many veterans in certain military occupational specialties be declared and assumed the result of their service to America; and

WHEREAS, veterans in those duties involving loud noises were not instructed to protect their hearing, nor was training given of the hazards of losing their hearing. They were not given a hearing examination at the time of release from active duty to determine if they had suffered any loss of hearing; and

WHEREAS, many claims to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for service connection of the loss of hearing have been denied because there was no evidence of record in the Armed Forces showing such loss even though the records indicated that the person worked around loud noises such as jet engines, loud machinery, artillery, demolition and many other specialties; and

WHEREAS, veterans whose duties required them to work in those specialties should be granted service connection for hearing loss on a presumptive basis and be entitled to disability compensation for their loss; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we seek the enactment of legislation by the United States Senate to ensure that those eligible veterans with a hearing loss be declared service connected by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be forwarded to the Congressional Representatives, and The Governor of West Virginia, Earl Ray Tomblin. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 629 (Submitted by the Department of West Virginia)

DEPENDENCY INDEMNITY COMPENSATION FOR SURVIVORS OF
ALL 100 PERCENT SERVICE CONNECTED VETERANS

WHEREAS, the goal of this resolution is to encourage the United States Congress to change the eligibility provision of the law pertaining to Dependency Indemnity Compensation for widows, children and parents of veterans who are rated as 100 percent service connected disabled at the time of death; and

WHEREAS, current law states that a veteran rated 100 percent service connected disabled from date of discharge from active duty is only required to have been rated 100 percent continuously for 5 years in order for the dependents to be eligible for death benefits; and

WHEREAS, a veteran who is rated 100 percent service connected any time after discharge from active duty is required to be 100 percent 10 continuous years to enable the dependents to be eligible for Dependents Indemnity Compensation; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the law should be amended so that all veterans who are rated 100 percent because of service incurred disabilities are treated the same; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW requests Congress to eliminate the requirements that a veteran be rated 100 percent for a certain period of time and approve the granting of Dependency Indemnity Compensation to qualified dependents where the veteran is rated 100 percent from service connected causes since it can be assumed that the veteran's health affected life expectancy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that those claims previously denied because of failing to meet the time limits, be reviewed and death benefits granted where eligible. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 630 (Submitted by the Department of Florida)

SERVICE DISABLED VETERANS CONTRACTING GOALS

WHEREAS, several governmental reports indicate that the majority of Federal Agencies have failed to reach their Three-Percent Service Disabled Veteran Contracting Goals; and

WHEREAS, many Service Disabled Veterans invest time and monies in Federal Government Procurement and gain no return upon the Investment; and

WHEREAS, the Government Agencies and Large Government Prime Contractors are not held accountable and there are no negative consequences for not meeting their Congressional and Executive mandated goals; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress provide oversight and to reduce any Federal Agencies, not meeting the mandated Three-Percent Service Disabled Veteran Owned Business goals, total budget by three-percent; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congressional oversight include looking at the manner in which Federal Agencies award contracts. Large bundled contracts should not be considered meeting these goals. The Standard should be to contact many small businesses; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress enforce the Veterans Administration compliance with Public Law 109-461 Veterans First

Contracting Program and 2013 National Defense Authorization Act to ensure that Service Disabled Veterans receive the opportunity demanded by the American People and their Elected Representatives in Congress. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 631 (Submitted by the Department of Florida)

SERVICE DISABLED VETERANS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WHEREAS, Congress has passed legislation to establish Federal purchasing goals for Service Disabled Veterans Owned Businesses; and

WHEREAS, Service Disabled Veterans often cannot gain access to Federal Contracting, because Federal Contracting Officers do not have "Sole Source" Authority under this legislation; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress enact legislation to allow Federal Agencies the authority to award "Non-Competitive Sole Source" contracts to Service Disabled Veterans Owned Businesses to ensure parity with other designated minority businesses. (Approved)

Resolution No. 632 (Submitted by the Department of Pacific Areas)

INCLUSION OF VETERANS TRAVELING AND RESIDING ABROAD ALL-INCLUSIVE MEDICAL SERVICE UNDER THE FOREIGN MEDICAL PROGRAM (FMP)

WHEREAS, services under the Foreign Medical Program (FMP) are strictly limited to the treatment of service-connected disabilities, regardless of a veteran's VA rating adjudication; and

WHEREAS, at this time current law prevents the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from establishing a VA Fee-Basis Program outside the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Fee Basis Program is solely for veterans receiving non-VA hospital care and medical services in the United States and is not applicable to veterans residing or traveling abroad; and

WHEREAS, reimbursement for a veteran travel under the FMP is limited to Compensation and Pension (C&P) examinations and transportation for a veteran to the nearest medical facility when life-threatening emergencies occur; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the Foreign Medical Program be expanded to provide all inclusive medical services to 100 percent disabled veterans. (Approved as Amended)

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

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 Vice Chairman: Glen M. Gardner, Jr., Past Commander-in-Chief, Texas

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Alabama	Charles Stephens	3128
Arizona	Allen "Gunner" Kent	9972
Arizona	Darlene Tryon	9399
Arizona	Timothy Borland	9972
Arizona	Roger Gowen	7968
California	Mike Maynor	52
Colorado	Ronald Lattin	5061
Colorado	Richard Wellensiek	4171
Connecticut	Ronald Rusakiewicz	9460
Delaware	Paul Phillips	2863
Europe	Peter Mascetti	27
Europe	Herbert Hall	9342
Florida	Daniel Duffy	1966
Florida	Robert Young	10137
Florida	Eugene Perrino	10087
Florida	William Kirsop	8083
Florida	W. Benny Bachand	4287
Georgia	Martha Hurst	6605
Georgia	Richard Knight	9143
Illinois	Joseph Stachon	5220
Illinois	Rick Frank	1461
Indiana	Arthur Fellwock	1114
Indiana	Paul Whitenack	1152
Iowa	John Chidester	817
Kansas	Robert Greene	7397
Kansas	John Muckelbauer	3712
Kentucky	Karle Johnson	7890
Kentucky	Paul Edwards	5839
Louisiana	Larry Minton	1736
Louisiana	Wesley Mitchell	3337
Louisiana	Larry Raymond	8538
Maryland	Paul Kauffman	10078
Massachusetts	Aaron Richardson	697
Massachusetts	Theodore Eaton	2104
Michigan	Robert Weiss	2406
Michigan	Stuart Billey	3087
Michigan	Jerry Newberry	2492
Michigan	Jack Pray	3243
Michigan	David Prohaska	4434
Minnesota	Stephen O'Connor	4114
Missouri	Zach Schwenk	5606

Department	Name	Post No.
Missouri	Roy Sherwood	2866
Missouri	Lawrence Maher	7356
Missouri	Kevin Jones	7356
Missouri	Jimmy Cook	30
Nebraska	David Beran	1504
Nebraska	Roger Broecker	1504
Nevada	Robert Barquist	7385
Nevada	Gilbert Hernandez	2350
New Jersey	Thomas Farrell	3020
New York	Harold Burke	1895
New York	Harold Leavor	9487
North Carolina	Jack Campbell	2423
North Carolina	James Goins	9811
Ohio	Gerald Ward	5713
Ohio	Charles Smith	4510
Ohio	Benjamin Quinn	7883
Oklahoma	Curtis Bohlman, M.D.	1335
Oklahoma	George Greer	9265
Pacific Areas	William Wichmann	727
Pennsylvania	John Getz	3376
South Dakota	Gary Knudson	2038
Texas	Carlos Sustaita	6378
Texas	Lavern Terbl	7873
Texas	Jimmie Cantrell	9168
Texas	Kenneth Burton	9182
Utah	Brent Neilsen	10900
Virginia	Charles Crouch	3150
West Virginia	Robert Kish	4442
West Virginia	Terry Scarbro	4469
Wisconsin	DeWitt Woodworth	1530
Wyoming	Harold Lowe	4343

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Alaska	John Minnick	9365
Arkansas	James Gilbert	4548
Europe	Blane Gish	10506
Florida	Stephen Holland	1689
Florida	Gary Mobbs	4412
Florida	Harry Paul	10069
Florida	Laurence Schatz	3559

Department	Name	Post No.
Idaho	Donald Riegel	889
Illinois	Robert Crider	2801
Illinois	Jeffrey Hastings	805
Illinois	William Phillips	4079
Indiana	Jerry Walling	2689
Iowa	Jerry Black	839
Kansas	Dallas Eubanks	56
Kansas	Robert Greene	7397
Kansas	John Stang	3147
Kentucky	James Curry	11139
Latin Amer/Carib	Jose Claudio	3822
Massachusetts	Edgar Docherty	1526
Massachusetts	Clifford Olson	8699
Massachusetts	Paul Spera	144
Michigan	Matthew David	423
Michigan	Kirk Kennedy	701
Michigan	Jerry Newberry	2492
Minnesota	Terrance Pieper	295
Mississippi	Johnnie Richard	2539
Mississippi	Danny Williams	3685
Missouri	Earl Boyer	1831
Montana	Gary Race	4725
Nebraska	Rolland Hild	8334
Nevada	Arthur Noble	2668
New Hampshire	Gregory Lynch	1088
New Jersey	Patrick Botbyl	1593
New Mexico	Richard Nutt	7686
North Carolina	William Hall	8013
Ohio	Gary Perkins	7496
Oregon	Rick Higgins	4039
Pacific Areas	Gerald Kraus	1509
Rhode Island	Roger Lavoie	5392
South Carolina	Richard Bell	4262
South Dakota	Dennis Sharp	2038
Tennessee	Kenneth O`Connor	7175
Texas	John Lozanski	5076
Texas	Robert Martinez	8111
Texas	Richard Shawver	3893
Virginia	Michael Boehme	9808
Wisconsin	Lemuel Ellis	7591
Wisconsin	Eric Mortensen	1391

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Alabama	John Schmitz	5162
Alabama	Harry Smith	3568
Alaska	David Lemelin	10029
Arizona	Kenneth Marshall	8053
Arkansas	Michael Griffin	8671
Arkansas	Ruben Tamariz	2278
California	Philemon Velasquez	5059
California	Dale Smith	3783
California	Russell Eseltine	2111
California	Selso Cavazos	4647
Colorado	Donald Smith	101
Connecticut	Richard Di Federico	7330
Delaware	Lawrence Waters	475
Delaware	John Morrow	475
Delaware	Gary Frederick	2863
Dist. of Col.	Anthony Rich	1085
Dist. of Col.	James Wilson	7358
Europe	George Gilgore	10614
Florida	Gary Godard	2093
Florida	Robert Poucher	8083
Georgia	R. D. Smith	4346
Georgia	Charles Dobbins	5080
Hawaii	George Barlett	10154
Idaho	Robert Jones	3012
Idaho	John Crotinger	3520
Illinois	Michael De Ross	8821
Illinois	Philip Maughan	3873
Indiana	Donald Taylor	6978
Indiana	Michael Smith	2689
Indiana	Eric Billman	6904
Indiana	Terry Bruning	2839
Iowa	Darrell Blasberg	2208
Iowa	Richard Davis	788
Iowa	Dennis Abel	1797
Kansas	Robert Greene	7397
Kansas	Charles Shoemaker	12003
Kansas	John Muckelbauer	3712
Kansas	Daniel Parker	852
Kansas	David Cuba	6654
Kentucky	Garry Smethers	1084
Latin Amer/Carib	Jose Pabon	12057
Louisiana	Elvin Bass	3337
Maine	Kevin Woodward	11553
Maine	Arthur Roy	1603
Maryland	Douglas MacArthur	5337
Massachusetts	George Murray	1018
Massachusetts	Ralph Masciulli	144
Michigan	Jerry Newberry	2492

Department	Name	Post No.
Michigan	James Van Hauter	4553
Michigan	Robert Williams	1137
Michigan	William Coats	701
Minnesota	Francis Sutherland	246
Minnesota	Donald Nix	5518
Minnesota	Michael Pierce	3723
Minnesota	Lawrence Grindland	295
Mississippi	Charles Singleterry	3036
Missouri	Freddie Dunn	6278
Missouri	Kenneth Davis	5789
Montana	William Edgar	4042
Nebraska	John Iossi	3704
Nevada	Gerald Franco	2350
Nevada	Ronald Wilson	2313
New Hampshire	Jorg Dreusicke	10722
New Hampshire	David Ouellette	10722
New Jersey	Francis Nelson	7164
New Jersey	George Lisicki	2314
New Jersey	William Young	370
New York	Walter Zincio	9593
North Carolina	Douglas Blevins	7034
North Carolina	John Harris	4286
North Carolina	Michael Edwards	2417
North Dakota	Wayne Paulson	753
North Dakota	Steven Volk	1868
Ohio	Robert Kroeger	3360
Ohio	Merton Compton	7424
Oklahoma	Robert Clark	4876
Oklahoma	Gordon Wheeler	9969
Oregon	Roger Ege	1909
Pacific Areas	Laurence Lyons	10216
Pennsylvania	Dwight Fuhrman	8896
Rhode Island	James Boardman	5392
Rhode Island	Joseph Cerrito	8018
South Carolina	Janet Chisolm-Richard	3433
South Carolina	Frank Fogner	10804
South Dakota	Dick Pickering	4726
South Dakota	Keith Blume	3442
Tennessee	William Smith	7175
Tennessee	James Simpson	7175
Tennessee	Curtis Hudson	3380
Texas	Norman Macey	4816
Texas	Robert Dickerson	9186
Utah	Elmer Inman	6395
Vermont	Allston Gilmond	6689
Vermont	John Boardman	6689
Virginia	David Kipfinger	2820
Virginia	Joe Martin	1827
Virginia	Tom Snook	8644

Department	Name	Post No.
Washington	Alger Bragg	224
Washington	James Daly	224
West Virginia	James Kirby	629
Wisconsin	John Kleinmaus	1393
Wisconsin	William Knudson	1866
Wyoming	Charles Sutter	4797
Wyoming	Earl Sellers	4343

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Arkansas	Michael Nuckolls	2330
California	Alexander Brown	1512
California	Arthur Napiwocki	1614
Colorado	Charles Watkins	3917
Connecticut	John Hollis	2083
Dist. of Col.	Richard Kottemann	284
Dist. of Col.	Herman Salley	2979
Florida	Eugene Manfrey	6827
Florida	Julius Sallette	1966
Florida	Glen Tilley	2391
Georgia	James Rogers	2785
Hawaii	Joseph Davis	3391
Illinois	Russell Rieke	5694
Illinois	Jules Spindler	4549
Indiana	Jerry Blake	1114
Iowa	David Christensen	817
Iowa	Larry Larson	839
Kansas	Ray Calore	846
Louisiana	Thomas Kijak	5951
Maine	Andre Dumas	9389
Maryland	Eugene Stewart	5838
Massachusetts	Roland Gendron	6643
Massachusetts	Richard Peterson	1012

Department	Name	Post No.
Michigan	Gerald Gorski	6250
Michigan	Roy Hamilton	9656
Minnesota	David Adams	1782
Minnesota	Charles Dresen	6208
Minnesota	John Staum	9625
Mississippi	William Long	4302
Missouri	Debra Anderson	7356
Missouri	Paul Frampton	11290
Missouri	Robert Harmon	1831
Nebraska	Sammy De John	8334
Nevada	Paul Eades	8660
New Hampshire	Paul Chevalier	168
New Hampshire	John Smart	483
New Jersey	Albert Bucchi	3020
New Jersey	Ernest Cuff	1795
New York	James McNally	53
North Carolina	Michael Ayscue	2417
North Carolina	Billy Cameron	5631
North Dakota	John Hanson	1874
Ohio	David Mahlie	3035
Ohio	Daniel Paumier	3761
Ohio	Bradley Price	1516
Oklahoma	Harlan Bjorgo	7322
Oregon	Kenneth Kraft	1324
Pennsylvania	Peter Hook	6393
Rhode Island	Frank Lightowler	6342
South Carolina	Paul Slater	10804
South Dakota	Marvin Czerwonka	1273
South Dakota	Russel Dramstad	1776
South Dakota	Duwayne Mack	750
South Dakota	Todd Struwe	2118
Tennessee	Sarah Howell	5669
Texas	Bethina Hawkins	3904
Texas	N. F. Layne	8560
Texas	Tashawnya McCullough	4676
Texas	Arthur Richards	4010
Texas	John Spahr	8787
Utah	Norman Nelson	1695
Virginia	Diane Mofield	3219
Virginia	Harold Roesch	3219
West Virginia	Thomas Anderson	4442
Wisconsin	Wilfred Johnson	10544
Wisconsin	Bruce Sorensen	7534
Wyoming	James Pedersen	2673

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National Veterans Service
Aleks Morosky, Senior Legislative Associate, National
Legislative Service

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National Veterans Service
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Veterans Service
Ryan Galluci, Deputy Director, National Legislative Service

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Alabama	Lorenzo Landrum	10366
Alaska	Scott Griffith	9785
Arizona	Dennis Dole	769
Arizona	James Katzenberger	285
Arkansas	Fred Steube	9095
Arkansas	Todd Willey	1322
California	Mark Barrett	5477
California	Paul Gonzalez	2967
California	Joseph Guest	2805
California	Buford Maples	5985
Colorado	James Mauck	2601
Connecticut	Aleksandr Morosky	7788

Department	Name	Post No.
Connecticut	Gary Waterhouse	10251
Delaware	Jerry Brooks	2863
Dist. of Col.	William Bradshaw	284
Dist. of Col.	Clifford Fields	2979
Europe	Dale Nagan	10708
Florida	Patrick Love	8203
Florida	J. Doug Morris	3559
Florida	Paul Nigara	1689
Florida	Kenneth Thie	10094
Georgia	William Sandberg	3679
Georgia	Joel Willis	5290
Hawaii	Randall Mau	2875
Hawaii	Maria Va`a-Igafo	3391
Idaho	William Heyob	63
Illinois	Paul Kallembach	2287
Illinois	Richard Luemen	5220
Illinois	Robert Migalich	4763
Illinois	Barry Walter	5220
Indiana	Johnny Capps	6653
Indiana	Michael Harrell	2689
Indiana	Jerell Herston	6978
Iowa	Todd Jacobus	9127
Iowa	Richard Knerr	1565
Kansas	J. T. Plummer	8873
Kansas	Larry Rowilson	2981
Kentucky	Joe Hunt	12022
Kentucky	Randall Webster	5837
Latin Amer/Carib	Pablo Cruz	12057
Louisiana	Alfred Leger	6720
Maine	Raymond Lupo	4633
Maryland	Raymond Kelley	160
Maryland	Richard Koel	2916
Maryland	Jack Lewis	194
Maryland	Anthony Navickas	521
Massachusetts	Charles Brunaccini	1012
Massachusetts	Walter Gansenberg	834
Massachusetts	Ronald Patalano	529
Massachusetts	Eric Segundo	3236
Michigan	Daniel Crocker	796
Michigan	George Wygant	701
Minnesota	Thomas Hanson	1639
Minnesota	Robert Posch	1757
Minnesota	James Tuorila	428
Minnesota	Leon Ulferts	3915
Mississippi	Raybon Windham	9122
Missouri	Donald Briggs	280
Missouri	Philip Duncan	7356
Missouri	Clifford Mitchem	6274
Montana	Robert Schwegel	6786

Department	Name	Post No.
Nebraska	David Brown	1251
Nebraska	James Pierce	5547
Nebraska	Eric Williams	7102
Nevada	Marvin Alig	10047
Nevada	Denise Estes	10053
New Hampshire	Paul Lloyd	1631
New Jersey	Bernard Mc Elwee	10184
New Mexico	Allan Kuchinsky	7686
New Mexico	Fred Ortiz	5890
New York	James Durkin	7414
New York	Thomas Todaro	53
North Carolina	Frances Crawford	10
North Carolina	Cleophus Summers	1134
North Dakota	Joy Mikyska	7564
Ohio	Francis Clendenen	9473
Ohio	Robert Critell	9936
Ohio	Robert Giannone	3383
Ohio	Wayne Hutchison	7670
Ohio	John Wasylik	2529
Oklahoma	Micheal Callahan	577
Oklahoma	Michael Devenitch	8706
Oregon	Bert Key	4273
Oregon	Jackie Zule	922
Pacific Areas	Patrick Higgins	10216
Pacific Areas	Robert Zaher	2485
Pennsylvania	Ruth Fairchild	315
Pennsylvania	John Foster	2
Rhode Island	Ginamarie Doherty	4487
Rhode Island	Ryan Gallucci	152
Rhode Island	Allen Wagonblott	5392
South Carolina	Austin Clark	11079
South Carolina	Daniel Thompson	4262
South Dakota	George Arends	628
South Dakota	Thomas Hafner	3298
Tennessee	David Jungquist	9851
Tennessee	William Maillet	7175
Tennessee	John Scott	4848
Texas	Sandra Covin	6008
Texas	David Kuertz	3904
Utah	Phillip Dunne	2628
Vermont	Kevin Stuart	2571
Vermont	Ronald Tallman	790
Virginia	Tommy Hines	9954
Virginia	Gerald Manar	609
Virginia	Mark Marth	1503
Washington	Carlos Almeda	1263
Washington	Bobby Clements	91
Washington	Jerry Herker	3386
West Virginia	Charles Haney	7048

Department	Name	Post No.
West Virginia	Charles Lyons	9097
West Virginia	Melvin Reed	573
Wisconsin	David Goeldner	1865
Wisconsin	Philip Jasinski	2895
Wyoming	Michael Stark	4343

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Chairman: Bertha Gripp, Post 10008, Arizona

COMMITTEE ON CONVENTION RULES

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Vice Chairman: George R. Cramer, Past Commander-in-Chief, Illinois

Department	Name	Post No.
Missouri	Kevin C. Jones	7356
Michigan	David E. Prohaska	7674
Missouri	Zach Schwenk	5606