

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 97TH NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE
DIVISION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

TRANSMITTING

A FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE 97TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, HELD IN BALTIMORE, MARYLAND FROM SEPTEMBER 1-3, 2015, AND A REPORT ON THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR PRECEDING THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO 36 U.S.C. 10101(b)(1); PUBLIC LAW 105-225, 10101(b)(1); (112 STAT. 1283)



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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, March 10, 2016.

Hon. PAUL RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: In compliance with current public law we herewith transmit for printing as a House document a financial statement and independent audit of The American Legion, proceedings of our 97th annual National Convention held in Baltimore, Maryland from September 1, 2, and 3, 2015 and a report on our organization's activities for the year preceding the convention.

For God and Country,

IAN DE PLANQUE,
Director, National Legislative Division.

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FOREWORD

This booklet has been prepared for the information of members of The American Legion. It has come to be known as the Summary of Proceedings of the National Convention for the current year. It is a comprehensive résumé of what took place at the Ninety-Seventh Annual National Convention in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1–3, 2015.

The final report of the national organization for the period ending December 31, 2014, and balance sheet as of December 31, 2014, and surplus analysis, January 1, 2014, to December 31, 2014, are included in the Summary.

To make a quick distribution, speed has been necessary. Every precaution has been taken to avoid errors, but some may have occurred in the rush of Convention events and the haste of editing and printing.

Permission is hereby given to quote from this Summary without further consent. However, because of the nature of our resolution process, I urge that the full text of any *resolve clause(s)* be used when a quotation from a resolution is required for publication.

Daniel S. Wheeler
National Adjutant

Note: At various times, the national vice commanders, as follows, presided over the Convention sessions, when called upon by the presiding officer, in accordance with the Uniform Code of Procedure as shown in the verbatim proceedings: Douglas C. Haggan, France; Paul O. Sanford, Kansas; Richard W. Neville, North Carolina; William R. Bryant, Virginia; Gerald L. Jacobs, Wyoming.

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND NATIONAL OFFICERS THE AMERICAN LEGION, 1919 to Date

Note: In the following list it should be noted that the terms of each group of officers expire with that particular convention under which they are listed.

**indicates deceased*

HONORARY COMMANDERS

General of the Armies of the United States John J. Pershing*

Marshall of France Ferdinand Foch*

PARIS CAUCUS

Paris, France, March 15 - 17, 1919

Temporary Chairman: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1955 and 1958 National Convention)

Permanent Chairman: Bennett C. Clark*, Missouri (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1926 National Convention)

Chairman Pro Tempore: Thomas W. Miller*, Delaware (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1968 National Convention)

Secretary: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1955 National Convention)

At the Paris Caucus an Executive Committee was elected to complete arrangements, the chairman and secretary of which were:

Chairman: Milton J. Foreman*, Illinois (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1921 National Convention)

Secretary: George A. White*, Oregon

ST. LOUIS CAUCUS

St. Louis, Mo., May 8 - 10, 1919

Temporary Chairman: Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. *, New York (Voted title of Past National Commander at 1949 National Convention)

Permanent Chairman: Henry D. Lindsley*, Texas (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1919 National Convention)

Vice Chairmen: John J. Sullivan*, Washington; Fred Humphrey*, New Mexico; P.C. Calhoun*, Connecticut (Voted titles of Past National Vice Commanders at 1933 National Convention)

Secretary: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1955 National Convention)

Chaplain: Thomas H. Wiles*, Colorado

1st NATIONAL CONVENTION

Minneapolis, Minn., Nov. 10 - 12, 1919

Chairman: Henry D. Lindsley*, Texas, Past National Commander

Vice Chairman: Bennett C. Clark*, Missouri

Secretary: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania

Treasurer: Gasper G. Bacon*, Massachusetts

Chaplain: Thomas H. Wiles*, Colorado

2nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Cleveland, Ohio, Sept. 27 - 29, 1920

Commander: Franklin D'Olier*, Pennsylvania

Vice Commanders: James O'Brien*,

California; Allan A. Tukey*,

Nebraska; Joyce S. Lewis*, Minnesota;

Alden B. Chambers*, Massachusetts;

William Follett*, Oregon

Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington

Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana

Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts

Chaplain: Rev. Francis A. Kelly*, New York

Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

3rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Kansas City, Mo., Oct. 31 - Nov. 2, 1921

Commander: Frederic W. Galbraith, Jr. *, (died June 9); Succeeded by John G.

Emery*, Michigan

Milton Foreman*, Illinois, Past National Commander

Vice Commanders: John G. Emery*,

Michigan; Thomas Goldingay*, New Jersey;

Claudius G. Pendill*, Wisconsin; James G.

Scrugham*, Nevada; E. Jackson Winslett*, Alabama

Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington

Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana

Chaplain: Rev. John W. Inzer*, Tennessee

Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts

Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

4th NATIONAL CONVENTION

New Orleans, La., Oct. 16 - 20, 1922

Commander: Hanford MacNider*, Iowa

Vice Commanders: H. Nelson Jackson*, Vermont; George L. Berry*, Tennessee; Raymond O. Brackett*, Massachusetts; Charles H. Kendrick*, California; John A. McCormack*, Colorado
 Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington
 Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
 Chaplain: Rev. Earl A. Blackman*, Kansas
 Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
 Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

5th NATIONAL CONVENTION

San Francisco, Calif., Oct. 16 - 19, 1923
 Commander: Alvin M. Owsley*, Texas
 Vice Commanders: Edward J. Barrett*, Wisconsin; Watson B. Miller*, District of Columbia; E. Erle Cocke, Sr.*, Georgia; Robert O. Blood*, New Hampshire; Chiles P. Plummer*, Wyoming
 Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington
 Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
 Chaplain: Rev. William P. O'Connor*, Ohio
 Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
 Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

6th NATIONAL CONVENTION

St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 15 - 19, 1924
 Commander: John R. Quinn*, California
 Vice Commanders: Lester F. Albert*, Idaho; Celora M. Stoddard*, Arizona; William B. Healey*, Pennsylvania; F. Ryan Duffy*, Wisconsin;
 Dr. I. Thurman Mann*, North Carolina
 Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington
 Resigned 2-1-24; Succeeded by Russell G. Creviston*, Indiana
 Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
 Chaplain: Rev. Ezra Clemens*, Minnesota
 Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
 Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

7th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Omaha, Neb., Oct. 5 - 9, 1925
 Commander: James A. Drain*, Washington
 Vice Commanders: Frank H. McFarland*, Kansas; Eugene P. Armstrong*, Connecticut; A. L. Perry, Panama; Peyton H. Hoge, Jr*, Kentucky; William Stern*, North Dakota
 Adjutant: Russell G. Creviston*, Indiana, Resigned; Succeeded by James F. Barton*, Iowa
 Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
 Chaplain: Rev. Joseph M. Lonergan*, Illinois
 Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
 Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

8th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Philadelphia, Pa., Oct. 11 - 15, 1926

Commander: John R. McQuigg*, Ohio
 Bennett C. Clark*, Missouri, Past National Commander

Vice Commanders: Joseph Y. Cheney*, Florida; Hughes B. Davis*, Oklahoma; Vincent A. Carroll*, Pennsylvania; Raymond B. Littlefield*, Rhode Island; Judge James A. Howell*, Utah
 Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
 Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
 Chaplain: Rev. William E. Patrick*, California
 Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
 Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

9th NATIONAL CONVENTION

New York, N.Y., Oct. 18, 1927
 Paris, France, Sept. 19 - 22, 1927
 Commander: Howard P. Savage*, Illinois
 Vice Commanders: C. Thomas Busha, Jr. *, Montana; Stafford King*, Minnesota; John G. Sims*, Tennessee; John E. Curtiss*, Nebraska; Dr. John G. Towne*, Maine
 Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
 Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
 Chaplain: Rev. Joseph L.N. Wolfe*, Pennsylvania
 Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
 Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

10th NATIONAL CONVENTION

San Antonio, Texas, Oct. 8 - 11, 1928
 Commander: Edward E. Spafford*, New York
 Vice Commanders: John T. Raftis*, Washington; Ralph T. O'Neil*, Kansas; Paul R. Younts*, North Carolina; Dan Spurlock*, Louisiana; John M. Henry*, Minnesota.
 Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
 Chaplain: Rev. Gill Robb Wilson*, New Jersey
 Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
 Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
 Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois

11th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Louisville, Ky., Sept. 30 – Oct. 2, 1929
 Commander: Paul V. McNutt*, Indiana
 Vice Commanders: Lawrence E. McGann, Jr. *, Illinois; George W. Malone*, Nevada; Edward L. White*, Connecticut; Miller C. Foster*, South Carolina; Walton D. Hood*, Texas
 Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
 Chaplain: Rabbi Lee J. Levinger*, Delaware
 Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
 Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
 Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois

12th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Boston, Mass., Oct. 6 - 9, 1930
Commander: O.L. Bodenhamer*, Arkansas
Vice Commanders: Milt D. Campbell*, Ohio; John J. Dugan*, Delaware; Morton M. David*, Colorado; Frank Schoble, Jr. *, Pennsylvania; Willis M. Brewer*, Michigan
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rev. George F. Kettell, D.D. *, New York
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois

13th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Detroit, Mich., Sept. 21 - 24, 1931
Commander: Ralph T. O'Neil*, Kansas
Vice Commanders: Bert S. Hyland*, Vermont; Roland B. Howell*, Louisiana; Harry B. Henderson, Jr. *, Wyoming; Dr. James A. Duff*, West Virginia; Dr. Neal D. Williams*, Missouri
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rev. Joseph N. Barnett*, Wisconsin
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois to 6-24-31; Succeeded by Acting Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

14th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Portland, Ore., Sept. 12 - 15, 1932
Commander: Henry L. Stevens, Jr. *, North Carolina
Vice Commanders: Richard F. Paul*, Massachusetts; Forrest G. Cooper*, Mississippi; Roy L. Cook*, New Mexico; Frank N. Brooks*, Washington; Harold L. Plummer*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rev. Harris A. Darche*, Illinois
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Remster A. Bingham*, Indiana

15th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Chicago, Ill., Oct. 2 - 5, 1933
Commander: Louis A. Johnson*, West Virginia
Vice Commanders: Russell Meadows*, Arizona; Robert D. Flory*, Nebraska; William E. Easterwood, Jr. *, Texas; John J. Maloney*, Maine; Chas. A. Mills*, Florida
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Irwin Q. Wood*, Idaho
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana

Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts (died January 22, 1933); Succeeded by Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Judge Advocate: Remster A. Bingham*, Indiana

16th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Miami, Fla., Oct. 22 - 25, 1934
Commander: Edward A. Hayes*, Illinois
Vice Commanders: Charles R. Mabey*, Utah; Robert L. Gordon*, Arkansas; Miguel Munoz*, Puerto Rico; Ed W. Carruth*, Kansas; Charles L. Woolley*, Rhode Island
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Robert J. White*, Massachusetts
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Remster A. Bingham*, Indiana

17th NATIONAL CONVENTION

St. Louis, Mo., Sept. 23 - 26, 1935
Commander: Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. *, California
Vice Commanders: Daniel J. Doherty*, Massachusetts; Harold J. Warner*, Oregon; John K. Kennelly*, North Dakota; Milo J. Warner*, Ohio; Quemoy Melton*, Georgia
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Dr. Park W. Huntington*, Delaware
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: James A. Drain*, Washington
Judge Advocate: James A. Drain*, Washington

18th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Cleveland, Ohio, Sept. 21 - 24, 1936
Commander: Ray Murphy*, Iowa
Vice Commanders: Raymond F. Gates*, Connecticut; Dr. I.E. Whitlock*, Florida; Oscar W. Worth wine*, Idaho; Dr. F. Whitney Godwin*, Virginia; Louis R. Proust*, Wyoming
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Thomas D. Kennedy*, Missouri
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

19th NATIONAL CONVENTION

New York, N.Y., Sept. 20 - 23, 1937
Commander: Harry W. Colmery*, Kansas
Vice Commanders: Salvatore A. Capodice*, California; Leo A. Temmey*, South Dakota; Leonard Sisk*, Tennessee; J. Fred Johnson, Jr. *, Alabama; Jack Crowley*, Vermont

Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Bryan H. Keathley, D.D.*, Texas
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

20th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Los Angeles, Calif., Sept. 19 - 22, 1938
Commander: Daniel J. Doherty*, Massachusetts
Vice Commanders: Drury M. Phillips*, Texas; Phil M. Conley*, West Virginia; Harry M. Johnson*, Montana; James F. Daniel, Jr. *, South Carolina; James R. Mahaffy*, Hawaii
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Frank J. Lawler*, Illinois
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

21st NATIONAL CONVENTION

Chicago, Ill., Sept. 25 - 28, 1939
Commander: Stephen F. Chadwick*, Washington
Vice Commanders: Edward J. Quinn*, Maine; Charles W. Crush*, Virginia; Earl T. Ross*, Nevada; James T. Crawley*, Mississippi; Henry C. Oakey*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Jerome L. Fritsche*, Nebraska
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

22nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Boston, Mass., Sept. 23 - 26, 1940
Commander: Raymond J. Kelly*, Michigan
Vice Commanders: Leo E. Ray*, New Hampshire; Charles Q. Kelly*, Arkansas; Matthew J. Murphy*, Illinois; James B. Fitzgerald*, Maryland; H. Elwyn Davis*, Colorado
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Patrick N. McDermott*, Iowa
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

23rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Milwaukee, Wis., Sept. 15 to 18, 1941
Commander: Milo J. Warner*, Ohio
Vice Commanders: Erwin A. Froyd*, Wyoming; James L. McCrory*, Nebraska; Harold P. Redden*, Massachusetts; Edward R. Stirling*, Pennsylvania;

Alcee S. Legendre*, Louisiana
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Brigadier William G. Gilks*, Texas
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

24th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Kansas City, Mo., Sept. 19-21, 1942
Commander: Lynn U. Stambaugh*, North Dakota
Vice Commanders: W. C. Sawyer*, Arizona; William DeLacy Allen*, Georgia; Charles E. Booth*, West Virginia; V. M. Armstrong*, Indiana; John F. Sullivan*, Vermont
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Frederick J. Halloran*, New Jersey
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

25th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Omaha, Neb., Sept. 21 - 23, 1943
Commander: Roane Waring*, Tennessee
Vice Commanders: John T. Batten*, Alabama; Arthur J. Connell*, Connecticut; Fred G. Fraser*, District of Columbia; Herman H. Lark*, Missouri; Jefferson Davis Atwood*, New Mexico
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas, (died July 25); Succeeded by Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan, Acting Adjutant
Chaplain: Dr. Paul De Forrest Mortimore*, Idaho
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

26th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Chicago, Ill., Sept. 18 - 20, 1944
Commander: Warren H. Atherton*, California
Vice Commanders: Martin V. Coffey*, Ohio; E.A. Littlefield*, Utah; Robert 'Roy' McMillan*, North Carolina; Edward Al Mulrooney*, Delaware; Hector G. Staples*, Maine
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. John F. McManus*, Kansas
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

27th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Chicago, Ill., Nov. 18 - 21, 1945

Commander: Edward N. Scheiberling*, New York
Vice Commanders: Bascom F. Jones*, Tennessee; Frank E. McCaffrey*, Rhode Island; Dan M. McDade*, Oregon; Ray S. Pierson*, Kansas; William P. Shadoan*, Kentucky
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. DeWitt C. Mallory*, Florida
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

28th NATIONAL CONVENTION

San Francisco, Calif., Sept. 30 – Oct. 4, 1946
Commander: John Stelle *, Illinois
Vice Commanders: R. Graham Huntington*, New Jersey; Fred LaBoon*, Oklahoma; Sam L. Latimer, Jr. *, South Carolina; H. Dudley Swim*, Idaho;
Jeremiah Twomey*, Massachusetts
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Edward J. Smith*, Iowa.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana, (died 7-13-45); Succeeded by Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

29th NATIONAL CONVENTION

New York, N.Y., Aug. 28 – 31, 1947
Commander: Paul H. Griffith*, Pennsylvania
Vice Commanders: Joseph W. Brown*, New Hampshire; Martin B. Buckner*, Michigan; Richard C. Cadwallader*, Louisiana; Ernest H. Dervishian*, Virginia; Edward J. Sharkey*, California
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Arthur L. Rustad*, Minnesota
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

30th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Miami, Fla., Oct. 18 - 20, 1948
Commander: James F. O'Neil*, New Hampshire
Vice Commanders: LeRoy William Barns*, South Dakota; Albert A. Cree*, Vermont; Richard B. Ott*, Washington; Myron R. Renick*, West Virginia;
Joe W. White*, Georgia
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Frank L. Harrington*, Montana
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

31st NATIONAL CONVENTION

Philadelphia, Pa., Aug. 29 – Sept. 1, 1949
Commander: S. Perry Brown*, Texas
Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. *, (NY), Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: James Lane*, (AL); Leonard W. Moody*, (AR); James Annin*, (MT); Walter E. Alessandroni*, (PA); Edward J. Kelly*, (CT)
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, (NE).
Chaplain: Rev. Thomas Grice*, (CA)
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, (AL)
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, (IN)
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, (IN)

32nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Los Angeles, Calif., Oct. 9 – 12, 1950
Commander: George N. Craig*, (IN)
Vice Commanders: Milton G. Boock*, (MN); David H. Fleisher*, (MO); Frank E. Lowe*, Maine; J. E. Martie*, (NV); Dr. D. R. Perry*, (NC)
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Edward J. Carney*, O.S.A., Massachusetts
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

33rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Miami, Fla., Oct. 15 – 18, 1951
Commander: Erle Cocke, Jr. *, Georgia
Vice Commanders: Joe H. Adams*, Florida; Herbert J. Jacobi*, District of Columbia; Felix Pogliano*, Colorado; Lewis K. Gough*, California; Fred C. Bramlage*, Kansas
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rabbi David Lefkowitz*, Louisiana
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

34th NATIONAL CONVENTION

New York, N.Y., Aug. 25 – 28, 1952
Commander: Donald R. Wilson*, West Virginia
Vice Commanders: Adolph F. Bremer*, Minnesota; Frank R. Kelley*, Massachusetts; Thomas E. Paradine*, New York; Oscar B. Rohiff*, Wyoming;
Audley H. Ward*, South Carolina
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Olaf G. Birkeland*, Wisconsin
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

35th NATIONAL CONVENTION

St. Louis, Mo., Aug. 31 – Sept. 3, 1953
Commander: Lewis K. Gough*, California
Vice Commanders: William R. Bourdon*, Arizona; Lyon W. Brandon*, Mississippi; Wilbur C. Daniel*, Virginia; Harry V. Groome*, New Jersey;
J. Addington Wagner*, Michigan
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. John E. Duffy*, Ohio
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

36th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Washington, D.C., Aug. 30 – Sept. 2, 1954
Commander: Arthur J. Connell*, Connecticut
Vice Commanders: John A. High*, New Hampshire; Dr. Deward H. Reed*, New Mexico; Truman C. Wold*, North Dakota; Thomas W. Bird*, North Carolina; Herbert M. Walker*, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Dr. Tom B. Clark*, Oklahoma
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

37th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Miami, Fla., Oct. 10 – 13, 1955
Commander: Seaborn P. Collins*, New Mexico
Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: Leonard L. Jackson*, Louisiana; Patrick H. Mangan*, Jr., Vermont; Howard C. Kingdom*, Ohio; Dr. Carl J. Rees*, Delaware; Robert L. Shelby*, Utah
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Albert J. Hoffman*, Iowa
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

38th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Los Angeles, Calif., Sept. 3 – 6, 1956
Commander: J. Addington Wagner*, Michigan
Vice Commanders; Guy Stone*, Georgia; John H. Van Horn*, Alaska; L. Everett Page*, Texas; Gilman H. Stordock*, Wisconsin; James V. Day*, Maine (resigned Jan. 1, 1956); Succeeded by William J. Holliman*, District of Columbia
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska (resigned); succeeded by E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming

Chaplain: Rev. Joseph MacCarroll*, New Jersey
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

39th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Atlantic City, N.J., Sept. 16 – 19, 1957
Commander: W. C. 'Dan' Daniel*, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Gaylor M. Brown*, Iowa; George T. Lewis*, Jr., Tennessee; Carl R. Moser*, Oregon; John E. Stay*, Pennsylvania; J. Edward Walter*, Maryland
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Bernard W. Gerdon*, Indiana
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

40th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Chicago, Ill., Sept. 1 – 4, 1958
Commander: John S. Gleason, Jr., Illinois
Vice Commanders: William A. Cottrell*, Hawaii; Ramon R. Guas*, Puerto Rico; Harry W. Miller*, West Virginia; Leo A. Lemos*, Rhode Island; Isadore E. Levine*, Indiana
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Feltham S. James*, South Carolina
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

41st NATIONAL CONVENTION

Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 24 – 27, 1959
Commander: Preston J. Moore*, Oklahoma
Vice Commanders: C. D. DeLoach*, District of Columbia; John W. Collins*, Pennsylvania; James B. Kerrigan*, Missouri; Robert Charles Smith*, Louisiana; James C. Bangs*, Idaho
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. John J. Twiss*, Massachusetts
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

42nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Miami Beach, Fla., Oct. 15 – 20, 1960
Commander: Martin B. McKneally*, New York
Vice Commanders: William A. Brennan, Jr., Indiana; A. Layman Harman*, South Carolina; Nate V. Keller*, Minnesota; (died 7-25-60); Succeeded by Irven Frank

Gianotti*, Minnesota (appointed 9-14-60); Willard W. Brandt*, North Dakota; Charles McGonegal*, California; (died 1-27-60); Succeeded by Corydon T. Hill*, California (appointed 5-4-60)
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rabbi Robert I. Kahn* D.H.L., Texas
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

43rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Denver, Colo., Sept. 9 – 14, 1961
Commander: William R. Burke*, California
Vice Commanders: George K. Walker*, Massachusetts; James M. Wagoner*, Ohio; Vincent J. Maxheim*, Iowa; Dr. Harry H. Kretzler*, Washington;
R. C. Godwin*, North Carolina
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. William H. Moss*, Tennessee
Historian: Glenn B. Hoover*, Iowa
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

44th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Las Vegas, Nev., Oct. 5 – 11, 1962
Commander: Charles L. Bacon*, Missouri
Vice Commanders: Walter W. Barnard*, Montana; Edward T. Hoak*, Pennsylvania; Wilson H. Morrison*, Michigan; J. Milton Patrick*, Oklahoma;
Edward Wysocki*, New Jersey
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Robert G. Keating*, Connecticut
Historian: Earl David Young*, Colorado
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

45th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Miami Beach, Fla., Sept. 6 – 12, 1963
Commander: James E. Powers*, Georgia
Vice Commanders: Harold D. Beaton*, District of Columbia; James W. Doon*, New Hampshire; Claude A. Hamilton*, South Dakota; Paschal C. Reese*, Florida; Victor F. Whittlesea*, Nevada
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rabbi Albert M. Shulman*, Indiana
Historian: H. Armand de Masi*, Italy
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana

Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

46th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Dallas, Texas, Sept. 18 – 24, 1964
Commander: Daniel F. Foley*, Minnesota
Vice Commanders: Earl D. Franklin, Jr. *, Colorado; Emilio S. Iglesias*, Vermont; Garland D. Murphy, Jr. *, M.D., Arkansas; George Emory Sipple*, Wisconsin; Harry Wright*, Mexico
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. John J. Howard*, Virginia
Historian: H. Armand de Masi*, Italy
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

47th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Portland, Ore., Aug. 20 – 26, 1965
Commander: Donald E. Johnson*, Iowa
Vice Commanders: David Aronberg*, Kentucky; Herbert D. Black*, South Carolina; Ward W. Husted*, Wyoming; Edward H. Lynch, Jr. *, Connecticut; Joseph Paul*, Michigan
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Morris N. Dummet*, Louisiana
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

48th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Washington, D.C., Aug. 30 – Sept. 1, 1966
Commander: L. Eldon James*, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Dr. A. R. Choppin*, Louisiana; William E. Galbraith*, Nebraska; Robert O. Phillips*, Philippines; William J. Rogers*, Maine; Tom Soleng *, Arizona
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming (died 4-21-67); Succeeded by Earnest N. Schmit*, North Dakota (Appointed 5-4-67)
Chaplain: Rev. Alfred C. Thompson*, New York
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

49th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Boston, Mass., Aug. 25 – 31, 1967
Commander: John E. Davis*, North Dakota
Vice Commanders: Robert M. Fritz*, Indiana; Lewis W. Emerich*, Texas; Harry V. Klein*, Pennsylvania; Frank L. Orfanello*, Massachusetts;

James A. Tadlock*, New Mexico
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Anthony J. O'Driscoll*, New York
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

50th NATIONAL CONVENTION

New Orleans, La., Sept. 6 – 12, 1968
Commander: William E. Galbraith*, Nebraska
Thomas W. Miller*, Nevada, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: Coleman Nolen*, Oklahoma; Louis R. J. Malo*, Rhode Island; Roscoe D. Curtiss*, Tennessee; Dr. Edwin L. Peterson*, Utah; Marvin W. Roth*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Edward P. Nolan*, Pennsylvania
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

51st NATIONAL CONVENTION

Atlanta, Ga., Aug. 22 – 28, 1969
Commander: William C. Doyle*, New Jersey
Vice Commanders: C. Russell Huber*, Alaska; John A. Jones*, West Virginia; Howard E. Lohman*, Minnesota; Lewis E. McCray*, Alabama; Maurice Parisien*, Maine
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. C. J. Olander*, Mississippi
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

52nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Portland, Ore., Aug. 28 – Sept. 3, 1970
Commander: J. Milton Patrick*, Oklahoma
Vice Commanders: Kent. T. Lundgren*, Michigan; Roland D. Marble*, Mississippi; Raymond F. Mudge*, New Hampshire; Earl R. Norgard*, Oregon; Gilberto M. Font*, Puerto Rico
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. William D. Curtis*, Minnesota
Historian: John A. May*, South Carolina
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

53rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Houston, Texas, Aug. 27 – Sept. 2, 1971
Commander: Alfred P. Chamie*, California
Vice Commanders: Claude Carpenter*, Arkansas; Max Hanson*, Idaho; Robert E.L. Eaton*, Maryland; Gabriel T. Olga*, Massachusetts; John E. Gilbert*, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Milton B. Faust*, North Carolina
Historian: Howard M. Swinney*, Kentucky
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

54th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Chicago, Ill., Aug. 18 – 24, 1972
Commander: John H. Geiger*, Illinois
Vice Commanders: Howard W. Fann*, Kentucky; Arthur M. MacCarthy*, Florida; Roy Sweet*, Vermont; Harry G. Wiles*, Kansas; Wallace C.S. Young*, Hawaii
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Paul J. Schwaab*, Nebraska
Historian: G. Greer McCallister*, Ohio
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

55th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Honolulu, Hawaii, Aug. 17 – 23, 1973
Commander: Joe L. Matthews*, Texas
Vice Commanders: Tim T. Craig*, North Carolina; Sam Gray*, California; Donald L. Gruenbaum*, Ohio; Albert J. Moeller*, New Jersey; Raymond J. Novak*, South Dakota
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. L. P. Fitzpatrick*, Iowa
Historian: Mrs. Loretta O. Phillips*, California
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

56th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Miami Beach, Fla., Aug. 16 – 22, 1974
Commander: Robert E. L. Eaton*, Maryland
Vice Commanders: John N. Roberto*, Connecticut; Frank C. Brooks*, Washington; Gilbert E. Sheeks*, Indiana; Merrick W. Swords, Jr., Louisiana; N. E. Brown*, South Carolina
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Jerome D. Fortenberry, Missouri
Historian: R. Robert Filter*, Wisconsin

Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

57th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 15 – 21, 1975
Commander: James M. Wagonseller*, Ohio
Maurice Stember*, New York, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: Boyd H. Clemens, North Dakota; Jack W. Flynt*, Texas; Jay E. Harville*, Tennessee; Donald H. Jeffery*, Pennsylvania; William A. Lindsay*, Montana
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Harvey T. Goodling*, Oregon
Historian: Nolie C. Deas, Sr.*, Florida
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

58th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Seattle, Wash., Aug. 20 – 26, 1976
Commander: Harry G. Wiles*, Kansas
Vice Commanders: John W. Adams, Jr., Kentucky; Fred W. Anderson, Jr.*, Nevada; Leo F. Malloy*, Massachusetts; Thomas W. Miller*, Arkansas; James F. Walker*, Minnesota
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Claude E. Smithmier, Georgia
Historian: Mrs. Dorothy Crimes*, Colorado
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

59th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Denver, Colo., Aug. 19 – 25, 1977
Commander: William J. Rogers*, Maine
Vice Commanders: Lloyd J. Berken*, Wisconsin; Thomas B. Coll*, District of Columbia; Robert B. Grauberger*, Colorado; Frank A. Kelly, Georgia; Wilbur Walker*, Virginia
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. James C. Tuxbury, North Dakota
Historian: Alton H. Carpenter*, New York
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

60th NATIONAL CONVENTION

New Orleans, La., Aug. 18 – 24, 1978
Commander: Robert Charles Smith*, Louisiana

Vice Commanders: Eugene V. Lindquist*, Minnesota; Roger A. Munson*, Ohio; John J. O'Connell*, Rhode Island; Chester Phillips*, West Virginia; Irving B. Selmer*, Wyoming
Adjutant: Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Walter D. Power*, Maryland
Historian: Arnold J. Stockstad*, North Dakota
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

61st NATIONAL CONVENTION

Houston, Texas, Aug. 17 – 23, 1979
Commander: John M. Carey*, Michigan
Hamilton Fish*, New York, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: L. Max Connolly*, Arizona; Alvin F. Grauerholz, Kansas; Joseph F. Ward*, New Jersey; John H. Wienand, Jr. *, Alabama; Nathan M. Wolfe*, South Carolina
Adjutant: Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota
Chaplain: R. Drew Wolcott*, Mexico
Historian: Harry H. Kretzler, M.D. *, Washington
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

62nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Boston, Mass., Aug. 15 – 21, 1980
Commander: Frank I. Hamilton*, Indiana
Vice Commanders: G. Y. Fails*, New Mexico; Keith A. Kreul, Wisconsin; Bob Legan*, Arkansas; Max E. Robinson*, North Carolina; Lawrence R. Spaulding*, New Hampshire.
Adjutant: Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota
Chaplain: Rev. Karl E. Kniseley*, California
Historian: Phillip Haddad, Oklahoma
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

63rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Honolulu, Hawaii, Aug. 28 – Sept. 3, 1981
Commander: Michael J. Kogutek *, New York
Vice Commanders: Ralph M. Godwin*, Mississippi; Keith H. Gwilliam*, Utah; Matthew W. Jamieson*, Michigan; Robert W. Lowry *, Nebraska; Dr. Almo J. Sebastianelli, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. George S. Macres*, Minnesota

Historian: Neal S. Sundeen, Arizona
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

64th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Chicago, Ill., Aug. 20 – 26, 1982
Commander: Jack W. Flynt*, Texas
Vice Commanders: Frank T. Markovich*, Missouri; Dan C. McDonough*, Alaska; Percy C. Miller*, Tennessee; Melvin 'Doc' Simon, Vermont; David A. Wade*, Maryland
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. George R. M. Rumney*, Virginia
Historian: Bernard J. Chisholm*, Minnesota
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

65th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Seattle, Wash., Aug. 19 – 25, 1983
Commander: Al Keller, Jr., Illinois
Vice Commanders: Robert C. Gabrielson*, South Dakota; Margaret M. Malone*, New Jersey; H. Melvin Napier, Indiana; Jack C. Plato*, Oregon; Leo O. Walker*, Oklahoma
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. John D. Kempf*, Ohio
Historian: James W. Conway*, Massachusetts
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

66th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Salt Lake City, Utah, Sept. 3 – 5, 1984
Commander: Keith Kreul, Wisconsin
Vice Commanders: J. Leslie Brown, Jr., Kentucky; Roberto Gonzalez-Vazquez*, Puerto Rico; Charles R. Green*, Ohio; Robert W. Groccia*, Massachusetts, John N. Lockhart*, Hawaii
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: James Clay McKee, Utah
Historian: Herberta T. Stark*, New Hampshire
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

67th NATIONAL CONVENTION

New Orleans, La., Aug. 23 – 28, 1985
Commander: Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland
Vice Commanders: Robert S. Turner, Georgia; Harold E. Collett*, Idaho; Ronald D. Birk*, Kansas; Stewart Kunde*,

Minnesota; Stephen J. Mikosky*, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Charles G. Rice, Jr., New York

Historian: Roy B. Mahoney, Florida
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

68th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Cincinnati, Ohio, Aug. 29 – Sept. 4, 1986
Commander: Dale L. Renaud*, Iowa
Vice Commanders: Bernard Black, South Carolina; Norman Conn*, California; Vito M. DeFilipp*, Maine; Miles S. Epling, West Virginia; H. F. 'Sparky' Gierke, North Dakota
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Dr. Gordon L. Patterson*, Nebraska
Historian: Ethel M. Matuschka*, Wisconsin
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

69th NATIONAL CONVENTION

San Antonio, Texas, Aug. 21 – 27, 1987
Commander: James P. Dean*, Mississippi
E. Roy Stone, Jr., South Carolina, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: William M. Detweiler, Louisiana; Doris R. Gross*, Washington; Donald E. Neil*, Delaware; Allen L. Titus*, Indiana; Ervin F. Van Dyke, Wisconsin
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Arthur J. Jakobiak, New Mexico
Historian: J. Ruffin Apperson*, Virginia
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

70th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Louisville, Ky., Sept. 6 – 8, 1988
Commander: John P. 'Jake' Comer, Massachusetts
Vice Commanders: Neale V. Cabral*, Connecticut; Joe Frank, Jr., Missouri; W. P. 'Bill' Peterson*, Montana; Paul B. Phifer, Jr., Virginia; F. Leon Reed*, Arkansas
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Jerry Salveson*, Minnesota
Historian: Edward F. Brennan*, Illinois
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

71st NATIONAL CONVENTION

Baltimore, Md., Sept. 5 – 7, 1989
Commander: H.F. 'Sparky' Gierke, North Dakota
Vice Commanders: Thomas L. Gabel*, Ohio; Harvey Holcomb*, Texas; Archie Pozzi, Jr. *, Nevada; Ray G. Smith, Sr. *, North Carolina; John P. Tipping, New York
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. F. Robert Davidson, Michigan
Historian: Richard A. Stevens, Sr. *, Louisiana
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

72nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Indianapolis, Ind., Aug. 28 - 30, 1990
Commander: Miles S. Epling, West Virginia
Vice Commanders: Vincent E. Blank*, Iowa; Joseph E. Caouette, New Hampshire; Andrew J. Cooper, Alabama; Gerald Goetzinger, South Dakota; Vinton R. Guy*, Colorado
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Lynn S. Kearsley*, Idaho
Historian: C. Carl Pilgrim*, South Carolina
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

73rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Phoenix, Ariz., Sept. 3 – 5, 1991
Commander: Robert S. Turner, Georgia
Vice Commanders: Lewis Adams, Nebraska; James T. Anderson *, Wyoming; Fred M. Ingellis*, Mississippi; Harry F. McDowell*, Florida; George E. Sampson, New Jersey
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Michas M. Ohnstad, Minnesota
Historian: Harold Matthew Branton, Texas
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

74th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Chicago, Ill., Aug. 25 – 27, 1992
Commander: Dominic D. DiFrancesco, Pennsylvania
Vice Commanders: James 'Jim' G. Brouillette, Vermont; Thomas P. Cadmus, Michigan; Ronald C. Murphy*, Arizona; Lawrence F. Roy, Oklahoma; Lee R. Stolfus*, Kansas
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan

Chaplain: Rev. Donal M. 'Jack' Squires*, West Virginia
Historian: Bettie M. Canon*, Montana
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

75th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Pittsburgh, Pa., Sept. 3 – 9, 1993
Commander: Roger A. Munson*, Ohio
Vice Commanders: Joseph V. Adams*, Pennsylvania; Paul Andrejewski*, Minnesota; Robert E. 'Jack' David, South Carolina; John William 'Bill' Murphy*, Arkansas; Louis A. 'Tony' Santillanes, New Mexico
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. James R. Wagner, Mississippi
Historian: Delfo Barabani*, Massachusetts
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

76th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Minneapolis, Minn., Sept. 6 – 8, 1994
Commander: Bruce Thiesen, California
Vice Commanders: Juan H. Cintron*, Puerto Rico; Douglas A. Mason*, Utah; John J. Mulkern*, Massachusetts; K. W. Ohl*, Indiana; Curtis O. Twete, North Dakota
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Msgr. Raymond J. Kozlowski*, New York
Historian: Marjorie T. Simpson*, Georgia
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

77th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Indianapolis, Ind., Sept. 4 – 6, 1995
Commander: William M. Detweiler, Louisiana
Vice Commanders: Joseph T. Craig*, Alaska; Silas M. Noel, Kentucky; Calvin E. Patton*, Maryland; H. Gordon Burleigh*, New York; Vernon K. Grosenick*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Roy L. Pryor*, South Carolina
Historian: M. LaReine Maxey*, Nevada, (died 10-7-94); Succeeded by Carl S. Wipperman, Washington (appointed 10-19-94)
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

78th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Salt Lake City, Utah, Aug. 30 – Sept. 5, 1996
Commander: Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota
Vice Commanders: Keith Baker, Iowa;
William L. Ciciotte, Maine; Robert D. Scott,
Oregon; C. Darrel Haskell, South Dakota;
Ralph J. Reel*, Tennessee
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Joseph E. Reynolds*, Texas
Historian: R. Paul Tenney*, Vermont
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

79th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Orlando, Fla., Aug. 29 – Sept. 4, 1997
Commander: Joseph J. Frank, Missouri
Vice Commanders: Wilson R. Timmons*,
Florida; Orland H. Taylor*, Hawaii; Roger
L. Wild*, Nebraska; Albert M. Robotti*,
New Jersey; Robert L. Bowen, Virginia
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Charles H. Richmond*, Oklahoma
Historian: Barbara 'Bobbie' Stuvengen,
Wisconsin
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

80th NATIONAL CONVENTION

New Orleans, La., Sept. 4 – 10, 1998
Commander: Anthony Jordan, Maine
Vice Commanders: Erwin Gus Williams,
Connecticut; Conrad A. Chisholm*, Idaho;
Norris W. Preston, Missouri; Gerald L.
Moore*, Ohio; Robert E. Vass*, West
Virginia
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Henry E. Eisenhart*,
Pennsylvania
Historian: Tommy Mills*, Mississippi
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

81st NATIONAL CONVENTION

Anaheim, Calif., Sept. 3 – 9, 1999
Commander: Butch L. Miller, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Leo P. Burke*,
California; Roger L. Tingler, Georgia;
James W. Gravenstein, Kansas; Fernando
M. Goulart, Rhode Island; John D. Morris,
Texas
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Robert J. Sweeney, New
York
Historian: Robert L. Klipstine*, Ohio
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

82nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Milwaukee, Wis., Sept. 1 – 7, 2000
Commander: Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho
Vice Commanders: James F. Fraughnaugh*,
Alabama; Milton W. Lobstein, Michigan;
Robert Skallerud*, Minnesota; Robert F.
Neville, New York;
L. Harry Easley*, Washington
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: David R. Brown, Louisiana
Historian: Robert Mead*, Nebraska
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

83rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

San Antonio, Texas, Aug. 24 – 30, 2001
Commander: Ray G. Smith*, North Carolina
Vice Commanders: Charles C. Ragsdell*,
Arkansas; James E. Koutz, Indiana;
Henry P. Bradley, Massachusetts; John C.
Pellegrini, Montana; William A. Weatherly*,
South Carolina
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Calvin C. Turpin, California
Historian: James Buterbaugh, Kansas
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

84th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Charlotte, N.C., Aug. 27 – 29, 2002
Commander: Richard J. Santos, Maryland
Vice Commanders: Russell H. Hanseter,
Wisconsin; Charles R. John*, Oklahoma;
Terry D. Lewis, Pennsylvania; James F.
Mareschal, Missouri; Dale R. Salmen*,
Nevada
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: David F. Russell, Virginia
Historian: Walter L. Davis, Michigan
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

85th NATIONAL CONVENTION

St. Louis, Mo., Aug. 26 – 28, 2003
Commander: Ronald F. Conley,
Pennsylvania
Vice Commanders: Jefferson 'Jeff'
Luginbuel; Roy L. Kirkham, Louisiana;
Robert M. Johnson*, Maryland; Robert G.
Bournival, New Hampshire;
Donavon R. Mason, South Dakota
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Norris A. Keirn, Indiana
Historian: Donald F. Simons, Texas
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana

Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

86th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Nashville, Tenn., Aug. 31, Sept. 1, 2, 2004
Commander: John A. Brieden, III, Texas
Vice Commanders: Richard G. Denbow, Iowa; Michael Dennis Helm, Nebraska; Fang A. Wong, New York; Clinton E. Thompson, North Carolina; Todd E. White, Wyoming
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Dr. William J. P. Doubek, III, Missouri
Historian: Fae Casper, Georgia
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

87th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Honolulu, Hawaii, Aug. 23 – 25, 2005
Commander: Thomas P. Cadmus, Michigan
Vice Commanders: Marco A. Valenzuela*, Arizona; Charles W. Barrett, Georgia; Samuel Barney*, Ohio; Wayne B. Richey, South Carolina; Linda M. Thayer, Vermont
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. James T. Akers, Kansas
Historian: W. Frazier Brinley, Connecticut
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

88th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Salt Lake City, Utah, Aug. 29 – 31, 2006
Commander: Thomas L. Bock, Colorado
Vice Commanders: Willard F. Coffey, Michigan; James H. Hall, New Jersey; Taurino J. Trevino*, New Mexico; Sebastian T. Roll*, North Dakota; Michael E. Harris, Virginia
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Steven E. Wright, Utah
Historian: Johnny B. Keel, Louisiana
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

89th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Reno, Nev., Aug. 28 – 30, 2007
Commander: Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts
Vice Commanders: Bryon W. White*, Alabama; Elgin Wahlborg, Kansas; Lloyd H. Woods, Maine; Robert C. Lahiere, Tennessee; Allan C. Setterberg, Utah
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Stanley Gruneich, South Dakota
Historian: Michael J. Miskell, Pennsylvania
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana

Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

90th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Phoenix, Ariz., Aug. 26 – 28, 2008
Commander: Martin F. Conatser, Illinois
Vice Commanders: Peggy G. Dettori, Alaska; Thomas L. Burns, Jr., Delaware; Randall A. Fisher, Kentucky; Donald Hayden, Minnesota; David A. Korth, Wisconsin
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
(Voted title of Past National Commander, effective 10/16/2008)
Chaplain: Rev. Elliott L. Foss, Jr. Georgia
Historian: James M. Holmes, Indiana
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

91st NATIONAL CONVENTION

Louisville, Ky., Aug. 25 – 27, 2009
Commander: David K. Rehbein, Iowa
Vice Commanders: James A. LaCoursiere, Jr., Connecticut
Michael J. Landkamer, Nebraska
James W. Davis, West Virginia
Harley W. Ray, Oregon; Dellan 'Shorty' T. Simmons, Texas
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Rev. Lawrence 'Larry' Vollink, Michigan
Historian: Charles J. Zelinsky, Illinois
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

92nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Milwaukee, Wis., Aug. 30, Sept. 1, 2, 2010
Commander: Clarence E. Hill, Florida
Vice Commanders: Morris M. Bentley, Idaho, Dr. Gordon B. Browning, Maryland, Mark A. Avis, Massachusetts, James C. Morris, Ohio, Eugene Schumacher, South Dakota
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Rev. John L. Beaver, Alabama
Historian: James T. Higuera, California
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

93rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 30 – Sept. 1, 2011
Commander: Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska
Vice Commanders: Russell J. Henry, Louisiana; John M. Mella, Michigan; Carlos Orria-Medina, Puerto Rico; Eugene R. Pytko, Rhode Island; William F. Schrier, Washington

Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Rev. Daniel J. Seehafer,
Wisconsin
Historian: James Fratolillo, Massachusetts
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

94th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Indianapolis, Ind., Aug. 28 - 30, 2012
Commander: Fang A. Wong, New York
Richard M. Pedro^o, New York, Past
National Commander
Vice Commanders: Mervin G. Gunderson,
Montana; James H. Hales, Jr., Pennsylvania;
Milton G. Heifner, Iowa; Larry D. Sheets,
Florida; David N. Voyles, Missouri
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Gerald Theriot, Louisiana
Historian: Robert B. Craig, Nebraska
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.
Maryland

95th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

96th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Charlotte, N. C. Aug. 26 – 28, 2014
Commander: Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Douglas W. Wooddell,
Colorado; Robert E. Newman, Indiana;
William A. Rakestraw, Jr., New Jersey;
Wayne D. Satrom, North Dakota; Paul E.
Dillard, Texas
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Daniel A. McClure, Iowa
Historian: Charemon Dunham, South
Dakota
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,

97th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Baltimore, Md. Sept. 1 – 3, 2015
Commander: Michael D. Helm, Nebraska
Vice Commanders: Paul O. Sanford,
Kansas; Douglas C. Haggan, France;
Richard W. Neville, North Carolina;

William R. Bryant, Virginia; Gerald L.
Jacobs, Wyoming
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Tierian ‘Randy’ Cash, North
Carolina
Historian: Susan B. Mason, Florida
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

PROCEEDINGS
of the
97th Annual Convention
of
The American Legion
Tuesday, September 1, 2015

... At 9:00 o'clock a.m., the delegates assembled for the 97th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.

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

Call to Order
Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, National Commander

The 97th National Convention will come to order. Ladies and gentlemen, please rise as the National Champion Color Guard from Post 472, Houston, Texas, presents the Colors and then remain standing while we render a salute for the singing of the National Anthem by The Texas Tenors.

... At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors, followed by the National Anthem performed by The Texas Tenors. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Color Guard, you may retire. Thank you. For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Randy Cash of North Carolina. Ladies and gentlemen, please uncover.

Invocation
Tierian 'Randy' Cash, North Carolina, National Chaplain

Let us join in prayer. Almighty and everlasting God, in whose name we trust and we pray, it is fitting to pause if but momentarily to recognize You, the one in whom does finally reside all authority and power and by whose grace we're allowed to exercise that which You have committed to us.

Lord, at this 97th Annual Convention of The American Legion, we pray that You would accept our homage, O Lord, and hear us when we pray for wisdom to lead and serve with integrity, compassion, and conviction. We are mindful that around the world today our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coastguardsmen are standing watch to safeguard our peace and liberty. Grant to all who serve and their families Your blessings of mercy and grace. Accept, O Lord, these prayers and may we perceive and know what things to do and receive grace and power to fulfill what is expected of us. We commit our best efforts and our nation to Your keeping. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Thank you, Chaplain Cash.

Pledge of Allegiance
Rawlin E. 'Leon' Hagan, Nebraska, National Sergeant-at-Arms

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Please remain uncovered as National Sergeant-at-Arms Leon Hagan of Nebraska leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Proceedings of Tuesday, September 1, 2015

POW/MIA Empty Chair Ceremony

G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman, National Security Commission
E. C. Toppin, North Carolina, Vice Chairman, National Security Commission

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: At this time we pause to remember those who are listed as prisoners of war or missing in action from wars in which we have been engaged. We in The American Legion will never forget them. We will not ease the pressure on our government to do the right thing and continue to work for an accounting of all those missing. I now call on the Chairman of the National Security Commission, Mike Schlee of Maryland, and Vice Chairman E.C. Toppin of North Carolina to place the POW/MIA flag on the empty chair.

Preamble to The American Legion Constitution **Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, National Commander**

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Please be seated. Medical issues prevent National Vice Commander William Bryant of Virginia from being with us this week. He did have surgery, which went tremendously well. We know that he would love to hear from you and appreciates all the cards that he has already received. Please remember him in your prayers. Before we begin, let's take a look at the video monitors and see a glimpse into the future of The American Legion. ... *At this time, the delegation viewed a video. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Don't these men and women of the post-9/11 generation give you great hope? Whether they served in Kandahar or California, they were vital parts of our War on Terrorism. You will notice seated in the front of our convention hall are delegates that are veterans of the War on Terrorism or served since the Gulf War. Will they please rise. Let's give them all a special round of applause. *(Applause)*

Also on stage with me, having served at that same time, that are now leaders of this great organization, are Randy Cash, our national chaplain, and Doug Haggan, a national vice commander. *(Applause)*

To begin our opening ceremonies this morning, singing "Coming to America," please welcome back The Texas Tenors.

... The Texas Tenors performed "Coming to America." (Applause.)

Opening Ceremony

ANNOUNCER: Immediately after the tragic events of 9/11, a young man from Birmingham, Alabama, put his college plans on hold to answer America's call. He was one of the first to be deployed to Iraq, and during his second deployment in 2005, Sergeant Noah Galloway was severely injured by a roadside bomb which resulted in the loss of his left arm and leg.

After going through years of a tough physical and mental healing process, he has emerged as an inspiration to his fellow veterans and non-veterans alike. He founded the No Excuses Charitable Fund, which raises money and awareness for organizations that mean the most to him.

He is a motivational speaker and was chosen from over 1,300 readers to become the Men's Health "Ultimate Guy." Earlier this year, he finished in third place on the hit show Dancing With The Stars. He is a true patriot, a dedicated family man, a Legionnaire from the Department of Alabama. Please welcome Noah Galloway. (Applause)

MR. NOAH GALLOWAY: Thank you. War is a difficult and challenging thing to endure. And for me, being injured on my second deployment and waking up in a hospital and knowing that my military career was abruptly ended and, on top of that, two of my limbs were gone. I fell into a deep, dark depression.

A few years after my injury, I was at a veterans event in Birmingham, Alabama, and I was sitting next to a Vietnam War-era veteran who was a helicopter pilot. We were talking, sharing stories, and he told me how he would fly into the battlefield and pick up casualties of war and all that he went through. We talked throughout the night. Before the night was over, he told me something I would never forget. He said, "Noah, when I came home from Vietnam, I could have been like so many of my buddies and given up. I could have quit. But I decided I didn't want to be another statistic." He said he went back to college, furthered his degree, started pushing himself harder than ever before. He became a success. He said he didn't want war to define him.

I remember when he told me this, I smiled and I nodded. But when I left and I got in my car, I thought: Well, things were different for him. I don't have the same luxuries that he has, or, you know, he doesn't know what I went through. I was wrong. I was wrong to think that positive momentum was a luxury, a luxury that I didn't deserve. In fact, one night I was sitting at home, watching my three young children play. And as I watched them, I realized I didn't want them to start making excuses when things got tough on them as they grew up, and it was up to me to teach them that.

So I started changing everything. I changed the way I was eating, started eating healthier. I started working out. I started pushing myself. From there I started getting into different races, 5K races and then 10-mile races and 13-mile obstacle course races. Started running marathons, climbed some mountains. Anything that people thought a person missing two limbs shouldn't do, I would go after. That's what really helped me in making the cover of *Men's Health* magazine. *Men's Health* is the world's largest men's magazine, and I became the first veteran and amputee to ever grace the cover of *Men's Health*. (Applause)

That just kept the momentum going. I started being invited to all these national talk shows to share my story. Then, of course, there was the conference call with *Dancing With The Stars*. I've had people say to me, "How did you convince *Dancing With The Stars* to let you come on their show?" I'm always like, "I didn't contact them; they reached out to me. It's not the kind of show I've ever watched." (Laughter)

They knew that. They knew I wasn't exactly their demographic. But we talked. We had a conversation. I remember they said to me, "Noah, what kind of dancing experience do you have?" I said, "I don't have any." (Laughter)

They said, "Well, if you went to a bar and a club, what did you ever do?" I said, "Well, I stood at the bar and I ran my mouth; that's what I do." (Laughter)

Well, I agreed to go on. I honestly didn't think I'd last more than two weeks. But, of course, I ended up doing the entire ten weeks, the entire season of *Dancing With The Stars* and came in third place. I'm very proud of that. (Applause)

Thank you. I wasn't there to win first place. I never cared to win it. What I'm proud of is that I did every dance on that show. I learned a lot about myself being on there and the experience of dance. I never thought I'd ever say that before. But it was incredible. It literally has changed my life being on that show because it broadened my platform to share my story and my passion for those that have worn the uniform. Now I'm being asked to always go on different talk shows, be at different events and share parts of my life.

What I'm really proud of is I get to go and speak to a lot of our youth. I go to a lot of schools and talk and share my experiences. They know who I am because I was on television. It's been amazing. I feel like it's really important for stories of positive things that have come after the military to be put out there. Because it is my belief that the more positive that our veterans see, the more it will help.

There's a veteran out there that is struggling. But hearing stories of not just mine but so many others that made it through, pulled themselves out of that darkness, found help and moved forward, that will encourage them. Because that's exactly what happened to me sitting with that chief warrant officer back in Birmingham, Alabama.

Because of the newfound attention, I've been able to do a lot of things that I'm very proud of. One of them is founding my No Excuses Charitable Fund. I'm able to give back to organizations that I feel are doing good things for veterans.

But I'm not just involved with veterans groups. I also have different youth programs, because I feel like it starts with our children. What we teach them, what we show them will define who they will be as leaders in the future. That's one of the reasons The American Legion is so important to me, because the missions we take on to mentor and teach the children of America about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship through our many youth programs. We want to introduce you to a group of young people who epitomize the future of this great country, your American Legion Youth Champions. *(Applause)*

The American Legion Youth Champions

ANNOUNCER: The 2014 American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team Captain is Matthew Walsh. He hails from East Weymouth, Massachusetts, and is currently a sophomore at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. His professional goal is to become a civil engineer. Matthew is an Eagle Scout and a member of the planning committee for a recent Wounded Warrior 5K. Matthew is sponsored by Post 79 in South Weymouth, Massachusetts. Please welcome your 2014 All-Academic Team Captain, Matthew Walsh. (Applause)

2014 American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team Captain Matthew Walsh, East Weymouth, Massachusetts

Good morning. I would like to open by thanking National Commander Helm, Sons National Commander Moss, Auxiliary President Jefford, and the entire American Legion family for having us. It is with great pride and pleasure that I get the chance to speak before you. It is truly an honor to be standing amongst such a crowd, a crowd marked by self-sacrifice, patriotism, and service.

I look out and see all of these flight caps and feel as though I'm in the wrong spot. Today I am being recognized as a distinguished guest, but I feel as though it should be all of you on this stage getting the recognition and praise, for without you this great country would not exist. *(Applause)*

I have gotten the chance to meet and speak with you during this conference. And to be honest, it has changed my life. Seeing this great organization come together and work for the betterment of America has brought out a deep sense of patriotism and love of country from inside me. I'm humbled to represent the outstanding American Legion Baseball program as the 2014 All-Academic Team Captain. American Legion Baseball is an organization that serves thousands of young athletes throughout the United States with some of the most competitive baseball in the country.

Legion Baseball was truly an escape. It was a way in which I found it easiest to remove myself from the grind, toils, and struggle of everyday life. Many kids in this world have a day filled with hardship, whether it be economic, emotional, or physical. And the baseball field is truly a place where they can just lose themselves in the game. Baseball is like therapy. Smelling the damp grass and clay on a warm, muggy summer night and looking out from behind that plate and seeing eight other guys looking back at you is truly soothing for the mind and calming for the nerves. I grew up around the game and have spent countless hours in the field, so it has a special place in my heart. Baseball is the perfect summer pastime. And on behalf of all the players, I'd like to thank my home post, 79, all

The American Legion posts, as well as the Legionnaires, for their continued support in making Legion Baseball what it is today.

This scholarship means the world to me. It is from the bottom of my heart that I extend my most sincere thanks to The American Legion and all who make these awards possible. It is extremely impressive to see the investment and effort which The Legion puts into the youth of America and the invaluable programs which they offer. Words cannot describe just how appreciative I am of this award and all the good it has done in my life. It is truly an honor to hold such a title. Without it, I would not be able to attend college, have such a bright future ahead of me, and the chance to pursue my dreams.

In closing, I would again like to thank the Legion Family for their hospitality and generosity. Without you, I would not be where I am today. Thank you and God bless. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next Youth Champion was elected as president of Boys Nation by his peers. He hails from Sarasota, Florida, and he's a member of the National Honor Society as well as the Mathematics, Spanish, History, and Science Honor Societies. He would like to pursue a career in law and political science. He is sponsored by Florida Post 159. Please welcome your 2015 Boys Nation President, Aravind Byju. (Applause)

**2015 Boys Nation President
Aravind Byju, Sarasota, Florida**

Thank you. I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to National Commander Michael Helm of The American Legion, National Commander Mike Moss of the Sons of The American Legion, and President Janet Jefford of The American Legion Auxiliary. These three individuals exemplify the dedication of your organizations to both God and country. Thank you. *(Applause)*

In my two life-changing weeks at Boys State and Boys Nation, I learned many important ideals of this country and Americanism. However, one of these has influenced me the most. I learned and now believe that the greatest quality of this nation is perhaps the hardest to define. That is our American spirit. This spirit is one of daring, determination, and faith. It began when our Founding Fathers wrote the words "We the people" and had the courage to start a great fight that many thought they would lose.

This American spirit is what put Theodore Roosevelt through the Panama Canal, the Wright Brothers into the sky, and Neil Armstrong on the moon. This spirit is what made three brave American men not casual onlookers on a French train but prompted them to stand up, act, and become heroes. This American spirit is the idea that you can reap what you sow, and this American spirit is that all men are indeed created equal in both opportunity and inalienable rights. *(Applause)*

It's not often that you'll hear a debate about England or China being the best in the world. That faith and idealism is uniquely American, whether we like it or not. America is the greatest country in the world, perhaps not because of our booming economy or because of our strong military, but because we believe we are. *(Applause)*

So my final and most important thank you goes out to this country, those who have defended it, and your organizations that embody that American spirit like no other. Because changing the world has never been easy, but it begins with helping just one person.

I have been that one person, as well as thousands across this great nation, that you all have instilled ideas of leadership, honor, brotherhood, and that American spirit. And for a final time, I thank you. May God bless each and every one of you, and may God forever bless these United States of America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The 2015 Eagle Scout of the Year is from Elkhorn, Nebraska. His Eagle Scout Project, the Douglas County Korean War Memorial, fundraised over \$4,000,

and the monument is engraved with the names of the 79 Douglas County men who lost their lives in the Korean War. The following year he raised funds and created the Douglas County Vietnam War Memorial. After high school, he plans to attend college, majoring in mechanical engineering. Sponsored by Nebraska Post 58, please welcome your Eagle Scout of the Year, Ethan Copple. (Applause)

**2015 Eagle Scout of the Year
Ethan Copple, Elkhorn, Nebraska**

Good morning, and thank you. I'm honored to be recognized as The American Legion 2015 National Eagle Scout of the Year.

I'd like to thank Legion Post 58 in Valley, Nebraska, for nominating me and say thank you to many of The American Legion posts who supported my projects and other Boy Scouts across the nation. I'd also like to thank National Commander Michael Helm, for inviting us; National Commander of the Sons Mike Moss; and National Auxiliary President Janet Jefford; and the entirety of The Legion family for inviting, hosting us, and just inviting us into the Legion Family this week. It's been really great.

In life, there are those who talk and those who do. Scouting and the Legion are about doing. The national theme of the Boy Scouts of America is around unparalleled experiences. In my 11-plus years of Scouting, I've had a ton of amazing experiences, ranging from practicing lifesaving techniques in the Caribbean while under the watchful eyes of fanged barracuda, to portaging the mosquito-infested trails of the Minnesota Boundary Waters, and carrying a U.S. flag to the summit of Mount Baldy at Philmont Scout Ranch and dedicating and creating two war memorials for our veterans.

There are so many opportunities to have fun, grow, and learn in Scouting, and we need to ensure that more youth like me have these opportunities. Young leaders like myself also need to spearhead efforts to create cultures of serving, giving, and doing, rather than ones of talking, taking, and entitlement. *(Applause)*

It means a great deal to me to look around this room and see so many veterans, those who have been doing so much for this great country. I'm also happy to announce that I'll be joining the Legion Family as a Son of The American Legion upon my return to Nebraska and my home squadron 58. *(Applause)*

I'm humbled to be chosen as the National Eagle Scout of the Year and fully realize the roles that Legion Post 58 and Department of Nebraska have played in me being chosen for this honor. So I'd just like to thank you one last time for all your support and commitment to this nation, and I am so proud to represent The American Legion and our Boy Scouts of America. Thank you, God bless all of you, and God bless America.

ANNOUNCER: In competition at Colorado Springs a few weeks ago, two Youth Champions took top prize in the 25th Junior Air Rifle Championships. Rhiann Travis from Poolville, Texas, claimed the Precision Champion title with a 2487.9 out of a possible 2509. Rhiann shoots for 4-H Shooting Sports. Please welcome our 2015 Precision Champion, Rhiann Travis. (Applause)

**2015 Junior Shooting Sports Precision Champion
Rhiann Travis, Poolville, Texas**

Good morning. I'd like to begin by thanking National Commander Mike Helm; National Commander of the Sons Mike Moss; and President of the Auxiliary Janet Jefford.

Whenever someone asks me if I want to go to the Olympics, my answer is no. I want to be at the top of the podium to represent my country. The only problem was, until The American Legion National Championship match, I had no real concept of what representing my country really looked like. Before competing in Colorado, it was just

another match that would put me one step closer to that podium. God puts us where we need to be, though, and I needed to be there. But not just because I'm a pretty good shot. I needed to understand that representing my country is more than just a single moment of standing at the top of the podium, holding a flag, and hearing our national anthem play.

The American Legion volunteers demonstrated that representing our country really means one must serve through actions in order to make the world a better place for those who stand beside us and those who will come after us. Through their enthusiasm and enjoyment of serving at the match, I witnessed how true service to others reflects a living patriotism, one of loyalty and love of country, and how their reward for that service is measured beyond the tangibles of a medal or check. The intangible joy they returned to us was much more valuable.

My thank you is for your service, for the joy that you have in being a part of this organization, of this country, and in the lives of the young people such as myself to whom you offer such life-changing opportunities. Someday, when I do stand atop that Olympic podium holding our Stars and Stripes and listening to our national anthem, I'll represent each and every one of you. I will forever serve as a testament to the power of who have given of themselves for this country and those who will stand for this country in the generations to come. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: In the Sporter category, the championship was captured by a young shooter representing Flowing Wells High School in Arizona. He's sponsored by Post 7, located in Tucson, Arizona. He won the title by firing a 2331 out of a possible 2509. Please welcome your 2015 Sporter Shooting Champion, Adam McClintock. (Applause)

**2015 Junior Shooting Sports Sporter Champion
Adam McClintock, Tucson, Arizona**

Good morning. I'd like to begin by giving special thanks to the entire American Legion Family, especially to American Legion Commander Michael Helm, Sons Commander Michael Moss, and Auxiliary President Janet Jefford.

Today I have the honor of representing the many sporter shooters around the nation as a Junior Shooting Sports Youth Champion. But like everyone, I didn't start where I am today. My journey to get here started four years ago on what was quite possibly the most difficult day of my entire life.

I remember coming home from my second day of freshman year and being informed that my parents would not be returning home from their annual trip to Sturgis and that they had passed in a tragic motorcycle accident. Thankfully my Uncle Dave and Aunt Susan stepped forward and invited me into their home and into their lives. I know I will be forever grateful to them doing so. But that year I let the death of my parents overtake me, and it drastically affected my life as both a student and a citizen. This ended my sophomore year. Upon the assistance of my uncle, I joined the Junior ROTC program where I found the discipline and the structure that I needed to get my life back on track. *(Applause)*

The Junior ROTC program taught me a truly deep respect for this country's veterans. Each year on Veterans Day, we would march in the parade and visit a local nursing home where we would deliver handwritten letters to the veterans who lived there. My senior year I had the honor of leading that detail myself. Seeing and hearing the responses from our letters and from the flag ceremony was what truly made me understand what service meant to them and what it meant to them to see the younger generation coming up behind them ready to give their own service. It is what inspired me to become a better citizen.

My academic inspiration came in the form of the rifle team. It was something I enjoyed, and it worked as a personal escape from my everyday life. By the end of my senior year, I had worked my way to the top 20 percent of my class, I had won a championship,

and I was going to go to college. Today I am a freshman engineering major at the University of Arizona, and I'm hoping within the next year to transfer to West Point. *(Applause)*

I give one last thanks to The American Legion Family for giving not only myself but all of my fellow youth and the many youth around the country the opportunities that they have to get to where they are today. If I do anything in my future, I hope that I can provide someone else that is going through a struggle the same opportunities that you and all in my life have provided me so that they may fulfill their dreams, just as you have. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next Youth Champion hails from Ocala, Florida. She displayed poise and effectiveness in delivering her prepared oration entitled "Our Greatest Honor." She enjoys tennis and is the founder of Kids in Special Situations, Inc., a not-for-profit organization. She is currently attending the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business and plans to pursue a career in law. Sponsored by Florida Post 27, please welcome your 2015 National Oratorical Contest winner, Geeta Minocha. (Applause)

**2015 National Oratorical Contest First Place Winner
Geeta Minocha, Ocala, Florida**

Hello, everyone. How are you all doing today? Oh, come on, it's the first day of the convention. I'm sure you're not all tired yet. How are you all doing today? *(Cheers)*

Good. I'm so glad to hear it. I would like to thank again, once again, Legion National Commander Mike Helm; Sons National Commander Mike Moss; and National Auxiliary President Janet Jefford, for allowing me to be here today to share my experiences with you. I consider it the greatest of honors.

I believe it would be quite uncalled for if I began without first acknowledging all those who made my presence here possible. From driving and even flying to and from every contest location, to listening to my speech every single time I wish to practice it, my family never once wavered in its love and support. *(Applause)*

My father, in particular, is in the audience today, and so a huge thank you goes out to the best dad in the world who incidentally has been more excited for this event than I've been. *(Laughter)*

Additionally, I'm immeasurably grateful to American Legion Post 27 of Ocala, Florida, and especially to Mr. Joe, Mr. Brian and Mrs. Kay Voge for their tremendous assistance and love.

I entered the Oratorical Contest on a whim. My counselor mentioned it to me about a week before the Ocala competition. I set out to do my best to excel though I didn't expect much. One win turned to two and then three and then four, and finally, I found myself at the National Finals in Indianapolis.

I will be frank with you. I don't remember a lot about every stage of the competition. It's all a bit of a blur. But here's what I do remember. I remember the various bits of advice I was given by each of the judges following each of the rounds, every single "Speak a little louder, kid," or "Be fluid and comfortable with your movements." I remember the encouragement that I was given each and every: "You're going to do great" or "Don't worry, you got this."

But most of all I remember the support that I received. This is perhaps most exemplified by a letter written by my home post, Post 27 to the administrators of the Oratorical Contest early on during this year. In it the adjutant, Mr. Brian Voge, wrote: "At Post 27, we are proud of Geeta and we know that she is a winner."

This advice, this encouragement, this belief in me has transformed me, just as I'm sure these things have transformed each and every participant in the Legion's Oratorical Contest. The American Legion, through its youth programs, changes lives and helps the future leaders of these countries develop essential skills. *(Applause)*

The Oratorical Contest does this more so than any other youth program. History has forever been at the mercy of language. A few words spoken thousands of years ago spawned the creation of the religions we still adhere to today. A few questions sparked the Enlightenment. Winston Churchill's "Blood, sweat, toil, and tears" speech brought strength to a weakened nation. Words have the power to change the world. Now that my own communication abilities have advanced to a, dare I say, competent level, I'd like to begin making my own contributions to this country and to this world. *(Applause)*

The scholarship money I was so generously given will be going towards my tuition at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business where I will be concentrating in business economics and public policy. I hope to apply this education to a career in law and public policy.

The media has recently reported that wealth inequality in this country is such that the gap between the middle class and the top 10 percent is over 1,000 percent. That's wrong. Additionally, it was recently reported that there are over 13,000 homeless veterans in the United States. This constitutes a little over 12 percent of our total homeless population. This means that these men and women went to serve our country, and when they returned, they were not provided with adequate compensation in the form of pension, health care, therapy, and so on. *(Applause)*

That's wrong. I could go on, but these are issues that I believe our great country should be leading the world in progressing. I'd like to help make a difference in these areas and in others. *(Applause)*

My biggest inspiration, Theodore Roosevelt, said in one of his more famous quotations that "Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." The American Legion has, by introducing me to the Constitution via its Oratorical Contest, introduced me to the beauties of this country that perhaps earlier I hadn't quite seen. Now I'm intent on preserving our values and I am intent on making this union evermore perfect. *(Applause)*

I believe in the Constitution, I believe in the United States of America, and I believe in the ideals that this nation was founded on. Thank you all very much, once again. God bless you all, and God bless the United States of America. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, your 2014-2015 American Legion Youth Champions. (Applause)

Presentation of the Spirit of Service Awards

Ryan M. Pitts, Medal of Honor Recipient

Noah Galloway, Master of Ceremonies

ANNOUNCER: Our next awards exemplify all that you as Legionnaires do throughout the year. The Spirit of Service Awards are given to men and women on active duty for their contributions to their communities and fellow citizens above and beyond the call. Assisting National Commander Helm and Noah Galloway in presenting the awards is Medal of Honor Recipient Ryan M. Pitts. Please rise as the commander leads us in rendering appropriate honors to Mr. Pitts.

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

ANNOUNCER: Our first Spirit of Service Award recipient spends time mentoring and training high school athletes, collecting toys and school supplies, while also reading books to young students. Over the holidays, she also participates in the Fayetteville Urban Ministries program providing food and clothing to the less fortunate. She was selected to participate in the Armed Forces 2015 Women's Basketball Team. Representing the United

States Army, please welcome your Spirit of Service Award recipient, Sergeant Danielle Salley. (Applause)

SERGEANT DANIELLE M. SALLEY: Good morning. First I would like to give honor and praises to God for my life. I would like to thank my family for their love and their support, and I would like to thank the 20th Engineer Brigade of the 18th Airborne Corps of the United States Army at Fort Bragg for allowing me the opportunity to do the things I love to do and as well nominating me for this gracious award.

I want to thank Commander Helm and The American Legion for this gracious honor. I never expect to be awarded for doing something that I enjoy doing and something that comes naturally to me. I consider what I do as a part of my duty and service to give back to others what was given to me.

I'm thankful for having the opportunity to be a part of the lives of the youth of my community, and it has always been my passion to give to youth and work with them in the building of their future. I would like to give a special thanks to my mom, Debra Mitchell, and my first sergeant, Justin, for being present with me here today on this honor.

I count it as a blessing of being able to do all that I can for others. Again, thank you for awarding me with this honor, and I look forward to continuing my service to others. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient of the 2015 American Legion Spirit of Service Award comes to us from San Diego. She joined the U.S. Navy in July 2007 and has been presented numerous awards including a Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal. Ever the volunteer, she has spearheaded and participated in many fundraisers and food drives while also spending time with her local Lions Camp, helping the elderly and disabled. Please welcome United States Navy Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Fredelyne Dolores. (Applause)

HOSPITAL CORPSMAN SECOND CLASS FREDELYNE G. DOLORES: Thank you, and good morning. Good morning, distinguished guests, National Commander Helm, fellow servicemembers, members of The American Legion, and my beloved family.

I am honored to be the 2015 recipient of The American Legion Spirit of Service Award. I am humbled in knowing that I have accomplished this only through the help of many people whom I offer my sincerest gratitude. To my leadership and my command who provided an environment and opportunities for me to succeed and for ultimately nominating me. To the staff and members of The American Legion for bestowing upon me this prestigious award. To my ever-present and loving husband who has given me wisdom and motivation. And, finally, to my family, my parents, brothers and sisters, who could not be here today to share this moment but are nonetheless close to my heart. Without your love and support, this prestigious award would not have been possible.

I have always lived by family principles taught by my father while growing up in the Philippines, and that is going the extra mile. My father told us we should be an instrument of others and never get tired of helping others who do not have the means. He said, "Although we may live poorly, if your heart is full of content and appreciation for life, you will lead a successful and happy life."

This led me to strive to give to my sailors who have entrusted me to guide them, to the community, to the less fortunate, and those who are homeless. I have offered my help and my time not for fame or awards but for the satisfaction of knowing that I could possibly change someone's life for the better or simply make them feel better. *(Applause)*

Thank you. As much as I appreciate this award and as grateful as I am, the greatest reward I have ever received is seeing the gleam of appreciation in the eyes of those I have helped. Before I leave this podium, I would like to close with a quote from Warren Beatty: "You have achieved success in your field when you don't know whether what you're doing

is work or play." That is me. I don't know if I am working or playing. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next Spirit of Service Award is given to a Marine for his selfless community service while helping to coordinate the local Toys for Tots program. Through his mentorship, they collected over 5,000 toys for the Susquehanna Township area. He is currently assigned to Manpower Information Systems Support Office 27 where he serves as a research analyst. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Sergeant Stephen Little, Jr., United States Marine Corps. (Applause)

SERGEANT STEPHEN K. LITTLE, JR.: As you all can see, all I have a coin in my hand; 3-by-5 cards would have been issued to me by the Marine Corps if they wanted me to have them. *(Laughter and applause)*

So as I stand before you, again, I want to thank the national commander. I want to thank you for allowing me to be here today. I want to thank all of you here for The American Legion. Here I have met numerous members here, spoke to you all, and everybody wants to come up to me and talk about "I wanted to join the Marine Corps; I didn't have the chance." It's okay. I still love you. *(Laughter)*

The Spirit of Service Award was definitely presented to me by my gunnery sergeant after all the hours I put in for Toys for Tots and a lot of hours put in with youth basketball teams with the Marine Corps community associations we have.

With that, the award got put in. I was on duty, which as good Marines always do — hoorah — as I'm on duty, I actually have the G1, one of the sergeants come up to me and say, "Hey, man, great job. Congratulations." I'm totally confused. "I don't know what you are talking about. It's like 0100, maybe 0130. I'm tired. You shouldn't be congratulating me for anything." Comes to the fact that I found out I won the Spirit of Service Award.

Another thing I need to do is thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, because that's the first person I need to thank. *(Applause)*

I also want to thank my beautiful mother, my beautiful sisters and my brother for being here today. My beautiful wife, Jessica, and three beautiful children could not be here. It is time to start school and that's more important. *(Laughter)*

But as I stand up on this stage and I wear this beautiful suit, I just want to definitely, if I could, throw a big hand salute out there to all you veterans that have set the table and the precedent for all of us here to emulate and definitely travel on as we set forth in our future endeavors that we look forward to.

Again, I give my biggest thanks to you all. I thank you for selecting me for this because I will take this award back to all my junior Marines and all those that I run into in all the other services and express to them that the spirit of service doesn't start when you put on the actual uniform but when you wake up in the morning and lace up those boots. Hoorah. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The next Spirit of Service Award is presented to our recipient for volunteering much of her off-duty time impacting the lives of the men and women of the Greater Hampton Roads and Elizabeth City areas. She serves as both the president of the Elizabeth City chapter of the Coast Guard Enlisted Association and as the volunteer coordinator for the Base Elizabeth City Complex. She has planned, organized, and supported dozens of community services events benefiting both military and non-military families in need. Please welcome Yeoman Second Class Casey Lawrence. (Applause)

YEOMAN SECOND CLASS CASEY B. LAWRENCE: Good morning. It's such an honor to be standing in front of so many veterans today, a group that I have cherished my entire life. I come from a long line of service to our country. Both my grandfather served in World War II, my uncle in Desert Storm, and countless cousins and friends have or are

currently serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bahrain. It is through their pride and commitment that I was inspired to serve our great nation, which has been one of the greatest decisions I have ever made.

Thank you to The American Legion for this award and, through the continuance of it, the encouragement of junior enlisted personnel to do more and be more than what is expected of them. I am so proud to be a part of your membership and look forward to getting involved with my post back home. *(Applause)*

To my beloved Coast Guard, I thank you for selecting me as your recipient of this award as well as allowing my husband and I to serve under your terrific leadership. To my Base Elizabeth City commanding officer and command master chief for nominating me, believing in me, and encouraging us to support our hospitable city. To the Chief Petty Officers Association and the Coast Guard Enlisted Association for providing a platform in which people like me can give back to our communities both inside and outside of our military gates. To my family, Justin, Sophia, and Paxton, who more often than not can be found volunteering alongside of me but always understand my absence when I am out helping others.

Finally I would like to thank my mother, Debra Curtis, who bred within me the volunteer spirit, and whose words resonate in my heart and the hearts of those in our community each and every day: A good day is never done unless you come home with empty pockets, dirty hands, and love in your heart. I have come to know in my life that when giving of yourself to your country, your community, your family or your friends, a good day is always done. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient was unable to attend today's ceremony due to deployment. Senior Airman Richard Baskerville has distinguished himself as a pillar of community service and volunteerism. He's provided leadership and mentorship as troop master for Boys Scouts of America while also anchoring local building projects and community cleanups. He's assisted in organizing countless fundraisers, bazaars, block parties, carnivals, and Color runs. Representing the United States Air Force, please show your appreciation to Senior Airman Richard Baskerville, III. (Applause)

Ladies and gentlemen, again please show your appreciation to the 2015 American Legion Spirit of Service Award winners. (Applause)

MR. NOAH GALLOWAY: I thank you for the honor of being here today. Just seeing this magnificent group of individuals you have honored here today is proof that what you are doing is good and relevant.

I mentioned in my speech earlier about my charitable fund and wanting to reach out to veterans and the youth. I hope you were paying attention to the youth that were up here today. It's not easy to stand before a large group of people and give a speech and ask them to come up and to hear them and their stories.

It was all because of everyone in this room. You are making a difference in our youth and our active servicemen and women. You have so much to be proud of. Please continue doing what you are doing. And on behalf of a grateful nation, I thank you all for your service to America past, present, and future. *(Applause)*

And now, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome back The Texas Tenors.

... The Texas Tenors performed "Mountain Music" and "God Bless the USA." (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Show your appreciation for The Texas Tenors as they join me up here onstage. All four of these Texas Tenors are eligible for membership in the Sons of The American Legion. Their new memberships are now being processed. *(Cheers and applause)*

Noah, thank you for your words of inspiration and encouragement. All of us can learn from your example and are proud to call you a Legionnaire. Please join me up here so that I may present you with a special pin and a Legion cap. *(Cheers and applause)*

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

A resident of Nashua, New Hampshire, our next speaker was severely wounded while serving as a forward observer with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Wanat, Afghanistan, on July 13, 2008. After losing blood in one arm and both legs, he was near death, yet he continued to lob grenade after grenade at militants who were so close that he could hear them talking. As comrades fell, he fired a machine gun at the enemy and even requested other soldiers to fire at his own position in order to keep the enemy from gaining ground.

His actions saved many lives that day, but he will never forget his nine comrades who made the Supreme Sacrifice. For his heroism, he was presented by President Obama with the nation's highest military award, the Medal of Honor. Some of his other medals include the Bronze Star with "V" device, the Purple Heart, a Meritorious Service Medal, and Army Commendation Medal with three Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters.

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: He left the Army as a staff sergeant in 2009. He now works in business development and lives with his wife, Amy; son, Hank; and daughter, Chloe. He is a member of The American Legion Department of New Hampshire Post 200. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome a true American hero, Ryan Pitts.

**Address: Ryan M. Pitts
Medal of Honor Recipient**

Commander Helm, thank you for that warm introduction. To my fellow Legionnaires and especially those from the great state of New Hampshire, good morning.

It's truly an honor to be invited to help present the Spirit of Service Awards to Sergeant Salley, Corpsman 2nd Class Dolores, Sergeant Little, Yeoman 2nd Class Lawrence, and Senior Airman Baskerville because service means so much to me, both our military service and the service we provide thereafter.

The recipients here today embody some of the finest quality in men and women in uniform. They have answered the call to serve our country and then taken a step further directly serving their local communities mentoring youth, supporting non-profit organizations, and helping those in need. Established by the generations of servicemen and women throughout our country's history, these recipients have continued the proud tradition of serving beyond the uniform.

It is our service to a greater mission that unites us. Like so many others, I served alongside a group with diverse origins, backgrounds, and beliefs. Some were born here in America, others abroad in places like the United Kingdom, Mexico, and El Salvador. Some were devout in their faith while others were atheist. We had different ethnicities, upbringings, and ambitions. And despite our perceived differences, we were united as Americans, dedicated to each other above all else. *(Applause)*

It's not that our differences didn't matter; rather, we respected each other completely and understood that we were stronger together than we ever could have been individually. On July 13th, 2008, our dedication was tested when approximately 200 enemy fighters attacked 48 Americans in the village of Wanat, Afghanistan.

The enemy had us surrounded from the high ground with greater numbers, but we held nothing back in response to our attack. None fought harder than the nine brothers we lost that day — Specialist Sergio Abad, Corporal Jonathan Ayers, Corporal Jason Bogar, First Lieutenant Jonathan Brostrom, Sergeant Israel Garcia, Corporal Jason Hovater, Corporal Matthew Phillips, Corporal Pruitt Rainey, and Corporal Gunnar Zwilling.

These men fought to their last breaths. The depth of their commitment allowed the rest of us to return home. I remember looking around at some of them during the battle and seeing them fight with everything they had. Bogar treated my wounds and then fired back at the enemy between treating our casualties. Ayers manned a machine gun after being struck in the helmet by an enemy round. Rainey distributed ammo, directed his fire team, and helped manage the fight. These nine men rose to a seemingly insurmountable challenge and inspired the rest of us to match their commitment. If they were afraid, I never saw it. While the pain of losing them persists, I am grateful that I had the privilege to know such great men, even briefly. *(Applause)*

Some people are surprised when I say I received more from my service than I gave. It's not a hollow statement. I mean every bit of it. I think it's a feeling that only those who have served others can understand. The men I served alongside taught me that our actions leave an enduring legacy of our character. The rising to the challenge teaches us that we are capable of more than we know. The courage is not the absence of fear, it's the ability to move forward in the face of it and that there is a sense of purpose from serving others that provides personal fulfillment beyond most pursuits.

Perhaps this fulfillment explains why the military may have been the first brush with service for many but it would not be their last. Many of my brothers remained on active duty while some have returned home as law enforcement officers, firefighters and volunteers and employees in non-profit organizations, finding a continued calling in service to others. This sense of duty is not exclusive to those I served with. It is a standard among the millions of men and women who have worn the uniform. *(Applause)*

There's something in us that where others see service as an option, we see it as an obligation. At a football game last fall, I met Major Justin Fitch, a fellow Army veteran. He was a captain at the time, and we were both standing at the end zone when we were introduced. He was in his uniform and looked like what I considered an average Army captain. *(Laughter)* If there's such a thing.

But I later learned that he was anything but average. When Major Fitch was lieutenant in Afghanistan, he came perilously close to committing suicide, stricken over the loss of people in his unit and his friend, Lieutenant Benjamin Hall, who served in the same unit as me. Major Fitch sought help and was able to complete a second deployment before being stationed in Massachusetts. While there, he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. And despite the terrible news, he didn't accept defeat. He found a final mission in fighting the tide of veteran suicides, committed to serving others through his work with Carry the Fallen and Active Heroes. At a time when logic would suggest Major Fitch focus solely on himself, he chose to continue to serve others. *(Applause)*

Major Fitch, Sergeant Salley, Corpsman 2nd Class Dolores, Sergeant Little, Yeoman 2nd Class Lawrence and Senior Airman Baskerville embody the very best qualities of service possessed by our servicemembers past and present. They have displayed the conviction that service equals duty. I am proud in knowing that I served in the same military as these extraordinary citizens. *(Applause)*

Fellow Legionnaires, I appreciate the comradeship, the courage, and the new horizons which have been the hallmark of this organization for nearly 100 years, helping to author the GI Bill to further expand returning World War II veterans' opportunities, meeting at posts to enjoy the comradeship of our brothers and sisters in arms, and showing courage in doing the right thing even when it might not be the popular choice. As our American Legion Preamble states, we associate ourselves to do many things, among them to foster and perpetuate a 100 percent Americanism, to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the great wars, and to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

To me it is this last which guides the rest. I'm allowed to serve today because of the actions of my brothers. Their comradeship on the darkest days means that I can still devote myself to mutual helpfulness. *(Applause)*

Thank you again for inviting me here, and thank you for all you do for veterans, whether for my generation or those that preceded it. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: A member of The American Legion Auxiliary Department of Connecticut, our next speaker believes in the celebration of faith, family, and freedom. She was elected to the top national position because she has worked many years for veterans and their families. I have personally witnessed her joy as she presented deployed servicemembers with gift cards while traveling with me overseas.

She is eligible for membership through the service of her father, World War II Army veteran William Lucas. She is also the mother of a U.S. Army Desert Storm veteran. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm American Legion Family welcome to the leader of the nation's largest patriotic women's organization, National President of The American Legion Auxiliary Janet Jefford. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Mrs. Janet Jefford
National President, American Legion Auxiliary**

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated. You know, I was walking over here this morning and I really didn't know what I was going to say. But then I got here a little early when The Texas Tenors were singing, and I watched everybody stand up during that song, and I was just filled with love of country and patriotism. And you can feel it in this room. And that's part of what we do as an American Legion Family.

And then listening to that Medal of Honor recipient, I kept thinking about the hundreds and thousands of veterans and active-duty servicemembers whose quality of life have been changed by the work that is being done by The American Legion Family.

And then I looked over here and I saw the Youth Champions that were sitting there earlier. And, you know, my dad used to bring me years ago. He used to bring me with him to the opening of the Legion convention, and the one thing I thoroughly enjoyed was hearing from those Youth Champions. So this year I invited them to address my convention yesterday, and they were amazing.

You know, The American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The Legion have joined The American Legion in working so hard to promote these youth programs and to make a difference in their lives. So thank you, thank you for doing that. *(Applause)*

You know, I have to say thank you, too, for electing Commander Mike to serve with me this year. We've had so much fun. He's really pretty funny, you know that? And following him around or keeping up with him, I've gotten my exercise over the year. So that's been good, too.

And, Mike, I got to say one thing seeing The Texas Tenors there, I love all the pictures I have with you, but I got one with them yesterday. That's going to have to go up there in the middle somewhere, too. But thank you so much.

Really, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the courtesies that you have shown me today and all year long. When I have visited your departments, you have been so gracious and so wonderful.

Thank you for what you do. Thank you again for your service in uniform to this country. May God bless each and every one of you and keep you safe, and may God continue to bless this country which I am so proud to call my home. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: A member of Squadron 21 in Golden, Colorado, the man that has led the Sons of The American Legion this year is eligible through his father's Korean War service in the Air Force. He is dedicated to honoring and serving our nation's veterans and their children. He has been a volunteer at the Denver VA and has played the Easter Bunny at children's events for more than a decade. He is married

to Linda Moss and has three children and seven grandchildren. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Mike Moss.

**Greetings: Michael W. Moss, Colorado
Past National Commander, Sons of The American Legion**

Good morning, American Legion Family. It's a pleasure to be here this morning. Commander Helm, thank you for allowing me to serve beside you this year. It's been a wonderful journey. Trying to keep up with Commander Helm this year has been a very, very wonderful experience to watch him run and take pictures.

I would just like to say, my theme this year was "Building bridges to the future." The Sons of The American Legion has built that bridge 100 percent. Our Youth Champions, those are our future. Thank you for supporting the youth of America. They are the future leaders of our nation and our organization. *(Applause)*

Commander Helm, thank you. I know one event this year I was in in Maryland and I was part of the Polar Plunge. I jumped into Chesapeake Bay in the middle of January. And then the following week Commander Helm decides to do his own Polar Plunge from a hotel sliding down a ducky slide inside the hotel. *(Laughter)*

That's the kind of commander you have. Thank you, commander, for what you do. Thank you, all, for what you do for our children, youth, and our veterans. God bless America. God bless The American Legion Family. Thank you. *(Applause)*

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

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

By the authority of the National Executive Committee, the 97th Annual National Convention of The American Legion is hereby called to meet in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1-3, 2015. The Convention business sessions will be held in the Baltimore Convention Center, Swing/Hall F (Level 100).

Purpose

The annual national convention is the legislative body of The American Legion. The convention is called for the purpose of setting the programs of The American Legion for the ensuing year, amending the National Constitution and bylaws, and transacting such other business as may be brought before it.

On Thursday, September 3, 2015, at twelve o'clock (noon) of the final session, or at the conclusion of all other business of the National Convention, whichever first occurs, officers for the ensuing year will be elected, those being the National Commander and five National Vice Commanders, in that sequence.

Representation

Representation in the convention shall be by department, and in accordance with the provisions of the National Constitution, Section 3, Article V:

"...each department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each one thousand members, or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said convention (August 3, 2015) — it should be September 3, 2015 — and whose registration fees, as fixed by the National Executive Committee, for its total authorized delegate strength, have been paid; and to one alternate for each delegate."

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

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

The rights of departments to make and accredit substitutes for absentee delegates or alternate delegates shall be recognized by the National Adjutant, provided that such substitution shall be officially certified by the delegation chairman and delegation secretary at the time of the certification required by the National Constitution or at any time prior to the adjournment of the first session of the National Convention.

Alternates

Alternates shall have the power to vote only in the absence of the regular delegates. The selection of alternates to represent absent delegates is a matter for decision within the respective delegations.

The vote of any registered delegates absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his/her department.

National Executive Committee

A meeting of the *new* National Executive Committee will be held at the call of the National Commander within twenty-four hours after the adjournment of the National Convention, as provided by the national bylaws.

Department Officials

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

Convention Committees

Americanism, one delegate per department. Children & Youth, one delegate per department. Constitutional Amendments, one delegate per department. Credentials & Rules, one delegate per department.

Internal Affairs — Other Internal Matters, one delegate per department; Membership, one delegate per department.

Veterans Employment & Education — Employment & Veterans Preference, one delegate per department; Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness, one delegate per department.

Finance, one delegate per department. Legislation, one delegate per department.

National Security — Military Benefits & Quality of Life, one delegate per department; Foreign Relations, one delegate per department; Unconventional Forces & Intelligence, one delegate per department; Conventional Armed Forces, one delegate per department; Aerospace, one delegate per department; National Guard & Reserve Forces, one delegate per department; Law and Order & Homeland Security, one delegate per department.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation — Health Administration, one delegate per department; National Cemetery, one delegate per department.

Signed by Michael D. Helm, National Commander; attested by Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Thank you very much, Mr. Adjutant. I now declare the 97th Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be regularly convened. Peter Ole, could we have some music?

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Thank you Peter. Because of security considerations, we ask that people remain in their seats until our next guest speaker leaves the hall. Staff members also should remain at their workstations.

A native of Philadelphia, our next guest has spent more than three decades leveraging his knowledge of science and technology, global strategy and policy, as well as his deep dedication to the men and women of the Department of Defense to make our nation and the world a safer place.

He has directly or indirectly served eleven secretaries of defense in both Democratic and Republican administrations. As a Rhodes Scholar, he earned a doctorate in theoretical physics at Oxford University. For his government services, he was awarded the Department of Defense Distinguished Service Medal on five separate occasions.

He is the author or co-author of 11 books and more than 100 articles on physics, technology, national security, and management. He is married to Stephanie Carter and has two grown children. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome our nation's 25th secretary of defense, Ashton B. Carter. (*Applause*)

**Address: The Honorable Ashton Carter
Secretary, U.S. Department of Defense**

Well, good morning, and thank you. Thank you very much, National Commander Helm. I want to thank the leadership of this great organization for inviting me and each and every one of you here for your tireless advocacy on behalf of our veterans and our men and women in uniform.

I want to thank Baltimore for hosting this year's convention. I don't know whether Bob McDonald is here, but I also want to thank him for his determined leadership at the VA and his partnership.

From the Second Battle of the Marne to the Battle of the Bulge, from Inchon to Khe Sanh, from Fallujah to Wanat, to every person here who proudly called themselves a soldier, sailor, airman or Marine, who now proudly call themselves a Legionnaire, thank you. You are defending those who defend us. (*Applause*)

There's someone else here today, a great personal friend and distinguished predecessor, who I want to mention and thank, Chuck Hagel. (*Applause*)

Chuck was a soldier in Vietnam. Stories of his bravery are well known. And throughout the rest of his life in public service, Chuck dedicated himself to those who served, and that's why he proudly wears the golden seal. Vietnam taught us the hard way that while one may question why we fight, we must never question the honor of the men and women who do the fighting. (*Applause*)

Our Vietnam vets were not given the recognition or respect they deserved. We cannot reverse that wrong, but we can learn from it. And that's what we're trying to do together. Never forgetting the sacrifices America's bravest sons and daughters make is what drives, inspires, and gives meaning to this organization.

For nearly 100 years, Legionnaires like you have fought for freedoms nobly earned by our country's finest patriots. You're driven by an enduring truth that above all, above all, the strength of our military and our nation is our men and women in uniform. And given that truth, we have a responsibility to defend those who have defended us.

That's why as secretary of defense, among the three principal commitments I made when I first took this office a few months ago, first and foremost is my commitment to our people, to the current force, including active duty, guard, reservists and their families, and veterans, too. Second is my commitment to lead with a national security strategy suited for this new century, protecting our country and keeping us strong, respected by our friends, feared by our enemies, always ready. And third is my commitment to our future and to the force of the future, where innovation and technology remain pillars of American strength

and making sure tomorrow's force is as great as today's by continuing to recruit and retain the best America has to offer. Because above all else, our people are what make our military the finest fighting force the world has ever known. It's them that make it that. *(Applause)*

Few others know better than you our great responsibility is to make sure we never put a single one of America's brave sons or daughters or their families in harm's way without the greatest care and reflection about why we're doing it and how it benefits our nation.

And our responsibility extends to all generations — to our veterans, to our wounded warriors, to the fallen and their families and those on the front lines today. Through our partnership we've made tremendous progress in recent years, and I'm grateful for partnership with this wonderful organization.

Today, for example, we know that traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress are factors that increase the risk of suicide, and we've taken action to make sure servicemembers treated for mental health conditions can continue their care as they transition to the VA. We're expanding suicide prevention training so warning signs are easier to spot and help is easier to get. We're also overhauling our electronic health records with a focus on interoperability across agencies. On transition assistance, we're upgrading our programs so benefits like counseling and financial planning are interlaced throughout service careers rather than tacked on at the end. You provide these vital services, too, and we're grateful.

You know, I travel around the country and I talk to employers, and the recognition today is widespread that a veteran makes a fantastic employee. That wasn't always so. I remember when it was different when people didn't understand. And now, with the exception of very few, they do. Better transition assistance is partly why veterans are getting jobs at record rates and good jobs. But I think there's more that we can do. Thanks to the Legion's help we've established a credentialing and licensing program to give servicemembers credit where it's due. Because if you're certified to drive a truck or provide medical attention in a war zone, you shouldn't have to get recertified back home. *(Applause)*

Over the next few years, we expect 1.5 million 9/11-generation vets to join the 2.5 million who have already left service. We need to lay a foundation for veterans' support needed 10, 20, 30 years from now. Asking questions about the future is vitally important, and we need to ensure today that every strategic decision we make should be a step towards keeping us safe, protecting our country, and protecting our allies and friends now and in the future.

After 9/11, under the weight of important and all-consuming missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, our men and women in uniform performed with tremendous professionalism, skill, and valor, as so many of you have done in your time when called to duty. As we remain engaged there to preserve gains we've helped secure, we must also turn the corner and look ahead to a full spectrum of threats today and into the future where our focus must be broader than counterinsurgency.

In the Asia-Pacific, for example, our rebalance toward that region, where nearly half of humanity and half of the world's economies reside, is aimed at preserving a security architecture strong enough, capable enough, and connected enough to ensure all nations, all nations, have the opportunity to continue to rise. The United States joins others in that region and around the world in our deep concern about China's pace and scope of land reclamation in the South China Sea. We want a peaceful solution to all disputes, but let me be clear: The United States will fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows, as we do all around the world. *(Applause)*

And in Europe we're supporting our allies with a new playbook, countering Russian aggression with a strong and balanced approach and bolstering our NATO alliance which continues to be an anchor for global security. We do not seek to make Russia an enemy, but make no mistake, while Vladimir Putin may be intent on turning the clock back in Russia, he cannot turn the clock back in Europe. *(Applause)*

We will defend our allies, we will defend a rules-based international order, and we'll defend the positive future that affords us. In the Middle East, the situation is, to put it mildly, complex. There are threats to our friends from different directions. But we have our compass and we know our true north. We are focused on protecting our interests and our allies and, above all, defending our people. *(Applause)*

First, we will deliver a lasting defeat to ISIL. *(Applause)*

With a global coalition of some 60 nations, we're taking the fight to ISIL across the physical, virtual, and ideological battle space as it requires. Our coalition has conducted over 6,500 air strikes, severely hampering ISIL's movement and operations and systematically eliminating this evil group's leadership.

Dealing ISIL a lasting defeat means that there must be capable, motivated, local forces on the ground to sustain the defeat; otherwise, we know from experience that ISIL will be defeated, but then five years, ten years later something like it will be back. The coalition, and us, we can support such local forces, but we can't substitute for them. To date, we've trained more than 12,000 Iraqis. We need more. ISIL's defeat is certain, but it will take time and it will require leveraging all elements of American power including intelligence, financial, and diplomatic efforts as well as military.

Which brings me to a second important piece of our broader Middle East strategy: The nuclear deal with Iran. Our strategy towards Iran includes, but is not limited to, the agreement to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. Now, let me say outright this is a good deal because, once implemented, it will remove a critical source of risk and uncertainty in an important but tumultuous region, Iran's ability to obtain a nuclear weapon. But while the deal puts limits on Iran, the point I want to make is the deal places no limits whatsoever on our military, and our military option is real and will remain real. We will continue to protect our friends in the region, especially Israel, from Iran's destabilizing activities. As I told some of the more than 35,000 American troops in the region when I visited there last month, deal or no deal, the United States military will remain full speed ahead. *(Applause)*

No matter the circumstances in that region or around the world, the bottom line is this: Those who wish to do us harm will never find safe haven. If you threaten American lives, you'll answer for it no matter what it takes. *(Applause)*

Answering threats today and for years to come demands we look forward and prepare for the future. Last week, I was at Nellis Air Force Base where we're conducting exercises with our Air Forces and, in fact, a joint force and some allies, working with new technologies and capabilities in space, cyber and electronic warfare as well as air warfare.

In that way, Nellis symbolizes our strategic transition, a future where America remains overwhelmingly strong in posture and retains full-spectrum dominance. After a decade of focusing on counterinsurgency, we're turning to all the challenges and opportunities and threats that will define our future security, where we remain strong, agile, and always ready. Today the U.S. military has no equal. We are the best. *(Applause)*

Damn right. But to stay the best, we have to embrace the future, and that has several dimensions. We have to be open to the wider world of technology. We need a sensible long-term budget that does right by our military and our taxpayers. *(Applause)*

And we need a 21st century personnel system to match a 21st century military. That's what I call our force of the future. Embracing change to stay the best into the future isn't a course correction, it's the wind in our sails. It's the American way. Quite frankly, it's what we've always done to make us strong.

First, our unrivalled military must double down on an unrivalled American strength. It's our capacity for game-changing innovation. We have to be the firstest with the mostest in all technology fields. As part of my effort to push the Pentagon to think outside of our five-sided box, as I call it, we're building stronger bridges between the Pentagon and Silicon Valley and the tech communities around the country. We're aggressively investing

in innovation and pushing R&D in areas like robotics, data science, cyber security, biotech, and hypersonic engines that can fly more than five times the speed of sound.

I was just in Silicon Valley last week announcing a new public/private partnership to propel flexible hybrid electronics technology, which, just in case you don't know what that is, is lightweight shapeable sensors of the future that can give us real-time damage reports or integrate into smart prosthetics that have the full flexibility of human skin. Those are some of the applications, but the most exciting applications will no doubt be ones we can't imagine yet. And that's just one field of technology. It's not just about the best technology. You know we need the best people, too. So we're drilling tunnels through the wall that sometimes seems to separate the government from the innovative private sector so more of America's brightest minds can contribute to our mission, even if for a time. *(Applause)*

All of this, having the best people, maintaining the best technology, and executing the best strategy, takes resources. That's the next point I want to make. To support today's force and meet tomorrow's threats, we need long-term budget certainty. Our troops need the best training, the newest equipment, and the right compensation. For too long we've been forced to make painful tradeoffs, often on short notice, critically undermining our mission. Our troops deserve better than the inadequacy of quick fixes and one-year, every-year crisis budgeting. Indiscriminate cuts from sequestration are wasteful for taxpayers, dangerous for our strategy, unfair for our troops and, frankly, embarrassing in front of the world. *(Applause)*

We need to come together behind a multi-year approach to our budgeting. The wider catalog of strategic challenges requires marrying the threat of force with financial and diplomatic leverage. So I also can't be, as secretary of defense, indifferent to the budgets of the State Department, the FBI, Justice Department, Treasury, Homeland Security. That's the world in which we live. I can't be indifferent to that, and I'm not. Failing to fund them, too, undercuts the full national security apparatus. For example, our collective effort to protect ourselves from ISIL and defeat it. To stay the best, finally, we have to attract and compete for the best talent from a new generation. And to accomplish this, we need to build the force of the future.

You may have read about recent proposals on personnel changes. We're thinking through many ideas, and we need time to get the best ideas and advice, both from our services and from groups like yours, like the Legion. The people of the U.S. Armed Forces are the best and always will be the best. And how we manage them should be the best, too. We have an all-volunteer force. So for us to keep recruiting and retaining the best, the military has to be an attractive place to work.

We're aligning our personnel management system with 21st century trends, like the digital revolution in talent management, and the generational reality that some young Americans aren't satisfied with Industrial Era-type career tracks. They want, you might say, jungle-gym careers where you advance by moving around and having new experiences, not an escalator where you get on and wait your turn. But not all upgrades, you see, in the private sector are applicable for our military, because, after all, the military is a profession of arms with a unique mission. Still, we can learn some lessons and get some inspiration from new tools and modern approaches.

And here's some things we're considering. We're pushing for flexibility by building on-ramps and off-ramps to give our people more choices, because wherever it's compatible with service needs, it shouldn't feel like you have to choose between pursuing a promotion, supporting a family, or getting a quality education. *(Applause)*

When today's veterans succeed, it shows tomorrow's servicemembers that the military can be a launching pad for further success for them. A few days ago I met with leaders at the professional networking tech company LinkedIn. I sat down with a few veterans who worked there who said it best when they told me that the military isn't just a great place to go, it's a great place to be from.

In its near 100 years of life, The American Legion has seen the world undergo tremendous change. That trend continues today with a more digitized, more connected, and more complex global security environment. But we are a learning organization. That's what keeps us ahead — adapting, innovating, rising to the occasion. We don't react to change; we wield change. In the century of progress The American Legion helped painstakingly build, you've never shied from advocating what's fair, insisting on something better, and demanding, above all, that we do right by the people who stepped forward to defend this great nation. *(Applause)*

Thank you for that. A few weeks ago I had the privilege of speaking with Captain Kristen Griest and First Lieutenant Shaye Haver, the first women to earn the right to wear the coveted Ranger tab. *(Applause)*

They did what Rangers do: Lead the way. Today it's actually a huge credit for anybody, man or woman, to endure the intense curriculum at Ranger School and to prevail and to graduate. But these two women are more than a snapshot of the strength of our current force; they represent a broader future trend, where a strategy of attracting the best and staying the best means we keep pace with change and open ourselves to the talents and strengths of all Americans who can contribute with excellence to our force, where we modernize our recruitment, our retention, and our readiness in a way that's worthy of a 21st century force.

When put to the test, not everyone, not everyone, only a select few, will meet our standards of combat excellence, but no one needs to be barred from their chance to be tested. That's just one way we're evolving to retain our place as the finest fighting force the world has ever known. *(Applause)*

To stay the best, we must keep our focus on our greatest strength, our people, caring for those who serve and pursuing a strategy suited for this century and building the force of the future. If we do right by our people with thought and commitment and openness and honor, then tomorrow's veterans will be as good as today's and America's security will be assured for generations to come. Thank you for all you do to make our country strong and secure. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Our next guest is a World War II veteran of the U.S. Navy. He has held many positions at every level in The American Legion, including national commander from 1984 to 1985. A graduate of Southeastern University in Washington, D.C., he earned bachelor degrees in business administration and accounting. He also completed graduate work in computer science and international economics. Please welcome the president of The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Maryland, Past National Commander Clarence M. Bacon.

**Greetings: Past National Commander Clarence M. Bacon
President, The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Maryland**

National Commander Helm, national officers, my fellow delegates, distinguished guests, it's a real honor and pleasure to be here this morning to invite so many people to come to this great city for your 97th National Convention of The American Legion.

I see this hall is filled with people. We've had about 130 volunteers to help you. And in any way that we can be of service, please let one of us know.

You know, Baltimore is a very safe city. You're down in an area that has a lot of restaurants. There's a lot of sightseeing to be done in this city. We have a national aquarium. We have Fort McHenry, a national shrine, a short trip to Annapolis, and there are many, many other things that you can enjoy in this city. You can feel free to walk the streets and visit our restaurants and other venues while you are here, and we hope you will take advantage of as much as you possibly can.

We have a great department staff with our department adjutant, Russell Myers, and a group of Marylanders sitting out here in the audience, and I want to thank all of them for all of the great help that they have done for the past year and a half in putting on this convention in Baltimore.

And I would be remiss if I didn't thank the national Convention Commission staff. They have been just tremendous in coming into Maryland, making several visits and making certain that everything was in place for your visit to Baltimore.

So, ladies and gentlemen, enjoy yourself, take advantage of all the sightseeing that you possibly can, and attend the sessions of the convention because I think you will take home a memory that will last you for a lifetime. Thank you very much, and have a good time while you're here.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Our next guest has made a career of championing military and veterans' issues. He is the recipient of two Purple Hearts for wounds sustained in combat while serving as an infantry squad leader in Vietnam. After his Army service, he worked as a talk radio host while using his GI Bill benefits to earn a bachelor's degree in history at the University of Nebraska.

Under President Reagan, he was appointed deputy administrator of the Veterans Administration but resigned on principle when the VA's senior leadership wanted to reduce funding for veterans programs and deny Agent Orange claims. He brought his core values of hard work, perseverance, fairness, and dedication to the United States Service Organization where he served as CEO.

As a two-term senator from Nebraska, he continued to be an unwavering advocate for a strong national defense while insisting that mission objectives and exit strategies be clearly established before American troops are sent to war.

In 2013, he became the first enlisted combat veteran to serve as secretary of defense. His integrity, fairness, and bipartisanship was widely admired in Washington. He issued a memo to increase access to military installations for The American Legion and other organizations. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present the highest honor that our organization can bestow, The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal, to the honorable former defense secretary and senator, Charles T. Hagel. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: The Honorable Charles T. Hagel
The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal**

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you. And to my friend, longtime friend Commander Helm, thank you, Mike, for what you have done and continue to do for this institution. And to all of our leadership at The American Legion and all of you who have devoted so many years of your lives to this country and to The American Legion, I'm particularly honored to receive this award.

I come from a Legion family. My father was a three-time commander of The American Legion post in Ainsworth, Nebraska, in the 1950s. My mother served three terms as president of the Legion Auxiliary in Ainsworth. This is, I think, my 47th year of being a life member of The American Legion. My brother is. *(Applause)*

So I'm particularly proud of this honor. And I recognize there are so many of you and people across this country, veterans, people who have given so much that deserve it far more than I do. But at one time I was a shameless politician, so I will accept the award, of course. *(Laughter)* But, again, thank you very, very much.

Let me offer a couple of thoughts, first to, again, acknowledge what this institution, The American Legion, means to this country. The shaping and the molding that The American Legion has done with our young people, and I see some here, I know they're in the audience, over generations has been very significant. You continue to do that. You continue to expand on that. I think that's as critical a contribution as any of you make. We

all know, especially as parents, that's the future. And to continually imbue in our young people responsibility, patriotism, I think, is an easy word to roll off people's lips, but sacrifice is different. Patriotism is about sacrifice, and it's so important that we teach our young people about that. And all the different programs the Legion has done, has been part of and continues to initiate over the years really, really does it in a very special way. So thank you.

Second, we are living at an incredible time in the world. I think we all appreciate that, understand that. This is a time when a world order established right after World War II that has lasted about 70 years, and when you look back over that 70 years, it's been pretty successful. Imperfect, problems, issues, conflict, and we still have that today, in some areas even more exaggerated than we've seen before, but when you look at the long poll of history and how all of this has worked over the last 70 years, the world is better today than it was 70 years ago by any measurement.

I think when we look at measurements of the kind of world we've had, and if we've generally been successful in the world, no World War III, no nuclear exchange, those two issues are pretty important, we kind of today accept that as "So what?" But as the previous speaker and recipient noted in his remarks here just a few minutes ago, and the World War II veterans out there, the Korean War veterans out there know that this was not a given. All the great leaders of the World War II generation that helped shape this new world order, Eisenhower, Marshall, Truman, Adenauer, Schuman, went to their graves concerned about a nuclear exchange and about a World War III. So we've preserved that, that element of 70 years of relative global peace.

Now we've got challenges that are immense. They are different kinds of challenges. We live in a world now that's completely interconnected. We have 7 billion global citizens, all part of a global community, and that global community is underpinned by a global economy. We are seeing a diffusion of economic power around the world at a rate unprecedented in history. We're seeing technology shift and change everything. We're seeing relationships develop and unfold and past conflict buried in centuries of conflict, religious conflict, tribal conflict, historic conflict. It is a time when every leader, responsible leader of every responsible institution in the world, starting with leaders of countries, are faced with an immense array of challenges coming at them all at one time. More uncontrollables than we've ever had to deal with all at once. More unpredictables.

As great a country as America is, with all its power, and no one equals this by any measurement. It doesn't mean we're better people, but we've got something very special that we've been able to preserve for a long time, and the world looks to us in a very special way. We can't solve every problem. We certainly can't do it alone. But what we can do is what these wise leaders after World War II did as they built these coalitions of common interest, NATO, IMF, World Bank, United Nations, dozens of these institutions that brought people together based on a common interest. Imperfect, differences of opinion.

We, the United States, have and continue to have, will have, have had, differences with our strongest allies. That's okay. But the common interests are critically important for our future. The world is going to get more complicated. A world of 7 billion people now; demographers tell us we will reach 9 billion.

How we use our military is always important, has always been important, but today is particularly important because the military can't solve all the problems. The problems that a military deals with today, wherever it is, in the Middle East, anywhere, are underpinned by much bigger political, social problems.

My good friend Jim Clifton, who is from Nebraska, his family owns Gallup, has said over the last couple of years that much of what's going on in the world is driven by no hope, despair, and joblessness. So when you have these 18-, 19-, 20-year-old young men, especially, with no prospects, no education, no jobs, no hope, what do we think is going to happen? It won't be good. So all of these things now come together at a point where the strength of our military, just as always, must never be compromised. We must have the

strongest, most sophisticated, most well-led, well-trained, motivated military ever. (Applause)

That alone won't fix the problems. That's a huge anchor to have, and we must have it. But economic issues and other issues factor in, too. So we must use our military carefully, wisely, judiciously. And what Mike said in his very generous introduction to me, and I did say this when I was in the Senate, I used to ask the questions: Well, what's the exit strategy? Not the first one to talk about that. But we need to have a series of questions asked before we commit military to different adventures. Then what happens? Then what happens? It's the same set of questions that each of us in our own lives ask each other in our personal lives every day, our business lives, whatever you do. Then what happens? Then what happens? What effect is that going to have? This is a time now in particular for that kind of reflection and thinking.

I'm hopeful about our world. This country, as much as people occasionally step back and wonder what's going on, has the world gone mad, everything is upside down, well, we go through those periods in history. But when you think about America and you think, first of all, we're rooted in a constitution that works, balance of power, checks of power on the governing institutions, everything about our society and our people and the fabric of our society is good, is strong. Sometimes our greatest strength appears to be a weakness, but it's not. That is the questioning of each other, the questioning of leaders. That's healthy. It's an outlet. But at some point then we've got to let our leaders govern. We have to let our leaders lead, not without question, but that's a responsibility we, too, have as citizens.

I began about The American Legion. The American Legion has always done that and been as responsible an institution and influential an institution as there has ever been really in our last 100 years. I say that because of the way you've done it, who you represent. You've earned through your contributions not only the right to do that but the responsibility to do that, at a time when every poll in the United States over the last few years shows clearly that the trust and confidence in every institution in the United States is at record lows except the military. The military is the one institution that is still very high, is highest, higher than any other institution.

So we're going through one of those periods when there is a lot of conflict, question, complication, uncertainty, but we need the strength of institutions as well because that's another strength we have. I often am in and out of Afghanistan. One of the points I used to make with Ghani or Karzai or any of them and with all our leaders when I was in the Senate, secretary of defense, is strengthen the institutions. The institutions outlive all of us. Strengthen those institutions of governance and help them build their own institutions so they can govern.

Because we can't be there all over the world forever to protect everybody and do the things that we can do better than everybody else. We don't have the capacity to do that. We don't have the will to do it. We shouldn't do it. We can't impose our will on people, but we can help them in tremendous ways. We've done it more than any other country, I think, in the history of man. I think that's as important about our country, our heritage. We look to the future with great hope, great confidence, and we can't lose that. We cannot lose our confidence now.

Well, what I've shared are some thoughts that you all know. But I thought I'd share that with you because after almost 50 years of doing many, many things in my life, and my first real service to this country is when I went into the Army in 1967 and my brother Tom and I served together in Vietnam in 1968, and from that time on I've done many, many things, private, public, had the great privilege to do so many things in so many ways, and I have been very fortunate in my life. So after almost 50 years of that, you hope you are a little smarter, you hope you are a little wiser. It doesn't always work that way. But you also have a little more time to reflect on the world, where we've been, and in particular where we're going.

I end with where we're going really includes maybe more than ever The American Legion and institutions that help guide our country, not necessarily help govern it, which you do, but help guide it. Because it is a morality. It is an influence. It is a leadership that is reflected in everything. I often said politics doesn't lead anything. Politics reflects society. Politics reflects society. Anyone in politics reflects who they represent. There are various views, you all know that, and I do, too, about how to govern, how not to govern. But it's society that's the core and the fabric, and the strength of that society really determines the future of a country. And for you to help continue to build that society and knit that together at a time when there is some fraying is going to be as critical as any component of our future.

So, again, thank you. You've been very generous. It is a great honor to be here and a great honor to accept this award. I'll continue to help The American Legion and our veterans and our country in every way I can. Again, thank you for everything you do. Have a wonderful convention. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: We're going to step away from the program just a little bit now. I have my family here and some friends, and normally this is done, I think, on Thursday, but then I've been informed that some of them have hair appointments and things to go to. *(Laughter)*

So I want to do that now real quickly. And one of my friends that I wanted to introduce, they already snuck off, and that was Sandy and Charlie Steinkamp. Sandy has been the secretary in Nebraska for many, many years and certainly has held us together over the time. But I wanted to thank Sandy for that.

But someone real special, Ray and Myrna. Ray and Myrna Hague are members of my American Legion post back there in Lebanon. Really held that American Legion whole thing together for a long time. Give them a big hand. *(Applause)*

Not only are they great Legion members, they have also been a great part of our family over many, many years. And my oldest brother Jim. *(Applause)*

Just to let you know that this is not the hair people that have caused this. My sister-in-law, Janis, is at home back in the hotel room studying. So that's the reason for that.

And then Natasha and Andrew Sloan. Natasha is the niece of my brother that passed away here a few years ago, retired Lieutenant Colonel Fred. So give them a big hand. *(Applause)*

Not here is my brother John who's out in Seattle, Washington. And the Washington people got us together on one of my trips to that department. And then my sister Mary who passed away. Then I'm next in the clan. And then my sister Kathy Brashears. Kathy? *(Applause)*

And then my sister CeAnne and her husband Martin Rinehart. *(Applause)*

And then I have my youngest sister, Laurie Jo, who is back in Missouri. And then my family. Captains Aaron and Robie. Yep, she's one of the hair girls. They are at Fort Hood, Texas. *(Applause)*

And then my daughter Becky and her husband, Jaron. Yep, she is the other hair girl. *(Applause)*

And then not here is my son Lieutenant Jacob Helm who is in Oklahoma waiting for flight training, a son Matthew Helm who is at K-State Manhattan in the ROTC program, And then certainly of my children, last but not least, the biggest of the family, Timothy Helm. *(Applause)*

I'm not going to forget her. And then the first lady of The American Legion, my wife, Debbie Helm. I always call her Honey Bear. *(Applause)*

Okay. Thank you, all. Thank you all very much. Before our next segment, I would ask that The Legion Riders and other Legacy donors please gather behind the curtains to my right to line up for the check presentations.

Our next guest is an accomplished attorney with a lifetime of experience in both the public and private sector. Along with Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, he has been a champion of tax cuts for veterans. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics and political science from Howard University, a master's and a law degree from the University of Southern California. Please give a warm welcome to the lieutenant governor of Maryland, Boyd Rutherford. *(Applause)*

**Welcome: The Honorable Boyd K. Rutherford
Lieutenant Governor, State of Maryland**

Well, thank you. Glad to be here. I just mentioned that my dad was raised in Nebraska. My grandmother was Class of 1929 from the University of Nebraska. So it's good to be introduced by a Cornhusker.

I am here on behalf of Governor Larry Hogan. I know he would have really wanted to be here, but he is facing a challenge and facing it with bravery and forthright. I was with him this morning, and he's doing quite well.

But I want to welcome the men and women of The American Legion to Baltimore, Maryland. We're honored in Maryland to host you and host this National Convention. It is also an immense honor for me to be here with so many of those who have served to protect the freedoms that our nation holds dearly.

One of the greatest duties of elected officials, including myself, is to make sure that veterans are appreciated and supported. Even after you have hung up your uniforms, our veterans are the most vital part of our society, taking care of families, starting businesses, serving your communities, mentoring young people as well as advocating for fellow veterans. Yet, despite the years of loyalty and sacrifice, your willingness to put your lives on the line for your country and your communities, you've often been forgotten.

Well, we have not forgotten you. In Maryland, Governor Hogan and I are working to change that. In our first few months in office, we reduced income taxes on pensions for retired military, tax breaks that are deserved and have been earned by your years of sacrifice. And the first bill that the governor signed was the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Bill. *(Applause)*

We are also making sure that the state is now open for business, and we're working hard to get government out of the way of growth and opportunity. We are taking measures to get our economy back on track, to improve the lives of all Marylanders, and especially our retirees.

I am ever mindful of the service and sacrifice that our veterans made. This past June I had the honor and privilege to visit the American Cemetery in Normandy, France. As I laid the wreath at the front of the memorial to *The Spirit of American Youth Rising From the Waves*, I could not help but think of the young men and four women who are buried there and the men who gave their lives for our freedoms on the beaches below. The youngest serviceman buried at the cemetery is Private Roy Talhelm, who was 17 years old, a Marylander who enlisted right here in Baltimore. Governor Hogan and I know that we will never stop in supporting our veterans because we know that you never stop serving. *(Applause)*

We all owe you a tremendous debt, and we thank you for the opportunity to be here today. We thank you for your service to our great country, and may God bless all of you. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: After winning 87 percent of the vote, our next speaker was sworn in as Baltimore's 49th mayor on February 4, 2010. She is a strong supporter of the Baltimore War Memorial and is strongly committed to the elimination of homelessness among veterans in her city. She was selected by *The Daily Record* as one of

Maryland's "Top 100 Women" in 2007 and 2011. Please give a warm welcome to Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. (*Applause*)

**Welcome: The Honorable Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor, City of Baltimore**

Good morning. It is my pleasure to be with you. I want to thank each and every one of you for coming to Baltimore for your annual meeting. It is wonderful to see so many members of the Legion Family here, including The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, and the Sons of The American Legion.

I want to thank National Commander Mike Helm of Nebraska and National Adjutant Daniel Wheeler of The American Legion for inviting me to give greetings on behalf of my great city. I'm proud to be here as well with Lieutenant Governor Rutherford and the many other dignitaries who will greet you today.

I know you are here at the convention because you care deeply about America's veterans. I want to take a moment to share with you an effort that we here in Baltimore launched earlier this year that seeks to fulfill our responsibility to serve our veterans when they need us most. Of the nearly 3,000 people who experience homelessness in Baltimore, approximately 15 percent of them are veterans. No one who has worn our nation's uniform should sleep on our streets or in emergency shelters. (*Applause*)

The men and women who have bravely served our country should be honored, not left uncared for. So earlier this year in partnership with the VA Maryland Health Care System, we announced Baltimore's Veteran Homelessness Challenge. This unprecedented effort brings our partners together so we can make veterans homelessness as rare and brief as possible by the end of this year. That's no easy task, but we know that homelessness can be solved. Since 2011, my administration has increased permanent support of housing by 68 percent, and we've been able to vastly expand housing opportunities for homeless persons.

To make Baltimore's Veteran Homelessness Challenge a reality, we recognize the need for the entire community to work together with us. We are asking developers, we are asking landlords to create more permanent housing opportunities for our veterans. We're asking health-care providers, legal advocates and benefits specialists to educate and to support our veterans so that they can achieve stability. And we're securing long-term commitments from our funders to invest in these and other efforts. Let me be clear, this challenge has a goal date of this year. But it will not stop at the end of this year. Addressing veteran homelessness in Baltimore has to be an ongoing commitment together. I know that we can do more for our veterans who have already sacrificed so much for us.

I want to thank you again for meeting here in Baltimore at a time when we need support the most. I know that together we can make a difference, and I know that that difference will start right here at your meeting. Thank you all very much for having me, and have a wonderful time in Baltimore. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Due to a scheduling conflict, the senior senator from Maryland is unable to be with us this morning. Senator Barbara Mikulski has been very helpful in advancing veterans issues. We are fortunate, however, to have her assistant with us. Please welcome Cheryl Paschall. (*Applause*)

**Welcome: Cheryl A. Paschall
Assistant to Senator Barbara A. Mikulski**

Thank you. Good morning, everyone. Personally I would like to say thank you to all the veterans out there, really appreciate your service. As it was already mentioned, I'm here

representing Senator Mikulski, who sends her regards, but, however, wanted me to go ahead and give you all the following words:

"Dear Commander Helm and friends, greetings to the members and guests of The American Legion as you gather together here this week in Baltimore for your 97th Annual Convention. Thank you for your kind invitation to share this uplifting event with all of the courageous veterans in this fine patriotic organization.

"Throughout the history of our great nation, The American Legion has been an essential and integral part of our nation's fighting force in wartime. In peacetime, I applaud your hard work to stand sentry and advocate for all veterans and their families.

"Friends, I do not have to tell you that our veterans were called upon to serve their country both as war fighters and peacekeepers. They honor our country by volunteering to serve, not an easy job. They left good jobs, great friends, and wonderful families to do what had to be done. They served longer than they could ever have expected in ways that they never could have imagined. Yet, they did not flinch and they did not complain.

"Since the inception in 1919, The American Legion has been true to its mission to build better lives for all our nation's veterans and their families. I applaud your provision of services, outreach, legislative advocacy, case management, legal assistance, and volunteer opportunities.

"Every day in every way The American Legion is there to promote its message of hope to all who have served and sacrificed. I promise that as long as I serve in the senate, I will also continue to honor veterans and servicemembers by fighting to make sure that we will not forget their sacrifice.

"Best wishes to all members for a successful and rewarding convention. Thank you for serving our country in both war and peace. May God bless you and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

"Sincerely, Barbara A. Mikulski, United States Senator." (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Sandy and Charlie are back. I have no idea where they were, and they don't want to tell, but if they would both rise and be recognized. Sandy and Charlie. Sandy, like I said, has been our secretary a lot of years. I don't know how she stays so young, but she manages to do it. (*Applause*)

Peter, let's have a little music. ... *At this time, a musical interlude was played.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Our next speaker is the ranking member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. He has consistently fought for veterans facing home foreclosure and serves on the United States Naval Academy Board of Visitors. He has represented Maryland's Seventh Congressional District since 1996. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome United States Representative Elijah Cummings.

Welcome: The Honorable Elijah Cummings, U. S. House of Representatives United States House of Representatives

Good morning, everyone. I want to thank you, Commander Helm, for your kind introduction and for all The American Legion is doing to strengthen our great country. I'm honored to join Lieutenant Governor Rutherford and Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake in welcoming you not only to Maryland, but also to Baltimore and also to my district. Thank you, Ms. Cheryl Paschall, for your able representation of Senator Mikulski. I'm certain that Senator Barbara Mikulski and Senator Ben Cardin wanted to be here this morning but apparently they could not.

I also want to thank the Maryland commander,Carolynn Baker, and President Clarence Bacon and The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Maryland for all of their hard work. You don't put these conventions together overnight. A lot of work went into it, and I thank you.

Allow me, if you will, to join you in applauding the truly great Americans whom you just honored for The American Legion Distinguished Service Award. Former Senator and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, I can think of no one more worthy. Please join me again in giving Secretary Hagel another round of applause. He richly deserves it. *(Applause)*

I welcome this opportunity to thank each of you for your service to our great country. As one who is the son of former sharecroppers, who only had a third grade education each, and for me to rise up from poverty to become a member of the Congress of the United States, a lawyer and a Phi Beta Kappa, I say only in America does that happen. Only in America. *(Applause)*

And only because of the tremendous sacrifices that so many of you made not only serving in the Armed Forces, but all of the folks who stayed back home keeping the family together while you gave your blood, your sweat, and your tears for all of us. I pause just for a moment to silently honor those who could not be with us today because they gave their lives or remain injured by wounds that they received in America's defense.

You have much to accomplish today. So I will offer just a couple of thoughts, and I believe are keeping in with this convention's and Legion's work. Secretary Hagel's career in government exemplifies an important principle. Political partisanship has no place where the defense of our great country is concerned. *(Applause)*

We may debate and even disagree, but we are all Americans first. The challenges that our nation faces today are not easy ones. We live in a very complex and too often conflict-ridden world. That is why we support the single largest defense budget of any country on the planet. But the core foundation of our defense is not the ships or the missiles, it is not the tanks or the planes. The bedrock of our defense is the men and women who voluntarily serve. You and you and you and you. And the truest costs of our defense can be found in the eyes of those who have paid the price.

Now, I remind you of these truths, my friends, because the founders of our nation gave me and the other 534 senators and members of Congress the power to declare war. I take that responsibility very, very, very seriously. And this means that I must also be responsible personally to those who have served, to those who have seriously injured during conflict, and to the families of those who have given their lives.

I say this to you because I did not join you to give a political speech. You can easily learn about the legislative actions that I have supported on behalf of veterans by a quick Internet check on the new GI Bill, the Veterans Health Care Choice bill, on housing and foreclosure protection, employment, and holding our Veterans Administration to the highest possible standard. That last one, I want to put a pin on that. We send our people to war. And if we can send a man to the moon, we ought to be able to get him an appointment when he needs one. *(Applause)*

And that's women, too, by the way. And you will find that same dedication to principle in our district offices when any veteran comes to us seeking assistance. For now, please know this: Any decision to place one of our countrymen or women in harm's way entails a solemn obligation on the part of all of us to do what is right, to do what is required when those Americans come home. This is my conviction, and this is why I am so honored, so very honored, to have these few moments with you this morning to thank you on behalf of a grateful Congress and thank you on behalf of a grateful country.

May God bless you and may God bless America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Responsible for the daily operations of the Maryland Army and Air National Guards, the state's Emergency Management Agency, and the Maryland Defense Force, our next guest serves as the 29th adjutant general of Maryland. She has completed a deployment in Kosovo and a combat tour in Afghanistan. Her military career spans more than 30 years in both enlisted and officer ranks. Please give a warm welcome to Major General Linda L. Singh. *(Applause)*

**Welcome: Major General Linda L. Singh
Adjutant General, Maryland Military Department**

So good morning, everyone. How are you this morning? So, one, I am so glad that I could come out and really just give my thanks to such wonderful Americans, people who have served, and you're still serving in so many ways that I'm not real sure that our country knows exactly how much you do every single day and that you've been doing really probably all of your career. So if you did not get thanked for your service, I want to say thank you, thank you, thank you. *(Applause)*

Because without what you've done, without the paths that you're continuing to make, without the service back to our country that you're continuing to do, we in the National Guard could not do what we do. We would not be able to walk down the streets and be thanked for our service. We would not be able to walk down the streets in our uniform and feel like we're okay to have our uniform on and won't be ridiculed.

I know that there's a number of you that have really paved the path for this to happen. I hope that someday every single American will understand the sacrifices that you have made, the sacrifices that we continue to make to make sure that our country can be free. *(Applause)*

If I think about what wearing this uniform means to me, this uniform, as you know, saved my life. When I say "saved my life," it saved me from running the streets, it saved me from being someone else that, you know, maybe I would have ended up in jail. Who knows where I would have ended up. I'm sure that there's a number of you that understand exactly what I mean.

So we have to continue to push forward. The service that you provide, the outreach that you have, we have to continue. That's why it was extremely important for me to be able to come down here and just to say for my forces, for my country, I want to thank you so unbelievably for the service that you've committed all these years. I want to thank you for everything that The American Legion does across the U.S. and everything that you're going to continue to do. Because I know without an organization of this magnitude there would be a lot of lost souls. There would be a lot of lost souls.

I will continue to serve as much as I can, whether I'm in uniform or out of uniform. I know where my faith and my allegiance is, and it's to my people, it's to the service of this country and to the overall United States. I know that you're right there with me.

As I look at the wonderful people that are here, and I hope that your conference goes really, really well, but I also hope that you're going to continue to maybe mentor a young soldier or a young airman that needs some mentoring and guidance and you will continue to be the guiding light for us. With that I want to say thank you and I hope that you enjoy everything that you're going to experience this week and just to know that you're always in my heart. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Very nice remarks, and a Legion member.

Our next guest is a former specialist in the United States Army. Using her GI Bill benefits, she attended the University of Maryland and received a bachelor's degree in nursing. She worked as a registered nurse at various hospitals before retiring. She is a life member and past commander of Harford Post 39. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the 2014-2015 past department commander of Maryland,Carolynn G. Baker. *(Applause)*

**Welcome: Carolynn G. Baker
2014-2015 Department Commander of Maryland**

Wow. National Commander Helm, fellow Legionnaires, distinguished guests and delegates to this 97th Convention, welcome to Baltimore and the great state of Maryland. The American Legion Department of Maryland with over 55,000 Legionnaires in this great

state would like to welcome everyone to this 97th National Convention. The department is the home of Past National Commander Clarence Bacon and Past National Commander Rick Santos.

We'd like to thank Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and all of her staff, the city of Baltimore, the Baltimore City Police, the Visit Baltimore for the wonderful job they've done not only to prepare for the convention but also continue to do to make this convention so successful. The hospitality that the city of Baltimore has shown The American Legion family and the 97th Convention has been outstanding, from the welcome at all the hotels, the airport, the local restaurants, to the packed parade route that we had on Sunday.

We'd like to thank the Convention Commission under the leadership of Mike Walton from Illinois and the Maryland Convention Corporation for all their work selecting, planning, preparing for this convention.

To the national staff who spent months preparing and getting ready for the National Convention and working tirelessly behind the scenes for weeks not only back at national but in the convention city, a special thank you for your dedication and for helping to make this convention possible.

Without the help of the members of the Department of Maryland, The American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion and the Legion Riders, we would not have been able to have everything ready and have such a smooth, organized, successful convention. I'd like to thank all the volunteers in the Department of Maryland and the Detachment of Maryland for volunteering in helping to make this 97th Convention such a success.

The Department of Maryland especially would like to thank all of you, the Legionnaires and your families, for attending this convention. I hope you have a great convention and enjoy your stay here in our great city.

God bless our troops, God bless all of you, and God bless America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Thank you, Commander Baker. Next I would like to call the chairman of the American Legion Riders Advisory Committee, Bob Sussan, to the podium for a special presentation.

Presentation: The American Legion Riders
Bob Sussan, Chairman, American Legion Riders Advisory Committee

Good afternoon. Commander Helm, national officers, headquarters staff, guests, and my fellow Legionnaires, I have the honor of being the Riders chairman and also the distinct honor of being the chief road captain on this year's Legacy Run. *(Applause)*

Twenty-three years ago, 19 members of Post 396 in Garden City, Michigan, motorcycle enthusiasts, founded the first Riders chapter. The Riders is the only program that encompasses the Legion, the Sons of The American Legion, and the Auxiliary. Currently, all departments have Riders programs either as a post or a department program. Our membership is approximately 120,000 strong and growing. *(Applause)*

From the onset, the Riders have adopted the Legacy Scholarship Fund, and annually we ride for the children of our fallen brothers and sisters. The first year, 2006, we rode to Salt Lake City. It was the first ride, and we had a goal of \$50,000. Had no idea if it was attainable. That year we raised \$165,000. Last year with a goal of \$450,000 riding into Charlotte, we raised \$1 million. *(Applause)*

This year, the tenth anniversary of the Legacy Run, our goal is \$600,000, and riding into Towson, Maryland, Post 22, we already had \$450,000. *(Applause)*

We're now going to play you a short video of this year's Legacy Run.

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

CHAIRMAN SUSSAN: On Thursday, June 25, our Lord, commander of us all, called home a dear friend and devoted Legionnaire and a Rider, Terry Woodburn. May his soul rest in peace. He will always ride with us. I'd like to introduce you to his wife, Kathy; his son, Chad; daughter-in-law, Michelle; and grandchildren, Deanna and Luke. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: At this time Bob will stay here at the podium, and I will move down to take photos. We'll begin now the presentation of the Legacy Scholarship Fund donations. Those presenting checks will please proceed to the microphone, announce the amount and donor and go to the front on the floor for the photograph. While the photographs are being taken, I ask National Vice Commander Gerald "Jake" Jacobs to assume duties at the lectern. We're going to move this along as well as we can, so just up to the microphone and state your amounts and then come down for the photos. Thank you.

... At this time, National Vice Commander Jacobs assumed the Chair.

CHAIRMAN SUSSAN: We'll now have a presentation from the Department of Maryland.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MD): On behalf of The American Legion family of Maryland and American Legion Riders of Maryland, we wanted to pay a special tribute to Terry Woodburn for all of his service to The American Legion Family, The American Legion Riders, and to our nation.

And we thought that we should do something that was fitting to Maryland, and we are very blessed to have one of the most holy places in the country to me, and that is Fort McHenry. So on Thursday, August 27, 34 riders from across the nation and from Maryland went to Fort McHenry, and in Terry's honor we raised the flag over Fort McHenry. We would like to present you that flag and a certificate of it being flown over the fort. *(Applause)*

CHAIRMAN SUSSAN: We have a presentation from Terry's department, Illinois.

DELEGATE ROBARDS (IL): In memory of Terry Woodburn, a great leader for the Department of Illinois and also a Legion Rider, Illinois presents a donation, \$17,553.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IL): Naperville American Legion Post 43, \$200, and also Post 43 Legion Riders, \$2,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IL): Louisville Legion Post 914, \$500; my wife and I, \$100; a native Illinoisan, Junior Vice Commander Pat Liddell, \$167. Our grand total this year, in Terry Woodburn's name, is \$30,000.

CHAIRMAN SUSSAN: A donation from the Department of New York, \$54,000.

In addition to donations made on the Legacy Ride, the Department of France donates \$3,310.

From the Department of Georgia, \$22,066.50.

Department of Texas, a new Riders chapter, Post 2, \$1,839.85. And a chapter that's been donating for a long time, Post 593, \$50,000. Which brings their lifetime total to the Legacy Scholarship Fund of over \$300,000.

The Department of Kansas had some additional donations, bringing their total to \$46,321.21.

From the Department of Kentucky, \$7,500.

From the Department of Massachusetts, \$3,531.

From the Department of Alaska, \$20,100.

Department of Iowa, \$3,000.

Chapter 55 in Brandon, Vermont, \$1,000.

Department of Missouri, \$64,566.72.

There are two donations from Arizona. The first one from the department is \$24,728.05. There was a death this past year in Arizona, Fred Manske, who rode on the Legacy Rides. He was the vice chairman. And that was \$1,430 donated.

Wisconsin — \$59,050.09.

From Chapter 72 in New Hampshire, additional \$900 to the monies already donated.

In addition to the monies donated from the Department of California, they're adding \$7,250.

Department of Colorado, \$3,500.

Various posts in Texas for an additional \$1,573.

Bryan, Texas, \$2,588.25.

They're all Riders up here from Michigan, and their first in-state Legacy Run raised \$21,375. Thank you.

The Department of Delaware had a donation for \$17,350, Nanticoke Post 6 didn't want to be left out so they added \$1,000, for a grand total \$18,350 from Delaware.

Post 69 in Alameda, New Mexico, \$1,000.

Department of South Dakota, \$4,250.

A newly formed Legion Riders post in Ohio, 3557, donates \$3,000.

The Department of North Dakota has an additional \$827.

The Department of Pennsylvania, an additional \$10,098.19.

The Department of New Jersey donates \$1,250; 250 of it coming from ALR Post 19 in Bayonne.

From six posts in the Department of Connecticut, we have a donation of \$1,650.

Department of Alabama \$25,000 total with \$10,000 coming from one post, 133.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FL): I'm here to talk about Scootin' America. Some of you know who he is. This is an individual that's riding a motorcycle across country to visit all the Harley Davidsons. As of today, American Legion Post 323, and him, there is going to be a check for \$93,000.

DELEGATE CONTI (FL): And the rest of the Department of Florida donations, we raised over \$76,000 on our in-state Legacy Run for a total of \$173,041.20.

CHAIRMAN SUSSAN: The total from the Department of Indiana, \$12,750.

The Department of Mississippi and Post 1776, \$3,000.

The Department of South Carolina, home of the World Champion American Legion Baseball Team, \$52,512.12.

Foreign and Outlying Posts and Departments of The American Legion, \$500.

Department of Nebraska, we have a total of \$32,634 in addition to what's already donated.

Additional check from the Department of North Carolina, \$9,664.46.

From The Legion Riders of Maine, \$3,300.

All these people up here are from Minnesota. Their total is \$103,754.98. Wow.

That concludes the donations. We will have a total for you later in the convention.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER JACOBS: The Royal Canadian Legion is committed to securing adequate pensions and benefits for veterans and their families by dealing directly with the federal government. Our next guest is a member of Royal Canadian Legion Marble Arch Branch in New Brunswick Command. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Royal Canadian Legion Dominion President Tom Eagles. *(Applause)*

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

Thank you very much for those kind words. It is very much appreciated. National Commander, honored guests, members of The American Legion, on behalf of 300,000 members of The Royal Canadian Legion in more than 1,440 branches located in Canada, United States, Germany, The Netherlands, and most recently Mexico, I bring you all warm greetings.

I must confess, ladies and gentlemen, that being so close to Fort McHenry where its valiant defense during the Battle of Baltimore on September 13 and 14 in 1814 inspired

Francis Scott Key to write the "Star-Spangled Banner" left me somewhat worried about the kind of reception I would receive. That said, I must admit that I have been most pleased and impressed with the kind hospitality you have extended to me and Cheryl here in the beautiful city of Baltimore.

Clearly, we have been able to move beyond our differences and have come to the conclusion that our men and women have a common history of answering the call when our nations were in need, and we also share the same belief that we have every right, ladies and gentlemen, to expect our governments to answer our call in time of need as well.

It is from this common history of serving shoulder-to-shoulder as well as our shared belief in the welfare of our veterans that have made our organizations the leading veterans organizations in our respective countries and gained so much attention and respect at home and abroad. That is not to say that we may rest on our laurels and our past accomplishments. There is much more that needs to be done, and I'll give you a few examples.

Helping veterans: We both share a common interest in helping veterans who are experiencing financial hardships. In Canada, we call it the Legion's Benevolent Poppy Trust Funds. Last year, ladies and gentlemen, in 2014, more than \$16.5 million was given to veterans and their families through the Benevolent Funds program.

Legion Branches: Much like you, we are always looking at ways to increase our membership among our younger veterans as well as increase the relevance of our Legion branches in their communities. So we are extremely interested in the recent success of Post 28 in Wyoming which in less than 18 months went from 18 to 183 Legion members, purchased and renovated a defunct VFW bingo hall and started an American Legion Auxiliary unit, a Sons of The American Legion squadron, and what is now the third largest American Legion Riders chapter in Wyoming. The post is sponsoring a baseball team, working with a local Boy Scouts troop, starting a Junior Shooting Sports group, and supporting the high school rodeo program, a hallmark of the Department of Wyoming. As impressive, 45 percent of the Post 28 members are post-9/11 veterans.

Clearly, ladies and gentlemen, Post 28 shows us that veterans do not join the Legion to attend meetings; rather, they join worthwhile programs. And this message resounds loud and clear across the 48th Parallel, and this is where we in Canada are placing our emphasis.

A Legion Riders program, as you've just seen here, won. In 2013, we held our own news conference to launch our own version of the Legion Riders program. Plans are well underway to help generate awareness about the Legion, its community engagement across the country, and its services to our serving and retired veterans, members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and their families. Part of that awareness campaign is the recent adoption of a National Memorial Ride at our National Military Cemetery in Beechwood in Ottawa. It is the only authorized memorial at this national cemetery for veterans on motorcycles. It happens on the first Sunday in June every year. This past June we were very pleased to have Pastor Gary Burd from the Christian M25 Mission of Hope from Amarillo, Texas, lead a prayer.

Partnerships: On June 23 of this year, I was very happy to represent The Royal Canadian Legion and donate \$1 million to mental health research at The Royal Ottawa Health Care Group in Ottawa, Canada. *(Applause)*

This gift will be used to support the creation of a Brain Imaging Centre at The Royal featuring a state-of-the-art MRI machine. This machine will show the experts at The Royal to conduct research including clinical trials that will advance knowledge of the brain circuitries and create new practices that will help to improve treatment for anyone suffering from mental illness. By collaborating nationally and internationally on patient-oriented research, The Royal is revolutionizing mental healthcare and setting new standards of treatment for future generations including our brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces and also the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. This support from the Legion clearly aligns with our mandate to support and care for all veterans.

Advocacy: It is an election year in Canada with the election date set for October 19. So The Legion developed an advocacy paper called "Veterans Matter." This position paper was given to every elected member of parliament and was uploaded to our website for all Canadians to see. The purpose of this paper is to help focus the debate and discussions surrounding the treatment and care of our fighting men and women.

I also hope that by sharing a few examples of our common advocacy and efforts towards serving our veterans that I have shown just how much we value our close relationship with The American Legion. It is also hoped that by doing so that any member of The Royal Canadian Legion in the United States will enjoy the same kind and generous hospitality we have enjoyed among you here in Baltimore. Likewise, I want to assure everyone here that any member of The American Legion in Canada will enjoy the same entitlement and respect as a member of your own Legion.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have been a member of the Royal Canadian Legion since 1976, and I take considerable comfort in the knowledge that this business of helping veterans, both The American Legion and The Royal Canadian Legion, will always see eye-to-eye on important issues such as promoting participation in the Legion for younger veterans, retaining the respective members as well as advocating on behalf of all veterans for better health care and benefits.

May your National Convention be a successful one, and thank you for allowing me to say a few words. Thank you, and may God bless. (*Applause*)

... At this time, National Commander Helm resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Our next guest was an officer in the United States Army Signal Corps. A former clinician with the VA, she taught in the Department of Psychiatry and Public Administration at the University of Southern California. She serves on the board of Student Veterans of America. Representing SVA, please welcome Dr. Lynda Davis. (*Applause*)

**Greetings: Dr. Lynda Davis
Student Veterans of America**

Good afternoon. It's great to be here. So I had the privilege of wearing green, being a soldier, and also serving as the deputy assistant secretary for the Navy, so I was able to work very closely with my colleagues in the Marine Corps and the Navy. And a shout out to all who served, and thank you for your service.

It's an honor today to be with you to represent Student Veterans of America. We are a young organization that focus primarily on the OIF/OEF population, and already we have made a significant impact in Washington and throughout the country to benefit our younger veterans, and it's thanks to organizations and partners like you all at the Legion.

SVA has over 1,200 chapters in 50 states and four territories around the world. These campus-based chapters represent over 440,000 students who served in uniform honorably as you did. A little more than 25 percent, happen to be women veterans. What SVA does is, even though we're campus-based, we are expanding to the left and to the right of the experience of the veteran in education to ensure that they can access education, have a good experience on campus, and then graduate and successfully enter the workforce as you all have done.

We also do that by creating more informed student veterans before they even arrive on campus. How they get their aid, how they can get assistance in choosing their majors, and then the assistance they and their families need on campus to succeed. Before they even get on campus, we have worked with organizations like yours in Washington, D.C., to make sure the GI Bill is available to them like it was to my father from World War II.

We have tools that we've created with the Department of Veterans Affairs to make comparisons so that these young veterans can choose what campus to go to and get a

behind-the-scenes look at which ones are more veteran friendly. We have programs like Math Boot Camp that allow the transitioning veteran to sharpen their hard skills to be ready to succeed in their academic pursuits on campus.

Once they're on campus, we have a peer network of veterans, and we have veterans study centers. We have leadership training. And we have chapter support to make sure they and their families have a positive experience and do not feel isolated, do not feel shunned on campus, and that they have access to all the benefits they're entitled to and to all the services that they need. We work very, very closely on campuses with our MSO and VSO partners like Legion posts around the country. And we work with you all in Washington, D.C., to make sure the benefits all our veterans deserve, especially our student veterans, are maintained.

After graduation, we work closely with our alumni veterans network of hundreds of thousands of student veterans who enter the workforce in corporations and associations and non-profits and build their own businesses. We help them engage in a career that takes advantage of their veterans services, just like you've been able to do, puts it to good use, enables them to continue to serve their community and their country.

This is all possible because this young organization was helped so strongly and so willingly by existing organizations with leadership like yours. We're very, very grateful to The American Legion for your support, both nationally and on campus, and how your posts are very active in supporting our campus chapters. We want to give a shout out and to thank you very much from Student Veterans of America. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Today we are most fortunate to have with us a gentleman who has dedicated his life to Canada's veterans and their families. He is a veteran with more than 34 years of service in the Canadian Coast Guard. He also marched with me in the parade on Sunday. Brian is a great guy and we had a nice visit when we went up to Penticton, Canada, for their convention. Legionnaires, please join me in welcoming Brian Phoenix, the dominion president of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada. (*Applause*)

**Greetings: Brian Phoenix, Dominion President
Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada**

National Commander Helm, special guests, comrades all, it gives me great pleasure to be with you to bring greetings from all your comrades in the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada. We were established in 1840. We are the oldest veteran organization in Canada. We have been advocating for veterans for 175 years. (*Applause*)

One thing Commander Helm didn't tell you is both my parents are veterans of the Second World War. My father was a D-Day war veteran landing in Normandy and fighting to the end of the war in Holland. My mother, she was in the Air Force, bomber command. She served in Great Britain through the war. They met in Toronto, Canada, and from their union there was six of us, I being the youngest son. So now I will go on with my speech, so you know a little bit about me.

At a quick glance at the headlines, shows the abundance of the volatile situations around the globe. There is shaky ceasefire between Russia and the Ukraine. The situation between North and South Korea remains precarious. ISIL, Boko Haram, and other terrorist organizations continue to gain territory and recruits, slaughtering anyone who does not conform to their perverse ideals. Our respective countries can only guess when the next threat will develop and where we will be sending our sons and our daughters to protect our liberties and freedoms.

That is why it is imperative that our organizations press our respective governments to ensure they provide the necessary resources to have efficient and mobile armed forces with the equipment, training, and manpower to effectively confront these threats, wherever

they may be in the world. It is also vital that those who are willing to give their lives in the line of duty for their country are confident that their country will provide world-class care to them and their families in event of injury or even the Supreme Sacrifice. We need to certify that the benefits and services they need are in place and accessible as soon as they may be required. That is that on the battlefield, no one is left behind. *(Applause)*

This is our obligation to those who serve our nations, and it is the obligation of our governments. It may not matter for political agendas and election platforms. It is unwavering commitment of citizens and country to pledge that the care of soldiers, sailors, and air personnel is a national priority. *(Applause)*

With collective determination and continued hard work, we will continue to fight for all veterans, past, present and future. Again, thank you for having me here with you this week, for all of your warm and wonderful hospitality. I wish you the best in your deliberations this week. God Bless. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: America shares a special bond with the people of South Korea. Sixty-five years ago the United States and our U.N. allies were in the beginning of a long and bloody war to preserve freedom on the Korean Peninsula. The two Koreas remain technically at war. With us today is the chairman of the 1.3 million member Korean Veterans Association. He is a former commanding general of the 1st Republic of Korea Army. Please welcome General Cho, Nam Poong. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: General Cho, Nam Poong, ROK Army (Ret.)
Chairman, Korean Veterans Association**

National Commander Michael D. Helm, members of The American Legion, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen. On the occasion of the 97th National Convention of The American Legion, I would like to extend on behalf of the 10 million members of the Korean Veterans Association my sincere congratulations to each and every one of you. It is my great pleasure to meet and join with you today in this great city of Baltimore.

Dear members of The American Legion, you are the veterans who bravely fought in various wars including the World Wars, Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War, and the recent War Against Terrorism. There might be Korean War veterans here today who put their lives on the line in the Korean War. I would also like to acknowledge that 531 soldiers from Maryland sacrificed their precious lives to protect democracy in my home country, Korea, during the Korean War. Today, the Republic of Korea stands as a strong, democratic, and peaceful nation. It was your unselfish service in Korea which allowed the beautiful country to bloom. On behalf of all the Korean people, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all of you. *(Applause)*

Beyond the Republic of Korea, all of you should be proud of yourself. Because of your service and dedication around the world, more and more people are enjoying democracy and human rights. Today, the Republic of Korea is actively participating in international efforts to preserve peace and democracy in many parts of the world as the United States did for us over 60 years ago. *(Applause)*

Korea fought with the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan to defend the universal value of democracy. Engineer and medical teams of Korea Armed Forces are also helping so many people around the world. Contrary to the efforts of the Republic of Korea, North Korea sticks to its provocation policy and nuclear ambition. These have led to escalating tension on the Korean Peninsula. However, the people of the Republic of Korea are firmly determined and vigilant to defend the mother nation, and the Korean government is formally pushing forward with Korean Peninsula Trust-Building Process which is promise toward peace and unification. The Korean Veterans Association and American Legion can parade more concretely to realize this goal. *(Applause)*

This will lead to ever stronger leadership between our two organizations. I believe that the strong alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea will be final winner on the Korean Peninsula. (*Applause*)

Once again, I would like to congratulate you on this year's National Convention and wish that God may richly bless you, your families, and the great United States of America. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Taiwan is a nation that is always vigilant. Because of its proximity to Communist China, the Taiwanese military is prepared for an attack that could come at any time. The Taiwanese people also know that taking care of veterans is an important priority when fielding a strong defense.

We are fortunate to have with us a gentleman from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office, Lieutenant General Mike, and I'm grateful that he said I could call him "Mike," Tien. Mike, welcome. (*Applause*)

**Greetings: Lt. Gen (Ret.) Tsai-Mai "Mike" Tien, Senior Advisor
Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office**

My dear National Commander Helm, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. It is my great honor to address your National Convention on behalf of Veterans Affairs Council, the Republic of China on Taiwan. The American Legion and the VAC have been sharing a profound relationship for many years.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of both the end of World War II and the Republic of China's victory in the War of Resistance against Japan. There were more than 23 million Chinese people killed during the war, include 3.21 million soldiers and officers as well as the generals. The purpose of commemorating the Second World War is not to boast about the victory but to remember the historic facts and to prevent war from happening again. It is not about provoking hatred against another country but is about seeking peace. Only by remembering history can one learn the realities of war and realize peace is priceless.

The ROC-U.S. military cooperation has a long history, reaching its apex in World War II when the U.S. government helped us to fight the Japanese. For one good example, the American Volunteer Group, AVG, also known as The Flying Tigers led by General Chennault, which later became the 14th Army Air Force in China, within less than eight months they had shot down nearly 300 Japanese planes, which established the basis of the victory in fighting against Japanese.

Today the people in Taiwan, the Republic of China, have been pursuing a life of peace, democracy, and freedom, just like the Americans. Under the leadership of President Ma, we will remain a faithful ally of the United States and hope to further deepen bilateral friendship and cooperative relations. Soldiers play an irreplaceable role in both the nation and the society; therefore, taking care of the veterans is one of nation's utmost responsibilities. (*Applause*)

The purpose of the VAC is to take care of our veterans and their beloved family. The value of our existence is to serve and look after those who have dedicated themselves to serving our country. As your founding father George Washington emphasized, "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation." Dear comrades, let's work shoulder-to-shoulder to provide a better and more comprehensive service to our heroes and their families. (*Applause*)

Dear American Legion friends, the veterans of the Republic of China cherishes your friendship for you have always been in support of us. We look forward to your continuous friendship and support, therefore we could enhance our defense capability and join more

international organizations. Thank you and wish you have great success and good health. *(Applause)*

Now, in recognition of National Commander Helm's contribution in strengthening our mutual friendship and support to VAC, on behalf of the government of the Republic of China, I would like to present National Commander Helm the Order of Resplendent Banner with Cravat. My colleague, Mr. Wong, please read the citation.

MR. WONG: *Certificate of Award. To accompany the Award of the Order of the Resplendent Banner with Cravat to Mr. Michael Helm, National Commander of The American Legion, in recognition of his significant contribution to the promotion of friendship and veteran exchanges between ROC and the USA, his efficacy of USA's provision of defense articles to our government and his support for ROC's participation in international organizations. The Order of the Resplendent Banner with Cravat is hereby awarded on the date of September 1, 2015, by Kao Kuang-chi, Minister of National Defense, Republic of China. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I will bring you up to date on the Legacy Scholarship. Through the year we had donations of \$195,315.72, on the Run we collected \$242,312.56, and today as a pass-through and made their donations, they made donations of \$812,055. It gives a grand total, \$1,249,684.13. That's a new record for The American Legion Riders. I want everyone in here to stand now and give a great ovation to what a great group they are. *(Cheers and applause)*

Our next guest is a veteran of the U.S. Coast Guard and a justice of the peace in Harris County, Texas. He was appointed by the Supreme Court of Texas to be on its advisory committee in 1999. Today he leads an organization that is comprised entirely of the descendants of patriots who served in the American Revolution. Since its founding, its membership has included 16 presidents of the United States. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the president general of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, Judge Thomas Lawrence. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Judge Thomas E. Lawrence, President General
National Society-Sons of the American Revolution**

Good afternoon. It is a genuine honor for me to be with you today and bring greetings from the Sons of the American Revolution, which we refer to as the SAR. I am also a member of The American Legion in Texas, and I also personally benefited from American Legion programs when I was growing up in Mississippi. I played American Legion Baseball and attended Boys State where I learned about government and citizenship, lessons that have served me well throughout my life.

The members of the SAR are blood descendants from the brave soldiers and sailors who fought for independence in the American Revolution. They were our first veterans. The mission of the SAR is to instill the principle and vision of our founding fathers and mothers in our citizens and particularly in our youth and to remind everyone of what George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams hoped America would become.

Just as The American Legion teaches citizenship, so do we. We have programs for elementary and middle school students. And for high school students, we have an Eagle Scout program, oration program, and essay contest. For teachers we have an American History Teacher Award, and we also promote and have programs for JROTC and ROTC.

Through our youth programs, we hope to leave the next generation with a legacy of patriotism and a love for our country. And, of course, we honor veterans, as many of our members are veterans. We volunteer at VA hospitals and military facilities and generally provide any services and comfort that we can.

Perhaps one of our most interesting programs was started about three years ago, and we call it Operation Ancestor Search. It is a free genealogy training program offered to

severely injured servicemembers in military hospitals, VA hospitals, and Armed Forces retirement homes across the country. It helps wounded warriors and veterans who need recreation and a diversion from their injuries to discover their roots and understand their family history. Ancestry.com provided a grant for us to hire a project manager and gave access to their genealogy records, and the SAR provided the expertise and the manpower to make it work. It was a way for Ancestry.com and the SAR to say thank you.

The veterans we have helped love learning about their ancestors. They enjoy the occupational therapy it provides, and they appreciate that we care about them and spend the time to help them. We have established this program in 23 facilities across the country so far and are working on more. Although Ancestry.com has chosen not to renew our grant, we are going to continue the program as long as we possibly can using our own resources.

Our ladies auxiliary is also involved in helping veterans. My wife is starting a program of encouraging the ladies to take on even more projects to help veterans by minting a challenge coin. The coin will be given to ladies who help veterans, and the design of the coin is interesting. The coin has inscribed around the outside the words "Help a Veteran," and in the middle is a picture of a veteran who looks to be in his late 70s being hugged by a pretty girl. The expression on his face tells me that he is probably thinking: 50 years ago that recruiter told me if I would just join up, I could put on a uniform and all the pretty girls would want to hug me. And now it has finally come true.

It is now my pleasure to make a presentation on behalf of the SAR. Commander Helm, would you please join me. The SAR has a Distinguished Patriot Award which a president general may only grant one time during his term, and we present that to someone who has demonstrated outstanding patriotism to our country. Having gotten to know Commander Helm from his appearances at SAR events, I was impressed by his passion and his commitment to the ideals that both of our organizations promote. I am therefore pleased to present the Sons of the American Revolution Distinguished Patriot Award to National Commander Michael D. Helm. Congratulations. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The National American Legion Press Association is an association of editors, writers, and professional communicators who are members of The American Legion, the Sons of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, and other subsidiary organizations. Today more than 1,000 members of the Press Association are involved in spreading the message of The American Legion Family, keeping members up-to-date on local organizational happenings. Bringing us greetings this morning is the president of NALPA and the sergeant-at-arms for the Department of Kentucky, Michael W. Moses. (*Applause*)

**Greetings: Michael W. Moses, Sr., President
National American Legion Press Association**

Good afternoon, Commander Helm, distinguished guests, and fellow Legionnaires. On behalf of the National American Legion Press Association, I welcome you to the American Legion's 97th Annual Convention. My name is Mike Moses, and it has been my honor to serve as NALPA's president this past year. It has been a very exciting year for NALPA as we initiated a complete transformation of our association into a more responsive and communication partner for your communication needs.

We started this year with a period of self-evaluation in conjunction with the national media and communication staff by examining the products and services that we provide. We asked ourselves many of the same questions that our members ask us, more specifically: What does NALPA offer that you can't already get someplace else? Additionally, in today's world of increasing demands on our time, our younger generations of veterans are always asking: What's in it for me? Answering those questions became the crux of our planning for our future and how we can increase our value to you.

These are the results of a member survey and candid comments across our American Legion organizations. We developed a plan of action. We are confident we are now on our way to reinventing our association to make it a more invaluable, well-known asset to The American Legion and the individual Legionnaire. What will result from our endeavor is a new NALPA with new products and resources not available anywhere else.

The first phase of our organization is scheduled for completion this fall, and we will continue our transformation to our valuable, state-of-the-art press association that will help our American Legion Families succeed by offering communication products and resources that you need. I hope you will keep a close eye on our progress as we continue to evolve in the communications partner that you expect and deserve from The American Legion. Also remember that this is your press association, and as such your comments, suggestions, and your candid feedback are always welcome.

On behalf of our executive director, Patrick Rourke, and our new incoming national president, Priscilla Imbergia, I invite you to join the National American Legion Press Association, and I encourage you to become involved in your individual department media, communications, and press affiliations.

Thank you for allowing me to address you this afternoon, and I hope this convention experience continues to be rewarding and that it's helping you further missions, goals, and programs of The American Legion. May God Bless our great country, our veterans, past, present and future, and, of course, The American Legion. Thank you.

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

National Commander's Report to Convention **Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, National Commander**

My fellow Legionnaires, Legion Family, members and friends, in 1979 the Pittsburgh Pirates shocked the baseball world with a surprise World Series win over the Baltimore Orioles. What stood out about that team was its motto: "We are family." Those players truly bonded and accomplished great things.

To me, that is why our organization is successful. When I was elected as your national commander, I had that goal for all of our family members, that's The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and The American Legion Riders, that we would raise that \$4 million to support our national charities and programs. Well, guess what? Prior to today, this morning, when I looked on the website, we had \$5,946,357. At one time I thought maybe, if we all worked hard enough, I might end up being the \$6 million commander. Well, the Legion Riders have stepped in now. With their donations today, it's got me looking like maybe I might be a \$7 million commander.

It's all because of all of you. Thank you very much for all you do and your donations, how you stepped up for all of those charities and made that part of my year more successful than anyone, including me, ever dreamed that would happen.

But on the other side, one figure that especially needs to climb, and that's our membership total. Some departments, as you will see during tomorrow's awards presentations, are doing a great job. Others, well, we've got some work to do, we've got some places to go, to make that happen. We are just four years away from celebrating our centennial. The American Legion has been a force for good in this country for almost 100 years. If we don't attract new members and keep our existing ones, who is going to provide the leadership and the voice that Americans have relied on for most of the 20th century?

Let me tell you that those posts, Legions, Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Rider chapters that are out there working as a family in their community for the community and for the veterans in their community, they're growing. I've got American Legion posts that are over 200 percent and 150 percent and have been for two and three and four years. They are successful. Our programs are successful. The reason for our

existence as an organization is needed today as much and probably more than ever before. So let's continue to work on that.

I have personally seen the respect that is given to The American Legion Family. I received a special briefing at NATO headquarters in Brussels, testified before Congress. As a matter of fact, my testimony before Congress and the ensuing questions, that was the longest testimony that The American Legion had ever experienced in front of Congress. I took that not as a sign of what they might be thinking, except that they were thinking we want to know what The American Legion is thinking. They have a great respect for us, and we need to take advantage of that.

I visited the Oval Office and visited with the president. We talked about claims and appeals. I've been given access over in Laos and Vietnam to MIA excavation sites. Just a little side note on that, while we were in Vietnam, we got some pictures of my cousin, who has been MIA for many, many years. They indicated at that time they were going to go in this late March and make the recovery of him and Captain Carr, and then some issues came up and they were unable to do that. But it's been my understanding now that this March they're going to go back and do that. I guess as your national commander, there wasn't a whole lot that I could get excited about on that except that next year, guess what, I'll have my blue cap back. I know some other people that can do something, too. So we're going to bring Danny home. *(Applause)*

These opportunities are rare, the positions that I've been in. But they weren't because of me. They weren't just because of me being from Nebraska. They were because of you. I represent you, the largest veterans service organization in the country. That's where the respect comes. Your membership is why they respect me and our organization. Our current membership window has been open since August of 1990. That's 25 years. And it won't be closing anytime soon. The Guard and Reserve units have been activated repeatedly to fight in the Global War on Terrorism, to help with natural disasters.

As much as we enjoy serving America, our country needs a strong American Legion. The unemployment rate for recently discharged veterans is still higher than it is for the general public. That's why The American Legion sponsors hundreds of veteran job fairs across the country. Our National Credentialing Summits are designed to create a seamless system for integrating military skills and training into the civilian workforce. Some federal laws have addressed the credentialing issue, but it still remains a problem because of state laws and certifications that state agencies require. The American Legion would hope that all 50 states would recognize the talent and skills offered by our veterans. This is a message that we should all be bringing back home to our departments and to our state legislatures.

The American Legion has been giving life-changing assistance to thousands of veterans across the country through our Veterans Benefits Centers. The VBCs have already helped veterans obtain more than \$1 million in retroactive benefits. Millions of dollars of future benefits will be awarded to frustrated, homeless, and disabled veterans who accepted the lifeline of assistance offered by The American Legion. *(Applause)*

While we believe veterans are entitled to quality care at any VA, we recognize that last year's crisis required some drastic action. Moreover, many veterans do not live close to a VA and can be better served by local healthcare providers. That is why The American Legion supported the Veterans Choice Act as a temporary solution until VA can meet the growing need of the veteran.

You all know that people say we don't want to use the VA. It's broken and not good health care. Well, guess what? So many veterans tried to access health care within the VA system that the VA found themselves in a budget shortfall. They had to go back to Congress, and with our support, we encouraged Congress to take some of that Choice Act money to fix a problem that they had already created and to go ahead and continue to serve our veterans because we are about serving our veterans one at a time. *(Applause)*

There were things within the Choice Act in the first place that made no sense, the "as the crow flies" rule where people had to drive many miles but since it was right straight

across the pond, less than 40 miles, then they still had to use the VA. There were a lot of things wrong with that. We fixed many of those problems. We also gave access to VA to use that Choice money. But keep in mind and always remember: The American Legion invented VA health care. We're not going to let someone else, no matter who it might be, step in and privatize health care for our veterans. *(Applause)*

And as people that are running for president keep coming up with ideas, I want you to keep your eye on them pretty quick. The judge always gets nervous when I say things like this. But we're seeing some pretty crazy ideas out there. And make sure that you're there to stand up for veterans health care.

We must also remember that a career in the military is like no other. We applaud proposals to award 401(k) benefits for the majority of military members who choose to serve less than the 20 years required to receive that military pension. However, we remain strongly opposed to any plan that diminishes the pension benefits for those who have spent decades of their lives serving this nation. *(Applause)*

The current retirement system creates a strong incentive for experienced NCOs and officers to remain in the military, even though they could often be climbing a corporate ladder and earn more money on the outside. No matter how it is dressed, when a government commission is created to reform or study military benefits, it is almost always with the purpose to save the government money. Our military members have done nothing that would merit a future decrease in their pay or their benefits. To the contrary, The American Legion strongly believes that in order to attract quality men and women to our all-volunteer force, the pay and benefits offered must be worthy of those who sacrifice so much for us. *(Applause)*

It's pretty hard to convince someone to stay in the military if while they're deployed overseas we're reducing the salary, healthcare, and retirement benefits for that military family. There is absolutely no way that we can address our national security problems without making sure that our military family is taken care of very, very well.

We must also remain vigilant about our call for a strong national defense. Much of Iraq has fallen to ISIS, Syria is a mess, and terrorism is spreading across parts of Africa. Our troops are still fighting a war in Afghanistan. And let's not forget about that crazy regime in North Korea. Yet sequestration still looms, and our military is funded at pre-World War II levels. We should not allow our national and elected leaders to pit personnel costs and benefits against weapons, modernization, and training. We can and must do both. We owe it to every man and woman in uniform that the United States will never send them into harm's way without the resources needed to win. *(Applause)*

We must be prepared to meet threats within our own borders. While The American Legion has always supported legal immigration for those who have been properly screened and who have obeyed the law, we remain very strongly opposed to granting amnesty to those who enter illegally. *(Applause)*

At the same time, when ISIS, al Qaeda, and other terrorist organizations are killing innocent Americans, it makes no sense to let our guard down and send a message that the United States is open or a soft target. Simply put, America must secure our own borders now. *(Applause)*

Whether you're a brand-new citizen or your family has been in this country for generations, all Americans should cherish and respect the flag that symbolizes our freedom and our way of life. The American Legion remains firm in our commitment to protect the American Flag from desecration. *(Applause)*

It is time for Congress to pass a constitutional amendment to make this a reality. I have always believed we are a "for God and country" organization. It is in the Preamble of our Constitution and on the back of every American Legion membership card. Last month we won a great victory for both God and country. After more than 26 years of battling in the courts, it appears as if the Mount Soledad Cross can remain in place. *(Applause)*

Our friends at the Mount Soledad Memorial Association purchased the parcel surrounding the 43-foot cross in California. It shouldn't have been necessary for a private group to have to buy land from the government in order to preserve a veterans memorial, but we are grateful they did.

Whether it's the flag, a memorial, or the emblem outside an American Legion post, symbols matter. They are a reflection of our values, our country, and our beliefs.

Your posts, squadrons, and units are the individual lights of your towns. They are little campfires of freedom, campfires of communities, and campfires of reaching out. We need those campfires to burn a little brighter. It's up to you to go out there and engage them. I know that you're up to this task. Thank you for listening.

Thank you for serving and helping with me this year. God bless our troops, God bless you, and God bless our American Legion Family. Thank you all very much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: A former elected official in Hamilton County, Indiana, he has a B.A. in economics from Westminster College. As vice president and senior relationship manager for Fifth Third Bank's Greater Indiana Region, he manages more than 50 accounts and has a portfolio in excess of \$700 million. Please welcome Carl S. Mills. (*Applause*)

**Presentation: Carl S. Mills, Vice President and Senior Relationship Manager
Fifth Third Bank**

Good afternoon. I've done this for several years, and it never ceases to amaze me to just see the growth of this organization. And this morning really hit me with a lot of the younger kids. But let me back up.

I haven't served in the service, but I have a father who served in the Navy in World War II and a father-in-law who served in the Army Air Force. My father's not alive anymore, but my father-in-law turned 90 this year. And about three years ago he finally started sharing with us. He flew from India to China during the war, and the stories that he told us that he kept all those years, and he was 19 when he did that, and it just really hit home, not only to me but more importantly to my children. That they had no idea that Grandpa did that. And he served in The American Legion in Broad Ripple in Indianapolis for about 15 years, and unfortunately now he's in a nursing home and he can't go on.

But it's interesting to me that it goes back to all of those years, and fast-forward my experience with The American Legion actually was when I played American Legion Baseball for a couple of years. Back when I played, which was a few years ago, we didn't have all the travel teams and things like that, and that was the only place I could play summer baseball. What that afforded me was that a couple scouts saw me and I got drafted to play with the Pirates. And I thought about 1979 when the commander talked about "We are Family." I certainly remember that time.

But what the other thing it did, which was more important, actually, than playing baseball, was it afforded me a scholarship to go to college and to get an education. And that just started me on my path to go forward. Listening to these young people this morning, I'm just excited with the growth, your newest members of the Legion, and watching them forward. And especially the gal who was the orator, she was something else. But I thoroughly enjoyed that.

So on behalf of Fifth Third Bank, we've been involved with the Legion for a number of years, and the last several years we've made a contribution to the charities. Commander Helm, what I'd like to do is try to get you to be a \$7 million man, and so we're going to do our portion of that. It's our contribution for a great partnership that we have with The American Legion, especially in Indianapolis. And we highly value our relationship, and we look forward to working on many projects for years to come. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The Chair recognizes George West, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials & Rules, for the purpose of making a report.

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

To the 97th Annual National Convention of The American Legion Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015.

Thirty-seven delegates to the Committee on Credentials and Rules met at 8:30 a.m., August 30, 2015, in the Hilton Baltimore, Holiday Ballroom.

George West (NH) was elected Chairman, and Timothy Collmer (NY) was elected Secretary.

The Committee proceeded to the business agenda by considering the Rules of the Convention. A motion was unanimously approved by the Committee to adopt the Standing Rules of the Convention as they appear in the revised Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion as approved by the National Executive Committee in October 2013. Each Department Delegation Secretary was provided two copies of the Uniform Code at this Convention.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried to accept the Delegate Strength Report as reported by the National Adjutant certifying membership 30 days prior to National Convention. It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the report be based upon the provisions of Section 3, Article V, of the National Constitution: Five delegates for each Department, plus one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer thirty (30) days prior to the opening of the Convention (August 3, 2015); and one alternate for each delegate. In addition, in accordance with Section 3, Article VII, members of the National Executive Committee, which committee includes the National Commander, who exercises his vote only in his capacity as Chairman of the National Convention, and five (5) National Vice Commanders are delegates to the National Convention. For a total of 2,496 delegates to the National Convention.

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

In accordance with the membership report certified to the Convention Committee on Credentials and Rules by the National Adjutant on August 3, 2015, and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 2,495 plus the National Commander allocated as follows:

Alabama	28	Illinois	102
Alaska	13	Indiana	99
Arizona	52	Iowa	58
Arkansas	22	Kansas	41
California	125	Kentucky	32
Colorado	32	Louisiana	32
Connecticut	28	Maine	28
Delaware	17	Maryland	66
Dist. of Col.	8	Massachusetts	49
Florida	138	Mexico	7
France	10	Michigan	86
Georgia	56	Minnesota	91
Hawaii	9	Mississippi	23
Idaho	17	Missouri	53

Montana.....	18	Puerto Rico	11
Nebraska	41	Rhode Island	12
Nevada	16	South Carolina	30
New Hampshire	24	South Dakota	27
New Jersey	61	Tennessee	36
New Mexico	19	Texas	87
New York	129	Utah	15
North Carolina	53	Vermont	19
North Dakota	23	Virginia	61
Ohio	115	Washington	38
Oklahoma	27	West Virginia	26
Oregon	27	Wisconsin	69
Pennsylvania	181	Wyoming	14
Philippines	7		

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

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

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of New Hampshire, I move that the Report of the Convention Committee on Credentials & Rules, to include the aforementioned delegate strength report, and the adoption of the standing rules of the convention as they appear in the Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion, be approved. ... *Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: We have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion? All those in favor say aye. All opposed, no. Motion carried. Good job.

I now call on Judge Gaughan for the report of the Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments.

Report: Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments
Hon. Vincent M. Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman

To the 97th National Convention of The American Legion, Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2 and 3, 2015.

The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 30, 2015, in the Ruth Room, First Floor of the Hilton Baltimore, Baltimore, Maryland. Committee Liaison Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD) called the roll and announced that 37 members of the Constitutional Amendments Committee were present. The following report was authorized by the members and is hereby submitted to this Convention.

The meeting was opened by Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD), who acted as temporary chairman. He stated a quorum was present and proceeded to the first order of business, which was the election of a chairman and secretary.

Vincent M. Gaughan (IL) was elected Chairman and Frank Porter (MD) was duly elected Secretary. Thereupon they assumed their respective places.

Copies of the Resolutions, the Report of the Standing Committee, the National Constitution and By-Laws and the Uniform Code of Procedure for the Organization of National Conventions of The American Legion, which include the Standing Rules of Convention, were made available to all members of the Committee.

The Chair called upon Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., National Judge Advocate, to give a summary background report on the resolutions assigned to the Committee, which was done.

A motion was made by Charles G. Mills (NY) and seconded by Richard Perry (AZ) that all members of the Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws and any Past

National Commanders who were present at the meeting, but not actual delegates to the Convention Committee be seated with voice but no vote. The motion was carried by the members.

The Chair further announced that he was in agreement with the Report of the Standing Committee on the Constitution and By-laws.

Resolution No. 16 (AZ) was considered. The Chair announced that this resolution was out of order.

James R. Johnson (LA) made a motion to reject Resolution No. 16 (AZ), seconded by Carl Swisher (OH). Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 45 (WA) was considered. The Chair announced that this resolution was out of order.

J. W. Smith (AR) made a motion to reject Resolution No. 45 (WA), seconded by Joe Sims (GA). Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 62 (MN) was considered. The Chair announced that this resolution was out of order.

James R. Johnson (LA) made a motion to reject Resolution No. 62 (MN), seconded by Charles Goodin (MO). Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 1 (NEC) was considered. The Chair announced that this resolution was in order.

Jerry J. Marcouillier (DE) made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 1 (NEC), seconded by Richard Perry (AZ). Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 1: Marketing Commission

Origin: Resolution No. 1 (NEC) May 2015

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments

WHEREAS, Article I, Section 6, of the National By-laws, which currently reads:

Section 6. There shall be the following standing commissions: Americanism Commission, Convention Commission, Finance Commission, Internal Affairs Commission, Legislative Commission, Media & Communications Commission, National Security Commission, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission, Veterans Employment & Education Commission.

The commissions shall consist of such number of members of The American Legion as the National Executive Committee may from time to time determine. Appointments to such commissions shall be made by the National Executive Committee upon nomination by the National Commander. The National Executive Committee is empowered to assign duties and responsibilities to all standing commissions and committees and to group standing committees with commissions for the purpose of efficient supervision and coordination of activities; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee recommended the Marketing Committee become the Marketing Commission; and

WHEREAS, This recommendation is hereby accepted, which means the provisions of the National By-laws, Article I, Section 6 must be amended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That Article I, Section 6, of the National By-laws, be amended to read as follows:

Section 6. There shall be the following standing commissions: Americanism Commission, Convention Commission, Finance Commission, Internal Affairs Commission, Legislative Commission, Marketing Commission, Media & Communications Commission, National Security Commission, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission, Veterans Employment & Education Commission.

The commissions shall consist of such number of members of The American Legion as the National Executive Committee may from time to time determine. Appointments to such commissions shall be made by the National Executive

Committee upon nomination by the National Commander. The National Executive Committee is empowered to assign duties and responsibilities to all standing commissions and committees and to group standing committees with commissions for the purpose of efficient supervision and coordination of activities.

Resolution No. 2 (NEC) was considered. The Chair announced that this resolution was in order.

Marshall Behr, Jr. (NJ) made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2 (NEC), seconded by Richard Perry (AZ). Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 2: Eligibility for The American Legion Auxiliary

Origin: Resolution No. 3 (NEC) May 2015

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments

WHEREAS, The eligibility requirements of The American Legion Auxiliary appear in the National Constitution of The American Legion as Article XIII, Section 2 which reads as follows:

"Membership in the American Legion Auxiliary shall be limited to the mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters and grandmothers of members of THE AMERICAN LEGION, and to the mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters and grandmothers of all men and women who were in the Armed Forces of the United States during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990, to the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the Government of the United States; all dates inclusive, or who, being citizens of the United States at the time of their entry therein, served on active duty in the Armed Forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any of said periods, and died in the line of duty or after honorable discharge; and to those women who of their own right are eligible for membership in THE AMERICAN LEGION."; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion Auxiliary by action of its 2013 National Convention has requested a change in its eligibility requirements to refer to direct and adopted female descendants instead of daughters, granddaughters and great-granddaughters; and

WHEREAS, This change has been recommended to the National Convention by the National Executive Committee; and

WHEREAS, This change has been reviewed and approved by the Constitutional Amendment Committee; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That the eligibility requirements for the American Legion Auxiliary in Article XIII, Section 2 of The American Legion National Constitution be amended to read as follows:

"Membership in the American Legion Auxiliary shall be limited to the grandmothers, mothers, sisters, wives, and direct and adopted female descendants of members of THE AMERICAN LEGION, and to the grandmothers, mothers, sisters, wives, and direct and adopted female descendants of all men and women who were in the Armed Forces of the United States during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990, to the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the Government of the United States; all dates inclusive, or who, being citizens of the United States at the time of their entry therein, served on active duty in the Armed Forces of any of the governments associated with

the United States during any of said periods, and died in the line of duty or after honorable discharge; and to those women who of their own right are eligible for membership in THE AMERICAN LEGION."

The Chairman then asked for a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be permitted to sign the report to the Convention on behalf of the members of the Convention Committee. James R. Johnson (LA) made the motion and it was seconded by Charles Mill (NY). The motion was carried unanimously.

The Report of the Constitution and By-laws Committee is attached to this report as an exhibit.

Richard Perry (AZ) made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chairman. The motion was seconded by Doug Uhrig (WY). The motion was carried unanimously.

The Chairman then thanked the Committee for its cooperation and productive meeting. The meeting was then declared in recess pending a call from the Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. Commander, as a delegate to the 97th National Convention of The American Legion, I move the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Do I hear a second? ... *Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Is there any discussion?

DELEGATE DOUGLAS (FL): Commander!

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Please go to a microphone.

DELEGATE DOUGLAS: Commander, I'm Shirley Douglas, Post 357, Clermont, Florida. The term "wives" needs to be changed to "spouse." We are disenfranchising a lot of female veterans' husbands from joining one of The American Legion's associations. If they have no tie to a military service, right now they cannot join the Auxiliary, the Sons, or the Legion. So it needs to be changed to "spouse" instead of "wives." Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GAUGHAN: I'm not going to disagree with the merits of your suggestion. But as an assistant national parliamentarian, any amendment has to be submitted in writing. And this is an oral amendment, so it is improper, so you're out of order. Gently, gently out of order.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Is there any more discussion? All those in favor so indicate by the usual sign. Opposed? The Report of the Constitutional Amendment is adopted. And by a two-thirds majority.

The Chair recognizes Larry Besson of Illinois, chairman of the Convention Committee on Internal Affairs, for the purpose of making a report.

... At this time, National Vice Commander Haggan assumed the Chair.

Report: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman

At 9:30 am, Sunday, August 30, 2015, 74 delegates assigned to the Convention Subcommittees of Internal Affairs Other Matters and Membership met initially in the Holiday Ballroom, Section Three, at the Hilton Baltimore Hotel for the purpose of electing a Chairman and Secretary for Internal Affairs. Larry Besson (IL) was elected Chairman and Ken Orrock (SD) was elected Secretary for the purpose of reporting to the Convention.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to accept and sign the report of the Convention Committee on Internal Affairs on behalf of its delegates.

It was moved and seconded that the Chairman, Internal Affairs Convention Committee be authorized to accept the actions of the two sub-committees assigned to Internal Affairs on the resolutions assigned to the respective sub-committees.

It was also regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Chairman and Secretary may make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of this Committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolution(s).

No further business was discussed at this point.

The delegates were then dismissed into the two subcommittees assigned to the Internal Affairs Convention Committee — Membership and Other Internal Matters--- for the purpose of reviewing and acting on the assigned resolutions.

The Convention Sub-Committees met and considered their assigned resolutions as follows:

Membership

Kenneth E. Orrock, South Dakota, Chairman

At 10:00 am, Sunday, August 30, 2015, 41 delegates assigned to the Convention Subcommittee on Membership met in the Poe Room on the second floor of the Hilton Baltimore Hotel. Kenneth E. Orrock (SD) was elected Chairman and Gary Schacher (NY) was elected Secretary. The subcommittee considered one resolution and its disposition is as follows:

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 76 (IL): Include Department Service Officer Website Link on Annual Dues Notice

Other Internal Matters

Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman

At 10:00 am, Sunday, August 30, 2015, 33 delegates assigned to the Convention Committee on Other Internal Matters met in the Holiday Room, Section 3 on the second floor of the Hilton Baltimore Hotel. Larry Besson (IL) was elected Chairman and Larry Sheets (FL) was elected Secretary. The committee considered fifteen resolutions and their dispositions are as follows:

Approved

Resolution No. 97: National Eisenhower Memorial

Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, Former Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force, former Supreme Allied Commander-Europe, and the 34th President of the United States Dwight D. Eisenhower deserves a prominent and permanent national memorial in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, General Eisenhower was a lifetime member of American Legion Post 39 in Abilene, Kansas, and besides being a veteran himself, he vigorously supported veterans, notably creating Veterans Day, and he supported programs such as The American Legion's "Back to God" campaign; and

WHEREAS, In honor of his dedicated service to veterans, The American Legion awarded him its highest honor, the Distinguished Service Medal in 1945; and

WHEREAS, Each day 492 World War II veterans who fought under General Eisenhower pass away, and there are only about 855,000 World War II veterans still alive, and these veterans want to, in their lifetimes, pay their respects to their fallen comrades and to the Commander who liberated Western Europe and protected democracy from the oppressive tyrannies of fascism, and to their Commander-in-Chief who waged peace

during the Cold War and ended the Korean War, created the interstate highway system, launched our space program, advanced and defended civil rights; and

WHEREAS, The Eisenhower Memorial Commission was created by P.L. 106-79 by two World War II-decorated veterans and Legionnaires, the late Senators Ted Stevens of Alaska and Dan Inouye of Hawaii and is currently led by the enthusiastic dedication of decorated World War II veteran and Legionnaire, Senator Bob Dole; with the mission to complete a national memorial to honor Dwight Eisenhower to inspire future generations with his devotion to public service, leadership, integrity, life-long work ethic, and total devotion to the values and practices of democracy; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission have given final approval to the design of the Eisenhower Memorial; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's policy on naming American Legion Posts is to obtain the approval of the family if a post is to be named after an individual and thus the same policy should be followed by obtaining the Eisenhower family approval of the design before Congress appropriates any money for this Memorial; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion endorses and supports building the National Eisenhower Memorial, if the design is acceptable to the Eisenhower family, as a lasting tribute to not only General and President Eisenhower, but also to the bravery and sacrifices of the troops who fought under him, and recommends that Congress take action in appropriating funding to begin construction so as to expedite the memorial's completion by the goal date of 2019, the 75th anniversary of D-Day, and to ensure that our remaining World War II and Korean War veterans can visit the Memorial in their lifetimes; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion, the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization, supports the use of government, corporate and private funds for design and construction of the Memorial on the National Mall which includes being maintained by the National Park Service as a National Monument and without any financial obligation on the part of The American Legion.

Resolution No. 98: Appreciation to Host City

Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, There has been a spirit of cooperation and friendship along with mutual helpfulness evidenced by the Legionnaires of Maryland, the officers of the Convention Corporation and the department, and by the officials and the people of Baltimore, Maryland; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That we express our deep appreciation to the Department of Maryland, Governor of Maryland Larry Hogan; Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake; the city of Baltimore, Maryland, including the Fire Department, Police Department, and other Public Safety Officials, and to The American Legion Maryland National Convention Corporation, Inc., Clarence M. Bacon, President, around this nucleus has been built the moving force that provided for every necessity that made for a successful and enjoyable convention.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Media & Communications

Resolution No. 61 (MN): Include National Guard and Reserve in Spirit of Service Awards

Referred to the Standing Commission on Internal Affairs**Resolution No. 15 (AZ): Additional Names to be Added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial****Received and Recorded****Resolution No. 14 (AZ): Endorsement of Robert B. Gilmore, Jr. for National Historian****Resolution No. 55 (DE): Endorsement of Larry J. Marcoullier for National Vice Commander****Resolution No. 83 (NM): Endorsement of Paul L. Espinoza for National Vice Commander****Rejected****Resolution No. 54 (NY): Official Class B Uniform****Resolution No. 59 (OK): Male Spouse Eligibility in The Sons of The American Legion****Resolution No. 70 (IL): Congressional Change in Eligibility Dates for Membership in the American Legion****Resolution No. 72 (IL): United States Naval Sea Cadet Award****Resolution No. 86 (FL): United States Naval Sea Cadet Award****Resolution No. 87 (AL): Paid up for Life Membership Dues****Resolution No. 88 (AL): American Legion POW/MIA Ride****Resolution No. 90 (PR): Rename Department of Puerto Rico**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BESSON: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Illinois, I move for the adoption of this report. And thank you, Mr. Commander, for allowing me the time for this report.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAGGAN: Do I hear a second? ... *Second.*

Is there any discussion? All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All Opposed? The report from the Convention Committee on Internal Affairs is adopted. ... *At this time, a musical interlude was played. ... At this time, National Commander Helm resumed the Chair.*

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

He has assumed responsibility for heading a department that is in desperate need for a strong leadership. The American Legion is eager to work with him to restore confidence that veterans can have in this essential health care system that was created for them. He has been accessible to veterans by offering his cell phone number and preferring to be called "Bob" instead of "Mr. Secretary." Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. *(Applause)*

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

Thank you. Commander Helm, thank you so much for that kind introduction and, more importantly, thank you for your tremendous leadership of The American Legion over the last year. Let me also acknowledge Dan Wheeler, who I visited in Indianapolis, and Verna Jones, who I work with every day, and the other members of The Legion's leadership team.

Fellow veterans, ladies and gentlemen, working at VA is a higher calling. We have the best, most inspiring mission in government; that's "to care for those who have borne the battle and their families and their survivors." And we have the best, most deserving clients in the world. Recently, some people in Washington and in other parts of the country have begun to question the need for VA. One thing I've learned since my confirmation as secretary is there is no substitute for VA. (*Applause*)

Veterans need the VA, American medicine needs the VA, and Americans everywhere benefit from the VA. What's so special about VA health care? VA's health-care system is supported by three pillars, a unique system that depends on the strength inherent in all three of these pillars: research, education and training, and clinical care. VA researchers have made major contributions to medical science, earning three Nobel Prizes and seven Lasker Awards, among many other recognitions. Among our achievements: the implantable pacemaker, cardiac pacemaker; the first successful liver transplant; the nicotine patch; the shingles vaccine; multiple advances in prosthetics, in identifying genetic risk factors for numerous diseases, and in treating spinal cord injuries at our Bronx VA; groundbreaking strides in treating the signature wounds of today's conflict, post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury.

We're affiliated with over 1,800 educational institutions, and we train 120,000 health-care professionals every year; 62,000 medical students and residents; 23,000 nursing students; 33,000 students in other health fields. An estimated 70 percent of all U.S. doctors have trained with VA, and we're the largest employer of nurses in the nation.

Last year we completed over 55 million appointments for 6.6 million unique patients. We're a national leader in telehealth services, caring for 700,000 veterans through over 2 million telehealth visits in fiscal year 2014. We're also a national leader in reducing MRSA infections. These are infections that occur in hospitals. They're down 68.6 percent since 2007, compared to 30 percent for non-VA hospitals. Since 2004 the American Customer Satisfaction Index has shown that veterans give VA health care higher ratings than patients at most private hospitals.

VA researchers continue to receive awards for excellence. Twenty-six years ago Drs. Bill Bauman and Ann Spungen teamed up to find out how spinal cord injuries caused many parts of the body to function poorly. In 2001 they established the National Center of Excellence for the Medical Consequences of Spinal Cord Injuries, where they and others have worked to improve the quality of life for paralyzed veterans. Last year they were honored with the Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal.

Now, VA does face some serious challenges. The veteran population is aging. In 1975 there were about two million veterans 65 years or older. In 2017 there will be almost ten million veterans 65 or older. 46 percent of veterans will be 65 or older.

Simultaneously, the number of claims and medical issues in claims has soared. In 2009 VBA completed almost 980,000 claims. In fiscal year 2017, we project we'll complete over 1.4 million claims, a 47 percent increase. But there's been more dramatic growth in the number of medical issues in claims, and you would expect that with an aging population, 2.7 million in 2009 and a projected 5.9 million in 2017. That's a 115 percent increase over just eight years.

These increases were accompanied by a dramatic rise in the average degree of veterans' disability compensation. For 45 years, from 1950 to 1995, the average degree of

disability was 30 percent. Since 2000 the average degree of disability has risen to 47.7 percent. The percentage of veterans receiving VA compensation follows the same pattern. From 1960 to the year 2000, it was stable at about 8 ½ percent. But in just 14 years, since 2001, it has more than doubled to 19 percent. So while it's true that the total number of veterans is declining, the number of those seeking care and benefits is increasing, fueled by the aging veteran population, more than a decade of war, Agent Orange-related claims, an unlimited claims appeal process, increased medical claims issues, far higher survival rates on the battlefield, and more sophisticated methods for identifying and treating veterans' medical issues.

Veterans' demand for services and benefits has exceeded VA's capacity to meet it. It's important that Congress and the American people understand why that is happening. Compounding the problem, VA is saddled with some seriously aging infrastructure: 900 VA buildings are over 90 years old; more than 1,300 are over 70 years old; a full 60 percent are over 50 years old. These older buildings don't meet today's standards for hospital construction and need to be replaced with new buildings. The Independent Budget, produced by the veteran services organizations, estimated that closing the major construction gap will take \$19 billion to \$23.3 billion over the next ten years.

Here's an example. This is an actual building owned by VA in Minneapolis. It was built as a gas station in 1932. We wanted to tear it down and build a homeless shelter on the site, but the building's supposed historical value has made that almost impossible to do, so it's still standing. VA currently has 336 buildings vacant or less than 50 percent occupied. That's 10 ½ million square feet costing about \$24 million annually.

VA is committed to delivering timely, high-quality health care to our nation's veterans. We know we still have far too many veterans waiting for care, but we're now providing more care for veterans than ever before, both inside VA and outside VA. To meet the immediate demand for access, we have extended hours. 880,000 appointments completed during extended hours. That's weekends and evenings. We've activated 80 buildings to add 1.3 million square feet to our health-care footprint, plus another 420,000 square feet in VA-owned properties. We stepped up recruiting of new personnel. 38,000 hired in the past 10 months, for a net increase of 12,000 VHA employees, including over 1,000 more physicians and over 2,700 more nurses.

We've issued over a million more authorizations for Care in the Community, a 41 percent increase. Speaking of Care in the Community, VA has been referring veterans to Care in the Community for decades whenever it made sense for veterans. And we're not opposed to making greater use of Care in the Community to meet the access challenge. But we know that many veterans prefer VA health care. In fact, a March survey of veterans found that 47 percent offered Choice elected to wait to get their care inside the VA, 78 percent were satisfied with their VA care experience, and 82 percent would recommend VA care to fellow veterans. One more thing to keep in mind. Most veterans already have a choice. Seventy-eight percent of veterans have either Medicare, Medicaid, TRICARE, or some other private insurance. Many come to VA because of the disparity in out-of-pocket costs between their insurance and VA care. Here's an example. VA provides the best hearing aid technology anywhere. Medicare doesn't cover hearing aids, and most insurance plans have limited coverage of hearing aids, at best. So choosing VA for hearing aids saves veterans around \$4,200.

We are providing regular updates of patient access data so you can see how well we're doing. No private health-care system does this. No private health-care system wants to be measured by appointment wait times. It's not an accepted industry practice, but we're doing it. Here are the results: 7 million more appointments completed in the past 12 months, 2.5 million more within VA, 4.5 million more in the community versus last year; 97 percent of appointments are now completed within 30 days of the veteran's preferred date, 87 percent are within seven days, 22 percent are same-day appointments; average wait time

for completed appointments, four days for primary care, five days for specialty care, three days for mental health care.

More progress: 12 percent increase in after-hours and weekend appointments, 19 percent increase in telehealth, 36 percent increase in e-consults, 36 percent increase in the number of veterans receiving Care in the Community, 47 percent reduction in the Electronic Wait List, and 93 percent reduction in the New Enrollee Appointment Requests List. Overall, our physician productivity has increased 8 percent and on a health-care budget increase of only 2.8 percent.

So you see, we are working harder and smarter, and the result is more care for more veterans. Of course, health care is just one of nine VA lines of business. Other lines of business include life insurance, mortgage insurance, pensions, disability compensation, memorial affairs, and, of course, education. We've got reasons to be proud in those areas, too. We guarantee 2 million home loans with the lowest foreclosure rate and highest satisfaction rate in mortgage lending. For the past decade, the American Customer Satisfaction Index has ranked our cemetery system as the top customer service organization in the nation, public or private.

In the past two years, we've cut the disability claims backlog by 84 percent. It peaked at 611,000 claims over 125 days in March 2013. Just last week it dropped to less than 100,000 claims, the lowest it's ever been in VA history. (*Applause*)

We've got more to do. Accuracy has also improved, from 83 percent in 2011 to 91 percent today. And veterans are waiting much less time for pending claims. In March of 2013, the average wait was 282 days. Today it's below 105 days. That's a 63 percent decrease.

How did we get there? We fielded a new electronic system for handling claims. We hired more claims staff, and we've had them working mandatory overtime for much of the past four years. The mandatory overtime can't go on forever. To keep the backlog down, we need to right-size our claims staff, which will require more funding. If we don't fund to requirement, we can't be expected to meet our requirements.

As you see here, we've also made a substantial dent in veterans homelessness, which has declined 33 percent from 2010 to 2014. Ending homelessness is a local effort, so we're working with over 2,000 partners all over the country.

Of course, to meet the challenges of the 21st century, VA will need adequate funding. The president's 2016 budget request would provide the funding we need: \$168.8 billion; \$73.5 billion in discretionary funds and \$95.3 billion in mandatory funds for benefit programs. The discretionary request is an increase of \$5.2 billion, or 7.5 percent above the 2015 enacted level, providing resources to continue serving the growing number of veterans seeking care and benefits.

But if the president's budget request is cut by \$1.4 billion, as the House voted to do, here's what it would mean if we applied those cuts across the board: \$688 million less for veterans' medical care, the equivalent of over 70,000 fewer veterans receiving VA medical care. No funding for four major new construction projects and six new cemetery projects. The House would inhibit hiring and retention of the best people by limiting the right of employees to appeal adverse actions and by prohibiting performance awards and bonuses for Title V, SES, and other employees.

The House would also deny VA the long-term budgetary flexibility needed to serve veterans the way they want to be served. Budget flexibility is extremely important. Demand for VA care is rising, for reasons already mentioned. Veterans are turning to VA for more of their care, but not for all of their care. On average, enrolled veterans relied on VA for just 34 percent of their care. But if that percentage increases just one percentage point to 35 percent, our cost increases about \$1.4 billion.

Congress acted to avert an end-of-fiscal-year crisis by giving VA limited flexibility to use Choice Act funds for Care in the Community to cover a shortfall in funding for Care in the Community. But that flexibility lasts only until the end of this fiscal year, September

30. To accommodate present and future changes in demand for care, VA needs permanent flexibility to move funds among accounts. We need to be able to move money to where the veteran goes. *(Applause)*

VA is committed to making the Choice program work. You can see our progress in the use of Choice authorizations for eligible Care in the Community. Choice doesn't cover everything, but for what it does cover, authorizations are now over 50 percent. But we still need Congress to fully fund the president's 2016 budget, and we need Congress to give us the permanent flexibility to move funds to where it's most needed based on where veterans choose to get their care.

I mentioned earlier that some people in Washington are questioning the need for VA. Others have attempted to squeeze the needs of veterans into a sequester budget; it artificially constrains the budget regardless of what it means to the programs we're trying to operate within the VA or across the government. All of this, lack of flexibility to give veterans real choice, the cuts, the discussions about whether veterans actually deserve a medical system to call their own, all leads to the same place. It leads to a place where the needs of veterans are secondary to ideology, where scoring political points or shortsighted budget policies are more important than veterans, a place where VA is set up to fail, a place where there are no winners, and veterans who have sacrificed so much for much nobler purposes are the ones left suffering. That is unacceptable to me, and it should be unacceptable to anyone who claims to actually care about the sacred responsibility that we as a nation have to care for those who have borne the battle. That's why I'm here, and that's why you are here. *(Applause)*

And that's why we all need to make sure our voices are heard and that we press forward in putting veterans first, not ideology. *(Applause)*

You should know we are listening hard to what veterans, Congress, employees, and veteran service organizations are telling us. What we hear drives us to a historic, department-wide transformation, changing VA's culture and making the veteran the center of everything that we do. We call it MyVA, and it entails many organizational reforms to better unify the department's efforts on behalf of veterans.

First, we want to improve the veteran experience to be seamless, integrated, and responsive to the veterans' need. Second, we want to improve the employee experience, focusing on people and culture, to better serve veterans. Third, we need to improve our internal support services like our IT systems. Fourth, we need to establish a culture of continuous improvement, and we are going to use Lean Six Sigma to do that. Fifth, we want to enhance strategic partnerships. There is a lot of goodwill in this country to help veterans; we want to make sure they are in the tent and helping VA.

The key to improving the veterans' experience at VA is a customer service approach. I call it the Platinum Rule. You've heard of the Golden Rule, I'm sure: Treat others the way you want to be treated. The Platinum Rule, I think, is a bit higher standard: Treat others the way they want to be treated. Their perspective, their needs, their wants, that's all that counts. Focus on the customer. From their perspective, we've already taken several MyVA steps to improve the veteran experience. We've also brought aboard several key leaders with broad experience in business. Eleven of my 18 direct-reporting senior executives have joined VA since my swearing in, and the entire leadership team is as committed as I am to making VA the number one organization in customer service. *(Applause)*

There's so much more I could tell you if we had the time, more that we've accomplished, but perhaps more importantly more that we will accomplish in the coming months. We're listening to veterans more, we're listening to employees more, and together we are making lasting improvements at VA so that in the future veterans will say with pride, "That's my VA."

But we need the continued support of Congress, veterans, of veteran service organizations, of the American people to make the necessary changes to keep moving forward. And I know we will do that with your help.

May God bless the veterans of this country who have done so much for all of us, may God bless the United States of America, and may God bless The American Legion. Thank you very much. *(Applause)...* At this time, a musical interlude was played.

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

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

Thirty-Nine members met at the Hilton Baltimore, Johnson Room at 9 a.m. on Sunday, August 30, 2015, in Baltimore, Maryland. Shawn Long, CPA (Indiana), National Finance Director, opened the meeting as staff liaison and informed the committee that nominations were in order for Chairman and Secretary. Kenneth D Danilson (Iowa) was elected chairman, and Carl E. Levi (Tennessee) was elected secretary, by unanimous vote.

Chairman Danilson introduced Benedict Lee (North Carolina) Chairman of the Media and Communications commission for the purposes of a report. Mr. Lee reported that the Media and Communications division is \$196,764 ahead of budget.

Chairman Danilson reported that the 2014 consolidated financial statements were audited by Crowe Horwath who issued an unqualified opinion.

The Chairman then introduced the National Treasurer, George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Indiana), who updated the committee on the economy.

Treasurer Buskirk then asked the chairman permission to call Shawn Long, CPA forward for the purpose of a special report concerning the need for a dues increase.

Shawn Long, CPA presented a slide presentation outlining various matters all related to the financial need for a dues increase.

The Summary of his presentation is:

- For nearly 100 years dues have remained constant when measured in 1919 dollars.
- Membership is down, resulting in a current loss in cash flow of more than \$5.6 million each year.
- Current Cash flow is insufficient to support the organization. National only had \$4.1 million dollars of unrestricted cash at June 30, 2015.

Treasurer Buskirk then recommended that the national dues be set in accordance with Res. 3 at \$18.50.

Secretary Levi read the resolve clause of Res. 3. A motion was made by Carl Levi (Tennessee), seconded by Gaither Keener (North Carolina) to adopt Res. 3. A discussion ensued and Gaither Keener (North Carolina) called for the question. The resolution passed by voice vote.

Resolution No. 3: Increase in National Per Capita Dues of The American Legion

Origin: Resolution No. 4 (NEC) May 2015

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Finance

WHEREAS, The National per capita dues remained constant at \$13.50 since January 10, 2007, although our nation has experienced a cumulative inflation rate of 13% during that time, and inflation continues to erode the value of the dollar; and

WHEREAS, Membership has declined 16.01% resulting in \$5,679,896 less dues revenue; and

WHEREAS, The national organization, by practicing prudent fiscal management, including increasing income from fundraising, increasing income from royalties and, improving the efficiency of DMS, has been able to absorb rising costs through 2015, but will no longer be able to do so; and

WHEREAS, The national organization has a current unencumbered cash reserve of \$13.3 million which is estimated to provide for operations for two years with no ability to provide for contingencies; and

WHEREAS, It is the opinion of the National Executive Committee of The American Legion that a per capita dues increase is necessary in 2016 in order to ensure solvency for the national organization, and, in the absence of a per capita dues increase, the national organization will be forced to curtail drastically some of its traditional and long-standing programs; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee of The American Legion, upon recommendation of the National Finance Commission, did at its regular meeting held in Indianapolis, Indiana on May 6-7, 2015, express its opinion that without a dues increase for the year 2016 the National Organization will be forced to curtail its traditional and long-standing programs, and did adopt a resolution recommending an increase in the national per capita dues for the year 2016; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That the national per capita dues for the calendar year 2016 be fixed in the amount of \$18.50, provided that any 2016 dues paid at the old rate of \$13.50 shall be accepted if remitted by the Departments to the National Organization by close of business January 20, 2016, which is the mid-winter 80% target date; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That rates established for purchase of a paid-up-for-life membership shall remain at the current rate until June 1, 2016, at which time the Finance Commission shall adjust the rate to reflect prudent actuarial assumptions.

The chairman called **Res. 10 (CO)** out of order since Res. 3 passed and the subject matter overlapped.

Kevin Bartlett (Michigan) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. Tom Mattice (Idaho) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote. As being no further business, the meeting recessed at 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected delegate to this convention, I move for approval of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Do I hear a second? ... *Second.* Is there any discussion?

DELEGATE BALL (OK): Commander, Jerry Ball from Oklahoma. I would be remiss if I did not bring up the fact that January 20 date is going to create a hardship on many posts. And I realize I have nothing in writing, but I just wanted to bring it up. I told my constituents that I would. Thank you, Mr. Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Just a comment. Thank you. Is there any more discussion? All in favor, please indicate by the usual sign. Opposed? Motion carried. The report of Finance is adopted.

The National Emergency Fund donations will be collected after the Membership Awards tomorrow, and Child Welfare Foundation donations will be collected after the Children & Youth report tomorrow. Operation Comfort Warriors collections will be Thursday.

I have one announcement. Tomorrow, in order to continue my rise to the top on my donations, I've got some coins and ink pens and pictures and all kinds of stuff like that. I'm going to have a table set up at the back of the convention hall tomorrow and Thursday; you can make some kind of a donation to any charity you want, or to The American Legion charities would probably be preferable, and have those, and then I can do signatures on pictures and all that tomorrow, too. But I want you to have an opportunity to have them but

also to have an opportunity to continue to raise money for American Legion charities. Legionnaires, please join me in a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

... The delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The time is now ten minutes after 3:00. The Convention will stand in recess until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning. Thank you, all.

... At 3:10 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, September 2, 2015, at 9:00 a.m.

**PROCEEDINGS
SECOND DAY**

Wednesday, September 2, 2015

... At 9:00 a.m. the delegates assembled for the second day of the 97th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.

Call to Order

Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The Convention will come to order. Please rise and address the Colors. Hand salute. Two.

... At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: We'll have a prayer by the national chaplain.

Invocation

Tierian 'Randy' Cash, North Carolina, National Chaplain

Good morning. The Lord is my light and my salvation. The Lord is the stronghold of my life of whom should I be afraid.

Let us pray. Eternal God in whose name we trust and pray, we give You thanks for the blessings of liberty and freedom. We are thankful for the honor, courage, and commitment of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coastguardsmen, both past and present. We are grateful for the determination and compassion of patriots who in defense of home and family have contributed to the continuation of that liberty.

We are aware that those contributions have often come with great personal sacrifice. May these same values which have made our nation strong be renewed today in this hall. These things we ask of You, O God, preserve the tie that binds us and lend us Your mind and Your standard as we serve one another, our country, and Your kingdom forever. Amen.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The Convention is now in session. Just to bring you an update, the donations for all of our charities with the whole American Legion Family, now stands at \$7,121,186.41. *(Cheers and applause)*

We are going to keep on taking some victory laps. And wouldn't it be great if we could hit eight? All right. There you go. My son, I always rhyme with him, and he always says, "Oh, Dad, I hate this."

Certificate of Appreciation

Tierian 'Randy' Cash, North Carolina, National Chaplain

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The man who has served as our National Chaplain this year is a truly dedicated man of God. He is a member of American Legion Post 30 in Lincolnton, North Carolina, and a retired Navy captain who served as a chaplain in Afghanistan; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; Liberia and many other places during his 30 years in uniform. He and his wife, Mary Diane, have three children. It is an honor for me to present a Certificate of Appreciation marking his year of service as national chaplain to Randy Cash. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: *Certificate of Appreciation presented to Tierian "Randy" Cash, National Chaplain of The American Legion, 2014-2015. Given in recognition of faithful and honorable service to The American Legion. (Applause)*

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

Presentation:

**Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion
Bron Mogenis, Trustee, Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation**

**Louis Cavaliere, Chairman of the Board, Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation
Christine Beady, Executive Director, Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation**

BRON MOGENIS: Good morning. Ladies and gentlemen, honored guests, Legionnaires, my name is Bron Mogenis. I'm wearing two hats today. One is I'm representing my department, which is the District of Columbia, as the ANEC and the other one is I'm a trustee of the Chapel of Four Chaplains.

I would like to tell you a little bit about myself and a little bit about the Chapel of Four Chaplains before we give out the awards to people that a certain committee had to review and make sure they are deserving of these awards. It is sort of a complex system we've got going.

A little bit about me. I take exceptional honor in being here and doing this. The reason for that is because I was not born in the United States. I came here when I was a child. I spoke four languages. I didn't speak English. We spent some time at Ellis Island trying to reconstitute some documents that during our flight across the borders we had to get rid of. So I have a lot of experience with people that show warmth and kindness to me, especially people from the military.

I never dreamt that a person like me would be allowed in our society to rise to the various levels. I've been a policeman. I've been an FBI agent. I've been a diplomat for six years in four different countries. And now I'm an American Legionnaire, and I would like to do my job in the very best way. I think it is when we start to mold people, the younger people who don't have the life experiences that we in this hall have, that's when you have positive results.

I have brought with me two people, executive officers from the Chapel of Four Chaplains, which is located in Philadelphia in the Navy Yard. It's a non-profit organization. The young lady is Christine Beady. She is the director, and we have Louis Cavaliere, who is the chairman of the board of the Navy Yard.

The United States is known, as you probably know, for their characteristic, and its characteristic of their culture to help their neighbors, to reach out to them. The Chapel of Four Chaplains is a non-profit organization, and the awards are built upon a manifestation of what the chaplains stand for.

The historical event that relates to our awards happened in the U-boat infested waters in the North Atlantic on January 23, 1943. The USAT *Dorchester* that was quickly assembled as a transport ship for soldiers with about 800 people onboard left New York City and was in an area of what we call the Torpedo Junction. Most of the people were seasick. The waters were very bitterly cold, gale winds and so forth. It was about seven days later, on February 2, 1943, when the *Tampa* sonar detected the presence of a German submarine. Even though they had an escort, the three ships, they happened to hit home with one of the torpedoes. It was at midnight on February 3, 1943. It landed in the boiler room. The boiler room exploded, releasing all kinds of gas. Some people died instantly. Other people started to climb into the lifeboats, and they were overcrowded and so forth.

The survivors that we talk to tell us that the only people that created calmness with 800 people onboard, who were told to go to sleep with their lifejackets, and of course they were all young people. Who cares what an elderly supervisor says? Sometimes you say that, and sometimes you regret it. But, anyway, when they started to hand out the lifejackets

that were left over and there were none left and there were still soldiers, the four chaplains took off their own lifejackets, their only means of survival, and gave it to the four airmen. And they were seen going down.

The impact was so great of molding spirit, patriotism, democracy. And all these things are very fragile. That's why we have an obligation to make sure that none of them break down. This is the strongest country and the best country.

I put some literature available out front, so you want to do some more particular reading. But to recognize and encourage volunteers, selflessness, to make sure that in the future we have people that do things just like that, the Chapel of Four Chaplains created what they call the Honor Humanitarian Award that is given to people who for their whole lifetime, their whole career, is with selfless deeds, things that they do for other people.

The people that we're honoring today. The Bronze Medallion will be given to National Commander Michael Helm. The Humanitarian Award Certificates will be given to National Vice Commander Doug Haggan, National Vice Commander Richard William Neville, National Vice Commander Paul Sanford, National Vice Commander William Robert Bryant, and National Vice Commander Gerald Jacobs.

I do understand that one of those folks because of poor health may not be able to come. So without any further ado, I would like to bring forward the national commander. Congratulations, sir. It is my pleasure.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Thank you very much.

ANNOUNCER: The Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion from the Chapel of Four Chaplains is granted for extraordinary contributions to the well-being of others at the national or world level, to world peace, or to interfaith or interethnic understanding.

The Medallions are being presented by Bron Mogenis, Trustee, Chapel of the Four Chaplains; Foundation Board Chairman Louis Cavaliere; and Foundation Executive Director Christine Beady.

They are being awarded to National Commander Michael Helm, National Vice Commander Doug Haggan, National Vice Commander Paul Sanford, National Vice Commander Richard Neville, and National Vice Commander Gerald Jacobs. A medallion will also be sent to National Vice Commander William Bryant. (Applause)

BRON MOGENIS: A couple words from the chairman of the Chapel of Four Chaplains.

LOUIS CAVALIERE: I want to be brief. I'm originally from Brooklyn, New York, and I always have to say a few words.

In the Pentagon Chapel there are three stained-glass windows. If you haven't been to the Pentagon Chapel, you should see them. One is Washington at Valley Forge, the other is the first lunar landing, and the third window is the four chaplains on the deck of the sinking *Dorchester*, as Bron Mogenis related to you earlier. They, according to survivors, were last seen kneeling on a slanted bow in prayer after they gave up their lifejackets.

Why is this story so important? Why is it that we are one of the three windows in the chapel at the Pentagon? And what is the Chapel of the Four Chaplains? I've been asked that many times.

In one sense we are a non-profit organization with a dedicated group of directors that include relatives of the four chaplains and relatives of survivors and relatives of those who went down on the ship, a total of 672 in all. We receive no support from major foundations, corporations, or defense contractors, but we struggle to survive through donations of individual members and service organizations such as yourselves. We really appreciate that support, and one of the reasons why we're here is to thank you for that.

In a second sense, the Chapel embodies the concept of the unity of all faiths and races without uniformity. In a third sense, it's a symbol of ultimate self-sacrifice with a legacy of giving to others, and we do this, as we've done today by giving out these awards, to ordinary

people who are doing extraordinary things. And this happens all over our great country. In the final sense, it is a small, beautiful building in the old Navy chapel surviving amidst converted structures and inactive warships in the middle of the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

I urge you to visit us and to sit in one of the pews amidst the bronze plates with the names of those who went down on February 3, 1943, with portraits of the four chaplains, two Protestants, one Catholic, and one Jewish. And that's why this story is so unique. Also paintings, testimonials, mementos from survivors. As you stare at the altar, two scrolls of the Torah to the left with a supporting menorah, a simple cross, a crucifix. And on the rear wall a beautiful stained-glass of the Lord of the Seas, a figure of Christ with one hand on the shoulder of the helmsman and his other hand on the helm.

It is a place for you to ask the question: Despite your faith, your belief, or your training, if the opportunity for the Ultimate Sacrifice to save another were to arise, how would you react? A question only a few of us have been called to truly answer.

The chapel is a place for all of us to reflect, to look back on one's past, to analyze one's present, to reflect on a world in chaos. It is a sacred shrine in which to pray for continued advancements in human rights, for a nation slowly and continually forging the concepts of freedom and equality, and to pray for the future and peace for all humankind.

The best, and we firmly believe this, the best days of this country are ahead of us. Come join us. Come visit us. Philadelphia Navy Yard. We are a slowly growing family with a sacred heritage and a legacy which we cannot allow to fade from our collective memory. Thank you so much, Bron. Thank you so much, Commander Helm, for allowing us to address you. We will see you all in Philadelphia. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: He asked the question: What would you do if you had the chance to save someone's life? Last night during the Commander's Banquet, a Legionnaire from New Hampshire named Bill McDonald was choking on food. Firefighter Jack Dunne from the Department of New Jersey, Post 19, from Bayonne, New Jersey, he is also an active duty New Jersey Air National Guard, did the Heimlich maneuver and saved that man's life. Give him a hand. *(Applause)* And that's what we're about.

USAA was founded by veterans and holds strong to its mission of facilitating the financial security of military families and its core values of service, loyalty, honesty, and integrity. Before joining USAA, our next guest was a senior vice president of operations and contact centers at Capital One. He also served as executive vice president of PNC Bank and holds a bachelor's in electrical engineering and computer science from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He has also earned an MBA from Harvard Business School. The American Legion is proud of its relationship with USAA, a company that shares our values. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the president of USAA Bank, Jamie Warder. *(Applause)*

**Address: Jamie Warder, President
USAA Bank**

Commander Helm, thank you for that warm welcome and thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this distinguished group. It's an absolute honor to be here on behalf of all of my colleagues at USAA. I'd like to start my remarks by thanking all of you in the Legion family. You represent in this audience the very best that this country has. You served, and now you serve those who served.

As I watched yesterday the Youth Champions, the Spirit of Service Awards, your absolute love of Staff Sergeant Pitts, the impact of this Legion shined through. The advocacy, the programs, the fundraising, the volunteerism, community by community The American Legion Family is making a difference for our servicemembers, our veterans and their families. And thank you.

I would argue that the formal programs and the posts and the departments are only part of it. A big part of it is also the mentorship. I actually remember as a young second lieutenant just about to be assigned my first tank platoon, my favorite Legionnaire, a Korean War veteran and my Uncle Chet gave me some pretty sage advice. He said: Jamie, whenever you're in doubt, just shut up and listen to your platoon sergeant. That was very good advice. Thanks, Uncle Chet. *(Applause)*

Let me talk about another organization that's obviously near and dear to my heart, and that's USAA. Like the Legion, USAA has been around for almost a hundred years, and we have an unabashed focus on our servicemembers, our veterans and their families. Our mission is to secure the financial readiness of that group. I am proud of the 27,000 employees at USAA that wake up every day looking to serve those who serve.

It's obvious why USAA and The American Legion Family have such a strong partnership given our shared purpose. We're so proud to support things like this National Convention, Boys Nation, The American Legion World Series, the annual Legacy Run and others. We also support veteran issues more broadly. Veteran hiring. I'm proud to say that 9,000 of my colleagues at USAA served in the United States military in one form or the other. *(Applause)*

We're also champions of financial readiness. And I'd actually like to spend a little time with you on this topic, specifically as it relates to our millennials, our youngest generation of servicemembers, veterans and their families, because I really do think we have both a problem and an opportunity.

First, let's talk about this group. The millennials, as you may know, they are the group that's right now between the ages of 18 and 35. According to many demographers, they will be our largest generation soon. They have proven to be outstanding warriors. They possess all of the courage and passion of their foremothers and forefathers who have served before them and have proven themselves over several decades in service to our nation.

They're statistically the most educated generation and most technologically sophisticated generation in our nation's history. They're literally transforming communication, transforming commerce, transforming whole business models. Despite this, despite their educational advantages, their technological prowess, our millennials are struggling in at least one area, and that's basic financial readiness. I see this every day in my job. I'm sure many of you see it in your children, in your grandchildren, at your posts. It's a real issue.

As a matter of fact, millennials are considered the most financially ill-prepared generation in our nation's history. Nearly half of our enlisted members and their family are now living paycheck-to-paycheck, and 45 percent of this generation's veterans are accumulating unmanageable debt. So we might say: Why is this happening? Because I think understanding the "why" helps us understand the "what we can do about it."

First, millennials just are spending less time in basic money management. It's not something that they're putting effort into right now. Studies have shown that they don't like to talk as much about money. A study I saw actually said that they would rather talk about religion and politics. Let's be clear, they don't want to talk about those things either. But they would rather talk about those two topics instead of talking about money management. And they're just missing some of those basic skills, skills like spend less than you earn, put money away each month for retirement and for a rainy day fund, protect yourself and your family and your belongings, and prepare basic estate planning documents.

At USAA, we are absolutely dedicated to helping our veterans, our servicemembers and their families make smart money decisions that will help them achieve their financial independence. We are all over this. To that end, we are providing financial education and planning tools on every single one of our channels, including, by the way, the USAA page on The American Legion website. All of the tools are available. We're delivering 850 financial management presentations this year on military bases all across the nation. That's two or three a day. And we've introduced a financial readiness score. This is a tool that

millennials have shown to use which will actually score their financial readiness and give them some real sage advice on how to become more financially ready.

I'm hoping that at USAA and with The Legion family's help, we can start to reverse this trend through both formal programs and that informal mentorship that I know Legionnaires are all about. I just want to thank you all in advance for helping with this very real problem. I'm convinced if any group can make a difference here, it's The American Legion Family and USAA working together. So thanks for that little break in opportunity. I actually just want to finish up where I started.

We at USAA are absolutely grateful to The American Legion and everything you do to support veterans and their families. We will continue to support you. Thank you, all, for your legacy of patriotism and your enduring love for our great nation. May God bless each of you, may God bless our troops, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I now call on Past National Commander Dan Dellinger to present the Plaque of Appreciation to Gaither Keener, the vice president of The American Legion National Convention Corporation of North Carolina, for hosting the 2014 National Convention in Charlotte.

**Presentation: Plaque of Appreciation to the City of Charlotte
Host City of the 2014 National Convention**

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: Good morning. Vice President Keener, it is my great pleasure to offer you this plaque in gratitude of your efforts last year. But, I must say, normally this is a very easy event, not that easy to put on. But last year with the passing of President Jerry Hedrick at the beginning of the convention, Gaither and the team from North Carolina stepped up. They did a fantastic job to guarantee that the attendees at the 96th National Convention had a most successful convention.

And I would like to offer my gratitude, and I can't say enough about how hard they worked with the sudden passing of our great friend to ensure that all the attendees at the 96th Convention had such a great time. So on behalf of the national organization, Gaither, thank you very much for your diligent work and hard work of your team of volunteers. Thank them very much. Give them a big hand. *(Applause)*

CONVENTION VICE PRESIDENT KEENER: Legionnaires, on behalf of the members of the Department of North Carolina, the city of Charlotte, and the North Carolina Convention, more particularly on behalf of Jerry, we thank you for attending last year. The whole north state looks forward in serving the Legion again and hosting the convention in the future. And Jerry's memory will never be forgotten. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: We just keep on doing good on donations. We had a blood drive this year at the convention, and we donated 70 units. We had seven double red cell donations. Thank you. Thank you, all. I think this is something we need to keep reminding ourselves of the great jobs that we still do back in our own departments with blood drives throughout the year. The American Legion Family is a great participant in the blood donor program.

You know, we always talk about our 1 percent of military. The population being committed to the defense of this nation. Also on the blood drive, only 10 percent of those eligible to give blood actually do. And certainly you know that that percentage is going to be much larger here in The American Legion Family. So thank all of you that donated for this convention and continue to donate at home. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Despite what we often hear in the news media, America is blessed to have so many amazing and dedicated police officers and firefighters. These are men and women who are willing to sacrifice their lives to keep us safe.

Our 2015 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year is a decorated detective and deputy with the Marion County Sheriff's Office in Ocala, Florida. He is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and Army Reserves, serving with the 351st Military Police Company during Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is a member of American Legion Post 284 in Ocala.

In 2013, he had a 71 percent closure rate for robberies, far exceeding the national average of 25 percent. He is a member of the SWAT team and has arrested numerous dangerous felons. A gospel musician and singer, he has performed in local concerts, along with his wife and children, to raise money for charitable causes. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm round of applause for Deputy Sheriff Benjamin Lee Adams. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: 2015 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year
Benjamin Lee Adams
Marion County Sheriff's Office, Ocala, Florida**

There you are, Florida. I just want to say thank you to everybody. This entire process of getting us up here has been first-class all the way. I want to thank you, Mr. Helm. Thank you, Joe. They told me yesterday "You have about a minute." So I'm going to make history because I'm also a southern Baptist preacher, so we'll see if I can do this.

One of the things real quickly I just want to bring up. I don't want to discount what this award means. Not at all. I wouldn't do that. But I want to bring attention to something to wrap this whole thing up. Just in the past month we had seven law enforcement officers that were gunned down. Some of them were sought out and executed. These are men and women that made a sacrifice that resembles that of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We can still say Jesus Christ in public, can't we? *(Applause)*

But they had an example before them, and it was men and women of iron resolve just like you. Men and women that set an example, that are continuing to fight the good fight. And I tell you what, I promise you keep fighting the good fight, and we'll keep fighting the good fight back home. Amen.

Thank you very much, guys. Have a great day. We appreciate it. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: This is to certify that The American Legion has bestowed the title of The National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year upon Benjamin Lee Adams for outstanding selfless service over and above normal duties through heroic acts, community service, and professional achievement, thereby exemplifying the meaning of the phrase "America's Finest." You reflect great credit upon yourself, the Marion County Sheriff's Office of Florida, and law enforcement officers everywhere.

Presented by The American Legion at the 2015 American Legion National Convention in Baltimore, Maryland. (Applause)

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

Our 2015 American Legion Firefighter of the Year has served as an EMT for 21 years and a volunteer firefighter for 15 years in Clearwater, Nebraska. He is a Desert Storm veteran and member of American Legion Post 122 in Dodge, Nebraska. He has led his department for most number of calls responded to every year for his entire career. He is a trauma review specialist and currently the training officer for West Point Rescue of Nebraska. He was one of the lead responders in a town that I recently visited, Pilger, Nebraska, after two devastating tornados wreaked havoc on the community last year. Ladies and gentlemen, please extend a warm welcome to our National Firefighter of the Year, Steve R. Brune. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: 2015 Firefighter of the Year
Steven Brune
West Point Volunteer Rescue, West Point, Nebraska**

Thank you. Thank you, Commander Helm. What an honor. What a privilege to be standing here today. You've awarded me the 2015 Firefighter EMT Provider of the Year. This has been overwhelming. To be a little more descriptive, it's been awesome, great, fantastic, uplifting, satisfying, and everything else you could possibly imagine, plus a whole bunch more. I've experienced this because of you and The American Legion. What an awesome organization to belong to.

In addition to thanking The American Legion for sponsoring this Firefighter EMT of the Year program, I would also like to thank National Commander Mike Helm for his wisdom and great leadership; Department of Nebraska Commander Mike Reimers; Past Department of Nebraska Commander Fred Craigie; my Nebraska district commander, my post commander for the support they have provided to me through this process. I would also like to thank the Law & Order Committee. The individuals assign the task of selecting just one firefighter in the nation. I'd also like to thank my wife, my family, my friends, my captain, my employer for supporting me in the passion I have for fire and rescue. Without them, this would not be possible.

So you may ask: Where do you and I cross paths? Let me tell you, it will be on the worst day of your life. On that day, you will call me. You know my number, 9-1-1. You will expect me to solve the crisis that just occurred during the worst day of your life. Whether it be a medical emergency, a vehicle accident, or some other unimaginable, embarrassing incident, either way, after that call, you expect me to solve all your problems.

That is exactly what I live for, my passion for fire and rescue. That makes me a caregiver and a difference maker. "Why?" you may ask. Because lives matter to us. All lives matter. *(Applause)*

So let me end with a heartfelt thank you and thanks for selecting me as the 2015 Firefighter EMT Provider of the Year. I'm very proud to represent The American Legion in this capacity. May our paths cross again without the use of a 9-1-1 system. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: This is to certify that The American Legion has bestowed the title of National Firefighter of the Year upon Steven R. Brune for outstanding selfless service over and above normal duties through heroic acts, community service, and professional achievement, thereby exemplifying the meaning of the phrase "America's Bravest." You reflect great credit upon yourself, West Point Rescue of Nebraska, and firefighters and emergency medical technicians everywhere. Presented by The American Legion at the 2015 American Legion National Convention in Baltimore, Maryland. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Our next guest has been recognized by the Veteran Institute for Procurement for his work to help veteran-owned businesses. He has helped obtain funding for a wide range of critical investments including infrastructure, biotechnology, and education; public transportation in the metropolitan Washington area; and anti-gang initiatives. He is the ranking member of the House Budget Committee.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome from Maryland's Eighth District, Representative Chris Van Hollen. *(Applause)*

**Address: The Honorable Chris Van Hollen, Jr.
Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on the Budget**

Thank you very much, and welcome, all of you, to Maryland. I'm proud to represent the Eighth Congressional District in Maryland and very proud to have the men and women of The American Legion with us here in Maryland.

And I want to thank Michael Helm, the national commander. I want to thank Brett Reistad, who is the American Legion Legislative Commission chairman. And I also want to acknowledge some of my fellow Marylanders who are here today, including the past national commander and head of this gathering, Clarence Bacon; and Rick Santos; as well as Maryland Department Commander Lew Trott and Maryland Department Adjutant Russ Myers and Maryland National Executive Committeeman Ed White. Great to have those fellow Marylanders with us, and it's also great to be at this gathering of thousands of men and women who have served and sacrificed in defense of the ideals on which our country was founded. We salute all of you and thank you for your service.

I want to start by recognizing there are 20 million veterans alive today, including half a million here in our state of Maryland. Their service spans, your service spans from World War II to the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, Desert Storm, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and other conflicts in between. There are also the many survivors of those loved ones who made the Ultimate Sacrifice, and we salute you and the families who gave up so much for our country. We're indebted to all of you, and a grateful nation must make sure that we extend to you the same kind of dignity that you extended to your country in serving our nation.

It's very important that we not just speak the words of providing the support, but we deliver on those words. That is true when it comes to disabilities backlogs. It's true when it comes to healthcare benefits. And, for goodness sakes, we should make sure that there is no veteran in the United States who is homeless after serving their country. (*Applause*)

Now, all of you know well that over the last several years there have been troubling revelations at the Department of Veterans Affairs, including the scandal over long waiting times for veterans seeking health-care appointments, inexcusably long delays in resolving disability claims, and a multi-billion dollar shortfall for veterans services just this year. Despite some progress, it's clear that the VA is still in need of major reforms to remake the agency, to make it less bureaucratic, more transparent, more accountable and more responsive to veterans' needs. We need a VA that's built not just for today, but for the demands of tomorrow.

However, it's also important to recognize that no amount of reform at the VA will address another very real potential threat to veterans benefits, and that is the threat from these across-the-board budget cuts that go by the name "sequestration," a word many people have heard about in the country during these debates, but translated very simply, sequestration cuts mean dramatic across-the-board reductions in resources for federal agencies, including the Veterans Administration and other veterans programs.

So I want to take a moment to talk about this issue, to put it in its proper frame and perspective, because it's important to know how we got here as we try and decide as a country how to get our way out of sequestration. These cuts from sequestration will begin to be triggered on October 1 of this year, if Congress is not able to get its act together and come up with an alternative approach to achieving the kind of budget changes we want without these across-the-board cuts.

So let me just provide a little tutorial. I want to invite you into sort of a discussion in the Budget Committee, because I think it's important to understand the big components of our national budget so that we can together, Republicans and Democrats alike, and others, try and figure out the best way out of this budget dilemma which does threaten to harm our national defense as well as veterans programs.

Back in 2011, Congress was worried about the long-term deficit in this country. We have the Baby Boom generation. More people are going to be retiring. Other demands on our budget. And so Congress said let's do something about it, and Congress passed something called the Budget Control Act. BCA for short. The Budget Control Act tried to reduce our long-term deficit in two ways. One, it immediately put some reasonable caps on defense spending and what we call non-defense discretionary spending. Non-defense discretionary spending includes things like our investments with the National Institutes of Health, what we spend on the FBI, what we spend on Homeland Security. And, yes, non-defense discretionary spending includes the monies we spend to care for our veterans.

Now, those cuts were made in the reasonable manner over a period of time. So they were going to be phased in. But the Congress also believed we needed to go further in terms of long-term deficit reduction, but the Congress couldn't decide exactly how we were going to do that at the time. I want to take a moment to explain some of the features of the budget. The U.S. budget includes something called mandatory spending, which is the funds we spend together for things like Social Security, for Medicare, for Medicaid, for other programs of earned benefits, where people have earned a benefit and therefore they will receive the value of that benefit over time.

So two-thirds of what we spend collectively as a country is for those mandatory expenditures, things that are on automatic pilot. If you're over 65 or 67, you qualify for Social Security. When you qualify for Medicare, that will be there for you. So it's important as we have these budget discussions to recognize that a full two-thirds of our budget falls in that category that's automatically there. Congress doesn't decide each year how much to spend on Social Security. Congress doesn't decide each year how much to spend on Medicare. Those funds are spent based on the number of people who qualify for those services.

So it's the other one-third of our budget which we call discretionary, discretionary because each year, each year Congress has the discretion to decide how much to spend in those categories. So one-third of the budget is discretionary. Most of the debates you hear in Washington are about that one-third of spending. And of that one-third, a little more than half of it is spent on defense, on our national defense. And a little less than half of it is spent on all those other government functions, like NIH, like the Veterans Administration.

So when Congress back in 2011 passed the Budget Control Act, we, as we said, made some reductions over time to that one-third of the budget in discretionary. Some reductions were made in defense. Some were made in non-defense. But as I said, Congress wanted to make more reductions overall than that. The idea was that those additional savings would be found in two areas: One, savings through reforms in some of the mandatory spending programs, but also reductions in some of the big tax breaks and tax loopholes that are part of our tax code and, in my view, don't belong there. In fact, if you add up all the so-called special interest tax breaks in the tax code, the total amount spent per year is more than we spend on Social Security.

Let me give you an example of a tax break that I think that has no good reason or purpose other than some powerful interest was able to get that benefit in the tax code. Hedge fund managers on Wall Street. Hedge fund managers, when they make money, they actually have that money taxed at a lower rate than people who are out there making a living by driving a bus or teaching at a school or whatever else it may be to earn a living. So there's a whole group of these so-called, economists call them tax expenditures, tax breaks, where people have gotten an exception to the normal rule for how much they will pay in taxes. And so that was another area where many of us believe Congress should look to find these additional savings to reduce the long-term deficit.

Here's what happened: Congress couldn't decide how to achieve those additional savings. So the Budget Control Act had a trigger in it, a triggering mechanism, almost like a guillotine. The way that worked was that if Congress could not come together,

Republicans and Democrats alike, to find these additional savings to reduce the deficit, then these automatic cuts were going to go into effect. Not on the two-thirds budget, not on the tax expenditures or tax breaks, but back on that one-third of the budget for discretionary spending, back on the one-third of the budget for defense spending and that part of the budget that deals with those other federal agencies like the Department of Veterans Affairs. So that's where we are today.

Let me just say that that sequester mechanism was never intended to take place. In other words, people recognized that it would be a really bad idea to make those additional deep cuts in our national defense budget and those additional deep cuts in things like NIH research and the Department of Veterans Affairs. So people said this this is such a bad idea, these across-the-board cuts, that it's going to force Congress to come up with these savings in the other part of the budget, cutting some of those tax breaks, making savings in some of the mandatory parts of the budget. That was the idea. But Congress didn't do it. And so these across-the-board cuts began to take place.

Now, for the past two years we were able to put together an agreement. Paul Ryan and Patty Murray, bipartisan agreement, that for the last two years has prevented the worst of those deep cuts to defense spending and the worst of those deep cuts to the discretionary part of the budget like the Veterans Affairs. But that two-year agreement expired. And many of us have been saying: Congress, we've got to come back together on a bipartisan basis to prevent the next round of deep cuts to defense spending and the category of the budget where we have veterans programs. We've got to come together and do another agreement to prevent that. Well, as of today Congress has not reached that agreement, and the new budget year begins October 1. So your gathering here is timely.

I'm just here to call upon all of you, regardless of your political party persuasion, to urge the Congress to work this out in a way that does not allow those deep cuts to trigger in defense and those deep cuts to that non-defense part of the budget that includes veterans programs. We know what will happen on the defense side, and the military leadership in this country has testified that it will damage our national security and our readiness.

Here are some of the choices that the Department of Defense would have to make. They'd have to reduce the size of the active duty Army to 420,000 soldiers, which our commanders tells us is an insufficient and dangerous level and does not support our national defense strategy, or you maintain the force at a higher level but it gets hollowed out because you don't have the resources to provide the training. And that just puts our troops and our men and women at greater risk. Those are not the kind of decisions that should be made. We should not allow these sequester cuts to take place on defense.

On the non-defense side, it's not exactly clear what would happen to all the veterans programs. But here's what is clear: If you take that category of spending that we make on veterans, on early education like Head Start, research at places like NIH to find cures and treatments to diseases that impact all of us, if you take that portion of the budget and you shrink it dramatically, more than anybody thought would be responsible, then it will ultimately have impacts on the veterans programs.

And the reality is just this year we saw overruns in the veterans programs, because more and more people are becoming eligible for the services that we provide. And so it should not be the case where we're saying that in order to provide additional services to our veterans, who deserve those services and who fought for our country or served our country so well, that in order to provide those, we're going to have to cut Head Start programs.

And so I'm asking all of you when you leave this convention, to please call your members of Congress, Republicans or Democrats, whatever they may be, and ask us to come up with another proposal, like the one we've had in place for the last two years, to prevent these cuts to veterans programs that could go into effect. We need your help to do that, and we need it now. *(Applause)*

And the final point I want to make is this: We've worked hard over time to try to shield veterans programs from a government shutdown. But we do that through what's called advance funding. But it's still the case that about 15 percent of the veterans programs are subject to taking a big hit in the event of a government shutdown. The Veterans Benefit Administration, which, as you know, administers many important benefits to our veterans, would be vulnerable in the event of a government shutdown, in terms of processing claims and that sort of thing.

So I'm very much hoping that between now and the end of this month Congress will get its act together and avoid another government shutdown. It was a scandal the first time, it was a pretty shameful episode in terms of the functioning of government, and we need to make sure we avoid that going forward. To avoid it, we're going to need men and women of goodwill to come together to make sure that we prevent those sequester cuts which will damage our national defense and put at risk the important work that the Veterans Administration performs. We cannot win this battle without all of you being engaged.

I want to thank all of you as The American Legion for being engaged in the service that you provided our nation when in uniform and for the service you continue to perform in terms of making sure our country is focused on providing for the needs of today's soldiers as well as making sure that we make good on the promises that we made to the good men and women who served our country so well.

Thank you all, The American Legion. God bless you. Thank you for bearing with me through a little budget tutorial. But the reality is that understanding how we got to where we are is also essential to working together to find our way out of this in a way that maintains a strong national defense and keeps our promises to all of you and our veterans throughout the country. Thank you very much and God bless you. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Department Membership Awards

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: It is now time for the membership awards. The departments and individuals who will be joining me on stage are being recognized today for their outstanding membership efforts in 2015.

We are now beginning the third year of implementing the Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth. It is imperative for us to continue working and building on the five priorities within the plan to reverse our current trend of declining membership and promote and encourage a culture of growth throughout The American Legion. Those priorities are to create brand awareness; communication; increase training, education and leadership development; post creation development and revitalization; and membership recruiting and retention.

The fifth priority of the Strategic Plan focuses on recruiting and retaining. We need to keep in mind that we cannot grow with new members if we do not remain engaged with our current membership. Every Legionnaire plays an indispensable role in this effort. We need every member to embrace and help foster a culture of growth if we want to increase and develop membership within our Legion posts. We want The American Legion to remain a household name with the resources and ability to assist all veterans. With the recent policy change from the secretary of defense allowing The American Legion and other non-profit entities greater access to military installations to offer support service, we are able to expand our outreach within the active duty, Reserve military components and the National Guard. This effort needs to continue building relationships at the local level.

Through our Reconnect visits and programs such as Operation Comfort Warriors, the Family Support Network, Soldier's Wish, Temporary Financial Assistance, The American Legion Riders, and many others, we have expanded the opportunity for The American Legion to fulfill the promises of our Four Pillars.

We need to continue to create Legion posts on college campuses to further reach out to our student veterans. Couple all of this with our continued commitment of service to

veterans, their families, and our communities through district revitalization, and you can clearly see why The American Legion's growth potential is unlimited.

Close to 3,700 posts received support through revitalizations for the 2014-15 membership year. Today we want to recognize a few departments and individuals for their outstanding efforts in membership. But before we do, I call upon Membership & Post Activities Committee chairman and my good friend, Ken Orrock, for his remarks.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ORROCK: Thank you for those kind words, commander. Good morning, delegates to the 97th National Convention. The recipients of today's awards are proof that when we commit ourselves to the five priorities of the Strategic Plan, it works. As leaders of this great organization, it's incumbent on us now to get buy-in from each individual Legionnaire in every post throughout this great nation. We can show them by staying the course and working the plan, they can show success.

We have twelve departments this year who have stayed that course and have consistently been ahead of last year's membership totals. I would like for each of those departments to stand up when your state is called and make some noise and be recognized: Georgia; Mexico; Florida; The Philippines; Arizona; Idaho; New Mexico, Alabama; Nevada; Oklahoma; North Carolina; Oregon. *(Cheers and applause)*

That enthusiasm, that enthusiasm shows that when you work your five-year strategic plan, you can show success. The plan is worthwhile. The plan is working. Work the five-year plan. With that, Mr. Commander, I yield back my time.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I now ask that National Vice Commander Douglas C. Haggan assume duties at the podium and that the national vice commanders assigned to each department join the chairman and I as we congratulate departments from their areas. ... *At this time, National Vice Commander Haggan assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAGGAN: Good morning. Our first presentation will be our 100 percent departments.

Two departments have exceeded their 2014-2015 membership goals. This is an outstanding accomplishment and testament to the motivation of the members and their ability to implement the Strategic Plan. A plaque is being presented to the following department commanders: Georgia - Randy Goodman; and Mexico - Ronald Abbe.

Congratulations, gentlemen. These plaques are being awarded to you. Your membership should take pride in knowing that their hard work paid off this year.

The next series of awards are being presented to each of the twelve departments previously recognized by the membership chairman for their hard work and dedication to establishing a culture of growth in their departments. The first two departments went above their goal obtaining over 100 percent. By implementing and working the five priorities within the Strategic Plan, the Department of Georgia and the Department of Mexico have built a foundation in which their membership saw tremendous growth. The first plaque being awarded is to Commander Randy Goodman from the Department of Georgia. The next plaque will be awarded to Ronald Abbe from the Department of Mexico. Thank you, commanders, for a job well done. *(Applause)*

The following departments also saw sustained growth consistently throughout the year and are being awarded plaques for their performance. The first department is the Department of Florida; the Department of the Philippines; the Department of Arizona; the Department of Idaho; the Department of New Mexico; the Department of Alabama; the Department of Nevada; the Department of Oklahoma; the Department of North Carolina; the Department of Oregon. Thank you for a job well done. *(Applause)*

The next award presentation will be the Eagle Award. National Commander Helm placed a huge emphasis on membership growth this year. Two Eagles are being presented today, one to the department commander and one to the department. This year this special incentive award is given to the departments in each category with the highest membership

percentage increase from the October 55 percent target date to the May 100 percent target date. Please join me in congratulating the following departments: Category 1 - Florida with 39.63 percent; Category 2 - Texas with 33.05 percent; Category 3 - Arizona with 39.01 percent; Category 4 - Nebraska with 38.54 percent; Category 5 - New Mexico with 38.98 percent; Category 6 - Alaska with 36.93 percent. *(Applause)*

The last Eagle goes to the national vice commander whose region had the highest percentage increase during the same October to May timeframe. This region finished with 34.59 percent membership increase. Congratulations to National Vice Commander of the Western Region Gerald L. Jacobs, Wyoming. *(Applause)*

Thank you, Gerald, and all the Eagle Award winners for your hard work and dedication. *(Applause) ... At this time, National Commander Helm resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I issued a membership challenge to each one of the national vice commanders back in October. Each one of us had to participate, and the cost to do so was \$200 apiece. This challenge was based on our own department reaching 100 percent of its traditional membership goal by August 15. If a department failed to reach that 100 percent, me or that national vice commander would be disqualified. Unfortunately, none of our departments reached 100 percent. Instead of one of us getting the money that we paid into this challenge, we are donating the \$1,200 to Operation Comfort Warriors. I now ask National Vice Commander Paul O. Sanford to assume duties at the podium. ... *At this time, National Vice Commander Sanford assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SANFORD: A district commander's job is one of the most important offices a Legionnaire can hold. It is very demanding, but it can be very rewarding as well. Our next award is given to the top district commanders in five different categories.

The District Commander's Race to the Top Award is a prestigious award that is very competitive between district commanders. Please join me in welcoming the newest top district commanders to the stage: Category 1, District 31: John Crutchfield, Department of Alabama. Category 2, District 3: Jack Youngs, Department of Idaho. Category 3, District 3: Robert Shreve, Department of Georgia. Category 4, District 23: David Harris, Department of Illinois. Category 5, District 13: Andrew Burkett, Department of Florida.

These district commanders are being presented a new Legion cap, a polo shirt, and a shadowbox. We sincerely appreciate your hard work and dedication. Thank you. *(Applause) ... At this time, National Commander Helm resumed the Chair.*

Presentation: National Recruiter of the Year

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: It is now time to hand out our most prestigious membership award. This year's National Recruiter of the Year introduced 725 new members to The American Legion. It is also no coincidence that his department has made remarkable strides this year by attaining over 100 percent of their membership. This Legionnaire took to heart the fifth priority of the Strategic Plan by focusing on membership recruiting. This is his second time to the stage as National Recruiter of the Year. Please join me in congratulating Edgar J. Johnson from the Department of Georgia. *(Applause)*

DELEGATE JOHNSON (GA): First giving honor to God, who is head of my life, I just want to thank all of you all out here. The 725 was not just by me collectively but it was for everyone in this building who are all Legionnaires. I did something special because of my state, because the leading candidate for national commander was coming out of Georgia. And not only that, I did it especially for my post. My post is a very new post, and my post is very dear to me. And just being our second year, we set all types of numbers for a small post.

Also I would like to thank my department. Without my adjutant, Charlie Knox, if we ask for anything, he's there for us; the NECman; and also for my district, because when the district comes to the post, they ask for help. And the triple threat is always there.

Post 333 is also recognized for four outstanding individuals in that post. Without those four, we couldn't make a team. That's the adjutant, which is Hazel Taylor; my service officer, who is Pat Liddell; the senior vice, Edgar Johnson; and most of all my commander, Vickie Smith-Dikes. I just want to thank everyone from the Team Georgia for giving me this opportunity to represent you.

And also I would like to say that my mentor, Mr. Frank Carr out of Virginia, I kept going over and reading that video on the membership video screen. I just looked at it over and over, and it gave me an idea: The only thing that everyone in this room can do is just ask. That's all you have to do. I thank God for the United States, I thank God for the American Legion, and I thank God for all of you veterans that have served this country. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Consolidated Post Reporting 2014-2015

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The Consolidated Post Report is a summary of what American Legion posts have accomplished in their communities. It is an opportunity to tell the story of your post on an easy-to-fill-out form either on hard-copy or online.

When I testified before Congress last fall, I used the data from this report as part of my testimony. For the 2014-2015 membership year, our response rate was 65 percent with 8,900 posts reporting out of 13,279. This is an area we really need help from the departments and districts to emphasize to the posts the importance of this report so that we can truly show what The American Legion is doing in our local communities. The posts are so critical, and we want for them to report what they are doing each and every day in communities across this great country.

To recognize those departments who worked on submitting these reports, a certificate was mailed to the departments who met the challenge of a 75 percent response rate this year. Those departments were Arizona, Idaho, Maryland, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Vermont, and West Virginia. They deserve a round of applause. *(Applause)*

Now I have asked the departments that have exceeded the challenge and had a response rate of 95 percent or higher to join me on stage today for special recognition. At this time, we will present their plaques to the department commander. Will National Vice Commander Jacobs assume duties at the podium for the reading of the winners.

... At this time, National Vice Commander Jacobs assumed the Chair.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER JACOBS: Jay Conti, Sr. - Department of Florida; Randy Goodman - Department of Georgia; Dennis Woeltje - Department of Missouri; Roger Hancock - Department of Montana; Frederick Craigie - Department of Nebraska; Robert Millar - Department of Oregon; Gerald Rhoads - Department of Virginia; Robert Shappell - Department of Wisconsin. *(Applause)*

... At this time, National Commander Helm resumed the Chair.

Presentation: National Emergency Fund Awards

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The National Emergency Fund is perhaps one of the most visible ways we demonstrate our devotion to mutual helpfulness to our fellow Legionnaires. But I don't know how many times I have heard longtime Legionnaires mention that they had just now heard of the National Emergency Fund. When I was elected your national commander, I placed the National Emergency Fund as one of my 4X4 programs, and you know already how successful you were this year in meeting my overall challenge in fundraising for it. As part of the 4X4, each department was challenged to raise monies based upon their delegate strength numbers from last year for the NEF. If every

department had met their individual challenge, we would have raised \$600,000 for the NEF. This year we have been lucky. Yes, we have had Legion Family members impacted by natural disasters, but not as many as in past years. And I for one am very thankful.

But I know, when there is a need, Legionnaires don't hesitate to respond. We are a big family, and a family helps each other when the need is there. Because of your generous donations since the NEF's creation in 1989, we have been able to provide almost \$9 million to those family members who were displaced. Remember that each and every dollar donated to the National Emergency Fund is issued for that purpose. We take care of our own when they need help. Departments are encouraged to assign or, better yet, seek volunteers to be department NEF coordinators who can travel and assist fellow Legion members in the processing and submission of NEF applications. In this way, we can help ensure that our Legion family members are assisted during a most troubling and challenging time. It is great to know that when a Legion member needs help, The Legion family will step up and give without reservations. And it is because of your continued giving that we are able to sustain this fund. I think all of us here who have donated to that need a round of applause. *(Applause)*

Those department commanders who met and exceeded my NEF Challenge before August 1 in their respective membership size categories will be presented a plaque. We have 18 departments being recognized today for exceeding my challenge by August 1. At this time, we will present their plaques. Will National Vice Commander Sanford assume duties at the podium for the reading of the winners.

... At this time, National Vice Commander Sanford assumed the Chair.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SANFORD: There were six departments that met the NEF Challenge and received the highest percentage within their membership category. They are: Category 1 - Department of New York; Category 2 - Department of Texas; Category 3 - Department of Maryland; Category 4 - Department of Louisiana; Category 5 - Department of Delaware; Category 6 - Department of the District of Columbia. *(Applause)*

In addition to the six category winners, we have twelve departments receiving a plaque for meeting their per capita challenge of 100 percent, and they are: the Department of Alaska, the Department of Arizona, the Department of France, the Department of Georgia, the Department of Mississippi, the Department of Montana, the Department of Nebraska, the Department of Nevada, the Department of New Mexico, the Department of Oklahoma, the Department of Oregon, and the Department of Wisconsin. *(Applause)*

Congratulations! Thank you for your hard work and ensuring Legion family members in local communities know where to turn during a natural disaster. So, please continue your fundraising efforts because we never know when and where the next natural disaster will strike and interrupt someone's daily life. I ask those departments that would like to present checks for the National Emergency Fund to come forward and make your presentation now.

Donations to National Emergency Fund

DELEGATE MATTICE (ID): Department of Idaho and its 9,000 members, we make a \$950 donation to the NEF fund.

DELEGATE STELACIO (PA): From the great state of Pennsylvania, \$24,057.57.

DELEGATE SCHWABE (FL): As the commander of the great state of Florida, \$5,000 to the NEF fund.

DELEGATE ABERNATHY (FR): Commander, Paris Post 1, Paris, France, Department of France, \$700.

DELEGATE ROBARDS (IL): Department of Illinois, \$3,630.20.

DELEGATE SHAPPEL (WI): Department of Wisconsin, \$3,425.50.

DELEGATE WEIBLE (ND): Great state of North Dakota, we give an additional \$1900, that puts us \$400 over our \$4,000 goal.

DELEGATE WHITE (MD): Commander, Clinton American Legion Post 259, one of our vendors donated \$2,000 and the post donated an additional \$1,000, a total of \$3,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): The great first district, Department of Ohio, additional \$100.

DELEGATE PETERS (NY): Good morning, Mr. Commander, having exceeded your challenge by transmitting over \$45,000 to date, we are proud on the behalf of the Department of New York to present you with an additional \$96,630 today, bringing our total to \$142,357 to date. Thank you.

DELEGATE HANSON (SD): Commander, the great state of South Dakota, the home of American Legion Baseball, donates \$200.

DELEGATE DIONNE (NH): The Department of New Hampshire would like to give you, commander, an additional \$1,000 towards what's already been sent in for the National Emergency Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): Department of New Jersey donates \$3,000.

DELEGATE WALLACE (MI): Department of Michigan is proud to donate to the National Emergency Fund \$2,000.

DELEGATE BRAULT (MA): Commander Louis Brault, Department of Massachusetts, Vice Commander Mike Davis, Department of Massachusetts donates \$1,250.

DELEGATE LOWRY (IN): Department of Indiana, Crawfordsville Post 72, \$250.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WY): Commander, Department of Wyoming, on behalf of Post 14 in Laramie, Wyoming, presents you with a check for \$1,000.

DELEGATE MILLER (AZ): John Ivens Post 42, Department of Arizona, \$1,000.

DELEGATE GROSSET: Commander, the Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion gives \$500.

DELEGATE KILE (WV): Bill Kile, chairman of the Southern block, we met this morning and collected \$7,598, and I'm going to add \$2 to it to make it \$7,600.

DELEGATE FINLEY-JACKSON (MO): Department of Missouri, home of the World Series Cardinals, \$6,740.

DELEGATE MOON (MN): Department of Minnesota, an additional \$2,000.

DELEGATE STRUBLE (IA): From the great Tall Corn State of Iowa, the commander and I would like to present to you with two checks totaling \$1,398.40.

DELEGATE MILLAR (OR): Commander, the great state of Oregon, home of our 2016 national candidate for commander, Charles Schmidt, regardless of what Missouri thinks, we're presenting additional \$600 over meeting your challenge.

DELEGATE CRAIGIE (NE): Commander, this is a personal donation from Brother Jim from Post 313, your home post, of \$100, cash.

DELEGATE STEPHENSON (UT): Commander, from the great state of Utah, we have donated \$2,600.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Let's have a little music out there, Peter.

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

... At this time, National Vice Commander Neville assumed the Chair.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER NEVILLE: When groups like the ACLU and other secular organizations targeted veterans memorials, The American Legion understood that if we want to defend both God and country, we would need friends like the Liberty Institute. The legal scholars there specialize in religious liberty cases.

Our next speaker has been named one of the 25 greatest Texas lawyers of the last quarter century. *Texas Lawyer Magazine* indicated that he was. He is a frequent guest on *The O'Reilly Factor*, *Fox and Friends*, *Good Morning America* and *Today* show. He has

been president and CEO of Liberty Institute since 1997. Please welcome Kelly Shackelford, Esquire. *(Applause)*

**Address: Kelly Shackelford, President and CEO
Liberty Institute**

Why don't we start with a short video. ... *At this time, the delegation viewed a video (Applause)*

I'm here today with good news. Mount Soledad case is over, and that veterans memorial still stands and will continue to stand from now and evermore. *(Applause)*

But the attacks are still occurring. There are still cases across the country against veterans memorials. In fact, just 40 miles from here in Bladensburg, Maryland, the Bladensburg Cross, which was put up almost a hundred years ago to honor those who gave sacrifice in World War I, it's now under attack. The American Humanists have filed a lawsuit to have it torn down. We represent The American Legion at Liberty Institute in that case, and we're going to do everything in our power to make sure that nothing happens to that memorial. *(Applause)*

But as these fights are going to continue year after year, today is about something that we can rejoice about, and that is today we are announcing that each year in the General Session at The American Legion National Convention we will be giving an award, an award for those who have given sacrifice, who've had success in defending what our founders called our first freedom, religious freedom.

Liberty Institute's Religious Freedom Award this year is going to go to a man who has really been instrumental in leadership in really what The American Legion has done in standing to defend attacks against veterans memorials across our country, attacks against the Pledge of Allegiance across our country. He has been really the leader in the nationwide movement to stand and say, no, you're not taking down this veterans memorial; no, you're not ending the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in this country. The result, I think of all the memorials that are up in part because of his sacrifice and his standing with us.

In fact, two extra things about this award that are really special. This gentleman that's getting the award this year, we're going to name the award after him because of his leadership, and every year from hereafter, that will be the name of the award when we give it out. My associate is here from Liberty Institute, one of our counsel, is holding what the award is. Henry Repeating Arms has given us a Goldenboy Rifle that they are going to give us every year for this award with special inscription on it. *(Applause)*

As I tell you what that inscription says, it's going to give away who's going to get this award. The Liberty Institute 2015 Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. Award goes to The American Legion's own Phil Onderdonk. *(Applause)* We caught him off guard.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE ONDERDONK: Yes, sir, you did. It was totally unexpected, and I want to say thank you very much to the Liberty Institute. Thank you. *(Applause)* ... *At this time, National Commander Helm resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Before we go further, I would just like to quell some rumors that I hear going on. There are protests that are happening outside, but they are mostly at city hall, the courthouse, and police headquarters, not this convention center. There are no real problems out there. Where I come from, not many people. You know when you are in a city, you have to be aware of your environment. I want you to continue to proceed as we have been proceeding, but when you are in the big town, you keep your eyes open. We're confident and satisfied that what's going on in Baltimore is not happening around this convention center and you are still very safe in what's happening.

It is now time to honor not simply a group of singers or musicians, we are honoring a group of patriots. Winners of five Grammy Awards and recently selected for induction to the Country Music Hall of Fame, they have used their considerable talents to raise awareness and support for the needs of veterans and their families. They have entertained

people worldwide with their stirring hits and amazing record of success. Their blend of gospel, country, and rock make them true American icons. They have made several public service announcements about The American Legion and our programs.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present the 2015 American Legion Patriot Award to Duane Allen, Richard Sterban, Joe Bonsall, William Lee Golden, and their manager, Jim Halsey, a group you know as The Oak Ridge Boys. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: The American Legion Patriot Award
The Oak Ridge Boys**

JOE BONSALE: Where is that "Elvira" piano coming from? Over there? Very good, sir. Very good. We are The Oak Ridge Boys, and we are honored to stand with The American Legion. *(Applause)*

Thank you so much for the work that you do. Every night whenever we mention on our stage that we are associated The American Legion and with the work that they are doing for our returning veterans today and what they have done for years, people respond in such a positive and wonderful way I cannot tell you. It swells our hearts to know that you have that kind of support from the general American public that we sing to almost every night. You're doing great work, and we thank you for that.

There is a lot of our veterans falling through the cracks these days. A lot of our organizations that we have trusted for years that have gotten so full and so bureaucratic that the suffering that's been experienced by so many of our veterans is catastrophic. But The American Legion has stepped up to the plate, and you are doing something. That's why The Oak Ridge Boys are honored, again, to stand with you and for the work that you are doing. Thank you for this honor. *(Applause)*

A very quick example as to how things kind of roll sometimes. When a group like The Oak Ridge Boys takes on a mantle of support for a group like you, The American Legion, our American Legion, it's amazing how many people it affects in a positive way. There is a man named Robert Rosenthal. Mr. Rosenthal for years had an organization and a foundation that supported concerts at American military bases here in the continental United States, and The Oak Ridge Boys probably performed at a dozen military bases for our troops thanks to Mr. Rosenthal and his generosity. He is a great man. He is retired now, but when he heard we were now associated with The American Legion, he sent a check for \$10,000 from his foundation to The American Legion. *(Cheers and applause)*

Isn't that cool? So we certainly thank Mr. Rosenthal today for his donation. We thank you for allowing us to be a part of The Legion and your work. Every single one of us are just honored beyond words to be here and to walk around Baltimore and see so many of you Legionnaires saying to us "thank you." I can't tell you how that warms our heart. We thank you for the work that you're doing. Thank you for this Patriot Award. It's an honor, and we'll put it in a place of distinction. Our manager, Jim Halsey, is here. Jim, did you want to say something, sir?

JIM HALSEY: Just God Bless America, and no other organization says it better than The American Legion. Thank you. *(Cheers and applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion Patriot Award Presented to The Oak Ridge Boys for using your legendary talents to raise awareness and support for the needs of veterans and their families.

You have been making a real difference in the lives of countless veterans who have benefited from your public calls for better treatment and detection of post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues. Your advocacy for America's heroes comes at a time when an estimated 22 veterans a day lose their lives to suicide. Your encouragement for veterans to seek assistance through The American Legion makes it possible for trained

service officers to help wounded, injured, and ill veterans navigate the complex steps needed to obtain the benefits that they have earned.

Your willingness to serve as the official "spokesband" of The American Legion and your unwavering support of The American Legion programs demonstrates the sincerity of your patriotism. When The American Legion-supported Soldier's Wish program needs celebrity assistance, you always answer the call.

The current Oak Ridge Boys quartet of Duane Allen, Richard Sterban, Joe Bonsall, and William Lee Golden and their manager, Jim Halsey, will forever be appreciated for their devotion to God and country. On behalf of the 2.3 million veterans of The American Legion, thank you for your strong support of America's veterans. Presented this 2nd day of September 2015 at the 97th National Convention. Michael D. Helm, National Commander; Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Soldier's Wish is an organization that is dedicated to meeting needs for military personnel, veterans, and their families. By the authority of our National Executive Committee, The American Legion has established an official relationship with this outstanding group. Please welcome the executive director of Soldier's Wish, a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, Kevin McDugle. (Applause)

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

Hello, American Legion. How in the world are you? Isn't it a great day? Anytime you get The Oak Ridge Boys to come to say hello to great Americans, isn't that a great thing?

You know, I brought some special guests with me today, too. I'm going to have them come join me up here on the side. This is Brian McGuire and his fiancé, Katie. And you know every time we get up and we talk about Soldier's Wish, we always honor somebody. And this is to honor Brian and his service to our country. Brian served in two tours of Iraq and two tours in Afghanistan. His fourth tour he jumped over a wall and was crossing a path with seven or eight other guys and stepped on an IED and lost his legs. He spent a number of years in recovery, got his prosthetics, and now, as you can see, he's a true warrior. He's on his feet, and he's getting after it again. Give him a big hand. (Applause)

You know, it's because of people like Brian and because of many like you that we have the freedom we have in this great country. That we have the ability to stand up and say Jesus' name. That we have the ability to stand up and say we do have the best country in the world. And I know that because I've traveled to a bunch of them just like you did, and you always were glad to come home. I want to say to all the Vietnam veterans and also to Brian: Welcome home. We're so glad you're here. (Applause)

Soldier's Wish granted 400 wishes last year. One of those wishes I want to tell you about was out of Arkansas. We received a call from a lady in Arkansas, and she said she wanted to grant a wish for her next-door neighbor that had lost their dad in Afghanistan. Dad had gone to Afghanistan and didn't come home. She said, "I want to send his three daughters to Disney World, to Sea World."

And as always we called to verify. I called Mom, and I said, "Your next-door neighbor wants to grant a wish for your girls to send them to Sea World, Disney World. Where would they want to go?" She said, "Well, let me get them on the phone." She got them on the phone, and I asked the three girls: "If you had a chance to go anywhere in the world — Disney World, Sea World — where would you want to go?" And the 13-year-old girl said, "We want to go to Arlington to see our daddy's grave."

So out of everything they wanted, and that's what gives me hope for America, because they still have a heart for the people who serve this great country.

At the Soldier's Wish Dinner, we were able to tell that story. And I said, "I need 12 people to come forward and give a \$1,000." We had 13 come forward. We were able to

send that entire family to Washington D.C. They got to see their daddy's grave, go to all the museums. A local congressman gave them a tour of Congress. And now, when it's time to go see somewhere, they can go back and see their daddy's grave or they can go to Disney World because they've done that.

And this year, we received a wish that came through the Internet, some young lady saying her fiancé wanted to go on a hunt to Colorado. And we're going to give you a hunt to Colorado, an elk hunt, my friend, because that's what she wanted to give to you. She's known about this all week, and you didn't know she knew it, did you? We're going to give you a hunt, brother. *(Cheers and applause)*

I just want to say, first of all, thank you for the sacrifice you gave, brother. A lot of people go over and serve and they come back and they go through hard times like you. I know you did. But I love that you kept your spirit, your fighting warrior spirit. You're still getting after it. He's going to go to gunsmith school, so he's going to be able to build weapons so we can take care of the enemy. *(Applause)*

Give him a big round of applause for an American hero, Brian McGuire. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Brian also is a new member of The American Legion from North Carolina. I want to present him this medallion and also this diamond lapel pin of The American Legion and my Commander's Coin.

The NEF donations totaled \$177,532.57 so far. We'll get a grand total on that a little later. I have a message from the department commander from Washington to the Department of New York, the great state of New York:

"Commander, in keeping with the spirit of mutual helpfulness and camaraderie, the Department of Washington wishes to thank the great state of New York for its gift of \$500 to support the families who have been displaced by the wildfires in our state.

Our sincere gratitude to The Legion family of New York. Coast to coast, we influence each other."

Thank you very much for saying that. That's nice. *(Applause)*

The Chair recognizes Denise H. Rohan of Wisconsin, chairwoman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin, Chairman

Seventy-five (75) members of your Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and on Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness met at 9:00am on August 30, 2015, in the Hilton Baltimore, Holiday Ballroom, Sections 1 & 2, 2nd Floor, Baltimore, Maryland, and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committees were called to order by Joseph C. Sharpe Jr. (DC), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Steve Gonzalez (DC), Assistant Director for the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received: Denise Rohan (WI) was elected Chairman and James Fratolillo (MA) was elected Secretary of the Convention Committee.

James Fratolillo (MA) was elected Chairman of the Employment and Veterans' Preference Committee and Dennis Tipsword (IL) was elected Secretary. Eric Measles (CA) was elected Chairman of the Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness Committee, and James Hogan (PA), as Secretary.

A Veterans Employment & Education Resolutions screening Committee met earlier to screen and group the resolutions. A report of their actions, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committees for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committees substantially. It was chaired by Denise Rohan (WI), Chairman of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission and was composed of the following persons:

James Fratolillo (MA)
 James R. Hogan (PA)
 Eric Measles (CA)
 Dennis R. Tipsword (IL)

There were 9 resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention.

The following actions on the resolutions were taken by the Convention Committees:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment	8
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	0
Referred to the Standing Commission	1
Received and Recorded	0
Rejected	0

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committees' behalf.

A report of action taken on the 9 resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Employment & Education Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

Employment and Veterans Preference Committee Approved Resolutions or Approved With Amendment

Resolution No. 31: Support and Strengthen the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA)

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, The American Legion has been the leading veterans advocacy organization since its inception in 1919; and

WHEREAS, Such advocacy resulted in the creation and passage of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA), formerly known as the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act, and the original GI Bill, codifying into federal law benefits earned by active and former members of the United States military as a result of their honorable service during a time of war; and

WHEREAS, Both the GI Bill and SCRA have been legislatively updated on occasion by the United States Congress to reflect societal changes and rising costs of providing said benefits; and

WHEREAS, It is the intention of the SCRA to protect members of the United States military called to active-duty by duly authorized and issued orders and their immediate family; and

WHEREAS, Such protection is not extended to include the necessary termination of a contract under Family or Group plans, nor to the necessary cancellation of reservations for air or train transportation, resulting in unnecessary, unintended and expensive costs incurred by service members who are obeying the task placed upon them by duly authorized orders; and

WHEREAS, Such costs coincide with negative credit reports which further exacerbate the ability of the servicemember to perform his or her duty, and impacts the ability of the individual or family to realize the American dream and own a home by punitive credit rates; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That Congress be urged to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) to include protections for members of the Armed Forces, and their families, acting under duly authorized and issued orders to

include, but not limited to, deployment and temporary duty assignment orders against fees, fines and the resulting negative credit reports by cancellation of ticketed travel on U.S. airlines or train transportation.

Resolution No. 93: Support Licensure and Certification of Servicemembers, Veterans and Spouses

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, Veterans are in need of employment after exiting the military; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) provides some of the best vocational training in the nation for its military personnel; and

WHEREAS, DOD establishes, measures and evaluates performance standards for every occupation within the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, There are many occupational career fields in the Armed Forces that can easily translate to a civilian counterpart; and

WHEREAS, There are many occupations in the civilian workforce that require a license or certification; and

WHEREAS, In the Armed Forces, these unique occupations are performed to approved military standards that may meet or exceed the civilian license or certification criteria; and

WHEREAS, Upon separation, many former military personnel, certified as proficient in their military occupational career, are not licensed or certified to perform the comparable job in the civilian workforce, thus hindering chances for immediate civilian employment and delaying career advancement; and

WHEREAS, This situation creates an artificial barrier to employment upon separation from military service; and

WHEREAS, A study by the Presidential Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance identified a total of 105 military professions where civilian credentialing is required; and

WHEREAS, DOD is obligated to keep such licenses and certifications current and cover the costs of renewal; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion support efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the timely and successful transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support efforts to eliminate spouse employment barriers through advocacy for the recognition and acceptance of spouses credentials regardless of location, as long as the spouse meets standards set forth by the credentialing board; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That all federal and state stakeholders (i.e., Departments of Defense, Energy, Veterans Affairs, and Transportation, along with the National Governors Association and National Conference of State Legislatures) take appropriate steps to ensure that servicemembers and veterans be trained, tested, evaluated and have the opportunity to obtain any credential (i.e., licensure, certification, certificate, degree, etc.) that may be required in the local civilian workforce; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support efforts to increase the civilian labor market's acceptance of the training, education, and prior experience provided by the Armed Forces.

Resolution No. 94: Improve Transition Assistance Program**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, The goal of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is to ease the adjustment of separating servicemembers during the difficult transition from active duty into civilian life by offering job search assistance, medical/health services, the advising of available benefits, and other related counseling; and

WHEREAS, TAP pre-separation counseling was not always integrated into the Military Separation process for servicemembers, and not all military bases allowed nationally accredited service organizations to participate in the pre-separation or TAP briefings; and

WHEREAS, The contracting of facilitation by the Department of Labor has eliminated the coordination and contact with local veteran representatives and workforce centers; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act mandated TAP participation in 2011 thanks to advocacy from The American Legion in response to Government Accountability Reports emphasizing the need for all eligible servicemembers to attend TAP prior to discharge; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion request that the Department of Defense expand and standardize their existing pre-separation counseling policies to ensure that separating servicemembers receive information regarding federal and private sector employment opportunities, GI Bill and vocational rehabilitation and employment programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to require that the Department of Labor thoroughly review the new Transition Assistance Program (TAP) by reviewing all participant surveys to ensure maximum effectiveness in helping servicemembers transition to civilian life and find gainful employment, while encouraging cooperation and inclusion of nationally accredited service organizations in their program; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to require that all TAP curricula include presentations by the Local Veterans Employment Staff and the local workforce center staff.

Resolution No. 95: Support Employment of Veterans in the Public and Private Workforce**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education**

WHEREAS, America's men and women returning home from military service are encountering financial challenges, which include a weakened economy, higher than average unemployment rate, and a lack of affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. government has recognized that employment of veterans is a national responsibility and that alleviating unemployment or underemployment of honorably discharged veterans is a national policy; and

WHEREAS, Unemployment rates of individuals recently separated from the Armed Forces is high and unacceptable; and

WHEREAS, Many companies are receiving federal and state grants, tax credits and subsidies to build their businesses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, on September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion support legislative and administrative measures that seek to encourage and recognize organizations that hire veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion reminds employers, both public and private sectors, of their moral obligation to hire veterans.

The Following Resolutions are being Referred to the Standing Commission for Staff Study or Appropriate Administrative Disposition

Referred to Standing Commission

Resolution No. 12 (GA): Operation Veteran Empowerment

Committee on Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness

Approved Resolutions or Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 29: Support Elimination Funding Fees for Government Guaranteed Loans

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, Currently numerous agencies offer government guaranteed loan programs; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Export Import Bank provides guarantee term financing to international buyers in both the private and public sector, and finances the local costs up to 30 percent; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has numerous Guaranteed Loan Programs to finance economic development, housing rehabilitation, public facilities, and large-scale physical development projects in certain communities; and

WHEREAS, The Small Business Administration is currently waiving fees for veteran-owned small businesses on Express Loans between \$150,000 and \$300,000 for Fiscal Year 2015; and

WHEREAS, Guarantee fees, which are calculated as a percentage of the loan based on maturity and loan value, typically cost borrowers thousands of dollars; and

WHEREAS, The funding fees charged to veterans were enacted to defray the costs of the loan programs and keep the budget for these programs outside of regular appropriations; and

WHEREAS, Funding fees collected each year from non-veterans can still cover the costs of operating these programs; and

WHEREAS, Providing fee waivers for veteran-owned small businesses is a simple and effective way of supporting veteran entrepreneurship; and

WHEREAS, Providing fee waivers for all veterans is a simple and effective way for the nation to recognize the service and sacrifices all veterans have made; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion supports the elimination of Government Guaranteed Loan Funding Fees for veteran applicants.

Resolution No. 30: Support Housing Preference for Low-Income Veterans in the Department of Housing and Urban Development

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, Currently, there are millions of low-income and elderly veterans; and

WHEREAS, Because many of those veterans are living on fixed incomes, it is often difficult if not impossible for them to provide adequate housing for themselves and their families; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Housing and Urban Development operates affordable housing programs for low-income and senior citizens; and

WHEREAS, Many needy and deserving veterans are unable to participate in those housing programs because of long waiting lists; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion supports any administrative and/or legislative initiative that will give preference to America's veterans and their families in obtaining housing through the programs within the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Resolution No. 65: GI Bill Medical Transferability Rights

Origin: Minnesota

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, the original GI Bill, was one of the most successful pieces of legislation and spurred over 50 years of economic prosperity; and

WHEREAS, The Post-9/11 GI Bill was signed into law in 2008 and is a robust and comprehensive education benefit, which is an enhancement to the original Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, Congress introduced and passed the Post-9/11 GI Bill Improvements Act of 2010, which was intended to make further improvements to this education benefit; and

WHEREAS, Since August of 2009, servicemembers who have served 6 years and commit to an additional four years of service (YOS) may transfer all or a portion of their benefits to a spouse and/or their children; and

WHEREAS, Between August 2009 and September 2014, there were 423,355 servicemembers who transferred their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit to 928,078 dependents; and

WHEREAS, Servicemembers who were injured in the line of duty (LOD) and have undergone a Medical Evaluation Board and Physical Evaluation Board (MEB/PEB) are in certain cases precluded from extending their enlistments; thereby making them ineligible to qualify for the transferability benefit of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Chapter 33 education benefit; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion hereby endorse efforts to establish provisions in law allowing for the transferability of Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits for those medically retired and therefore unable to extend their enlistments needed to qualify for the transferability aspect of the Post-9/11 GI Bill; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Chapter 33 of Title 38 U.S.C., be amended to allow for the transferability of the Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits for Chapter 61 medical retirees who have served since September 10, 2001 and are identified as unfit for further military service, as determined through the Medical Evaluation Board/Physical Evaluation Board (MEB/PEB) process.

Resolution No. 96: Support Funding and Changes to VA's Grant and Per Diem Program

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, The Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program allows the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to award grants to community-based agencies to create transitional housing programs and offer per diem payments; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of the program is to promote the development and provision of supportive housing and/or supportive services with the goal of helping homeless veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skills levels and/or income, and obtain greater self-management; and

WHEREAS, GPD funded projects offer communities a way to help homeless veterans with housing and services while assisting VA medical centers by augmenting or supplementing care; and

WHEREAS, Many homeless veterans have legal and past financial hardships they must overcome and GPD often serves as a transition point for veterans as they obtain permanent housing; and

WHEREAS, In 2014, 71 percent of veterans in GPD transitioned to permanent housing; and

WHEREAS, The most recent data from the VA points to a need for at least 15,000 GPD beds nationwide to continue to provide emergency housing and rapid stabilization services to homeless veterans with specialized needs – women veterans, single veterans with dependent children, veterans transitioning out of incarceration, veterans with mild to moderate mental illness, veterans who become homeless due to sudden or worsening economic hardship and loss of employment; and

WHEREAS, The GPD program has proved to be successful in rehabilitation of the veteran in helping him/her to become a productive citizen; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, on September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion supports Congress authorizing and making appropriations for the Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program to the level of need demonstrated in communities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommends the GPD program be modernized in order to keep pace with the Department of Veterans Affairs goal to end and prevent veteran homelessness; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation that protects the eligibility for homeless services of veterans with other than dishonorable discharges who desperately need assistance through the GPD program.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ROHAN: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate to this convention from the Department of Wisconsin, I move for its adoption.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Do I hear a second? ... *Second.*
Is there any discussion? All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. Opposed? Motion carried. The report of Veterans Employment & Education is adopted.

Presentation: Employer of the Year Awards for Hiring Veterans

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Military members transitioning home have few priorities that are more important than finding meaningful employment. A number of outstanding employers were recognized by The American Legion at the Veterans Employment & Education Convention Committee meeting for their work in hiring veterans, but we would like to recognize a couple of our award winners today for their outstanding record of hiring veterans.

Large Category
The Home Depot, Atlanta, Georgia

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: In the large business category of 200 or more employees, The American Legion recognizes The Home Depot. Representing the Atlanta-based retailer is the director of talent acquisition, Eric Schelling. *(Applause)*

ERIC SCHELLING: Good morning. Thank you for your service. We're out of Atlanta, Georgia. But we want to thank The American Legion for this tremendous honor. I also want to thank all the Legion posts and outside organizations attending this year's convention for their continued partnership and our mission to support veterans across the country.

As a leader in the retail industry, we rely on associates who are knowledgeable, hardworking and solution-oriented to provide top-notch service to our customers. Men and women with military experience have shown us again and again that they have these attributes. They're highly skilled, motivated, and they're terrific representatives of the communities they serve, exactly what we look for in a Home Depot associate.

This is why we participated in more than 100 military- and veteran-focused career fairs last year. It's why we created our online military skills translator, which literally translates skills that are unique to military and matches them with Home Depot positions that we have open. It's also why we currently employ more than 35,000 veterans at The Home Depot. *(Applause)*

Thank you. But our connection to those who served extends far beyond the aisles in our stores. We've been talking last night as well, it's really truly part of the culture of The Home Depot. If you work for Home Depot, you can feel what that's like. It's not something that we do for the sake of doing it; it truly is who we are as an organization.

Our foundation, which has committed more than \$105 million to improving veterans' homes and facilities that serve veterans, and, in fact, last year at The American Legion Convention in Charlotte, The Home Depot Foundation committed \$1 million to renovating Legion posts across the United States. I'm proud to report that we've surpassed that goal. So in one year the foundation has granted \$1,287,000 for the improvement of 141 posts. *(Applause)*

Our Team Depot associates that are a volunteer force proudly works side-by-side with all of you to make these improvements. With so many veterans wearing orange aprons in our stores and offices, recognizing and supporting them has become very, very personal to us. They're an invaluable asset to our workforce and a source of pride for The Home Depot. I'd like to thank them and their commitment to our company and our country that service us and work for us at The Home Depot.

On behalf of our associates and our shareholders and of course myself, thank you very much for this award, and thank you for your service. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2014, Presented to The Home Depot, Atlanta, Georgia, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 97th Annual National Convention, Baltimore, Maryland, September 2, 2015. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The American Legion is also proud of the men and women who work on behalf of disabled veterans seeking employment.

This year I am happy to present the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist of the Year Award to Linda "Michele" Scuito of the Texas Veterans Commission of Lufkin, Texas. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year Award
Linda "Michele" Scuito**

Thank you. I just wanted to say thank you to all of you who have served and that I'm honored to have worked really hard to help veterans with significant barriers of employment bringing them to the workforce center and the workforce.

Now that I have been elected the post commander of Lufkin, Texas, of The American Legion and the sergeant-at-arms for The American Legion Auxiliary, for Lufkin, Texas, it even enables me to help more veterans and get out into the communities and help more of you. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year 2014, presented to Linda 'Michele' Scuito, Lufkin, Texas, for your outstanding service to the veterans of the state of Texas. Presented at the 97th National Convention, Baltimore, Maryland, September 2, 2015.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: On behalf of every veteran in America, I extend to you our congratulations and say those words all workers love to hear: "Thank you for a job well done."

We're certain you will keep hiring or assisting veterans. Please tell other businesses about the reliability and work ethic of veterans. No veteran should be in need of a job, nor should veterans have to live on the streets. And those with disabilities often prove to have many abilities. Thank you and congratulations to all of our award winners. *(Applause)*

The Chair recognizes Brett P. Reistad of Virginia, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation, for the purpose of making a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Legislation
Brett Reistad, Virginia**

The National Convention Committee on Legislation met on Sunday, August 29, 2015 in the Baltimore Convention Center, in Baltimore, Maryland. There were 43 delegates to the Committee present and 12 guests in attendance.

Following the preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the Chairman and Secretary were duly elected. I, Brett Reistad, a delegate from the Department of Virginia, was elected Chairman following a motion from Jeff Joyner, Department of North Carolina. John Graham, a delegate from the Department of New Hampshire was elected Secretary following a motion from Hank Robards, Department of Illinois.

There was no new business to discuss. The Legislation Convention Committee received 1 resolution for consideration from the Department of Puerto Rico.

The resolution, Resolution No. 89, was approved by the committee.

Approved Resolution

**Resolution No. 89: Puerto Rico Conduct Federally-Sponsored Plebiscite
Origin: Puerto Rico**

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Legislation

WHEREAS, In 1898, Puerto Rico became a United States territory and persons born in Puerto Rico have been granted United States citizenship by law since March 2, 1917; Puerto Rico has been granted authority over local matters that is similar to the authority that the States possess, but Puerto Rico remains subject to the powers of Congress under the Territorial Clause of the Constitution of the United States; the approximately 3,700,000 residents of Puerto Rico do not have a democratic form of government at the national level, because United States citizens residing in the territory are disenfranchised in the election

for the President and the Vice President; and are not represented in the United States Senate; and the one representative of United States citizens residing in the territory in the House of Representatives can only vote in committees of the House of Representatives; Puerto Rico and residents of Puerto Rico are treated unequally under Federal programs, tax, and other laws relative to the several States and the District of Columbia and residents; and

WHEREAS, For the first time since 1998, voters in Puerto Rico went to the polls in November 2012 to reconsider the island's relationship with the federal government (a concept known as "political status") and voters were asked to answer two questions: (1) whether they wished to maintain Puerto Rico's current political status; and (2) regardless of the choice in the first question, whether they preferred statehood, independence, or to be a "sovereign free associated state"; according to results certified by the Puerto Rico State Elections Commission, approximately 54.0% of those who cast ballots answered "no" to the first question; in the second question, approximately 61.2% of voters chose statehood; in San Juan, the new governor, Alejandro Garcia Padilla, and a May 14, 2013, concurrent resolution approved by the territorial legislature, contend that the November 2012 plebiscite results were "inconclusive" because a large number of voters chose not to answer the second status question; and

WHEREAS, The White House has said "the results were clear, the people of Puerto Rico want the issue of status resolved, and a majority chose statehood in the second question," and "now is the time for Congress to act and the administration will work with them on that effort so that the people of Puerto Rico can determine their own future"; and

WHEREAS, U.N. General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 states that "peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development"; and

WHEREAS, More than two years after President Barack Obama presented a \$3.77 trillion budget proposal for 2014 that includes \$2.5 million for voter education and the first federally sanctioned plebiscite in Puerto Rico on options that would resolve the fundamental question of the island's future political status, the plebiscite has not been held; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That Congress has enacted legislation to enable Puerto Rico to conduct the first federally-sponsored plebiscite in history, the law requires the U.S. Department of Justice to ensure that any option on the ballot is compatible with U.S. law and policy, accordingly, we urge Congress to call upon the Governor of Puerto Rico to hold a plebiscite as soon as possible.

A motion by Jim Whitfield, Department of Missouri to allow the Chairman and Secretary to make technical corrections to the Committee Report, as necessary and appropriate, and to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Legislation, was unanimously approved and adopted by the Legislative Convention Committee.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REISTAD: National Commander Helm, as a duly authorized Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Virginia, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Do I hear a second? ... *Second.*

Is there any discussion? All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed? The report of the Convention Committee on Legislative is adopted. (*Applause*)

Our next guest is a 19-year member of The American Legion. He served in the Marine Corps infantry during the Gulf War. A resident of Waynesville, North Carolina, he has been a driving force behind efforts to build a national memorial to those brave Americans

who fought to push back Saddam Hussein's occupying force and liberate Kuwait. Remembering his comrades has been a passion for him. Please welcome the president of the board of the National Memorial for Desert Storm Veterans, Scott Stump. (*Applause*)

**Address: Scott Stump, President of the Board
National Memorial for Desert Storm Veterans**

Good morning, Mr. Commander, fellow Legionnaires. I just wanted to verify one thing or correct one thing. I'm a 23-year member rather than 19. (*Cheers and applause.*)

I'm able to say that very proudly. It's an honor to be here, and I want to help you all that have a 25-year-long memory. Those of you that don't, please accept my apologies. But I'm going to help you go back 25 years ago. And if you would please draw your attention to a short video to the video screens, you'll find out what I'm talking about. Thank you.

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

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I hope that that brings back some memories. I hope that it also reminds you what an uncertain time it was back in 1990 and 1991. And if you remember right, many in the world press were predicting a swift American defeat with tens if not hundreds of thousands of casualties. It was far from the layup that a lot of people look at it now in perspective. And, you know, the unfortunate part, and part of the driving action for me to initiate this effort, was the fact that many people have relegated Operation Desert Shield and Storm to a mere footnote in history. I felt that that was not accurate or representative of what was accomplished or how important that it really truly was.

There are many reasons for this memorial. I just want to highlight several of the top three here briefly for you this morning. First and foremost, we have to absolutely remember the almost 300 Americans who paid the Ultimate Sacrifice. And 15 of those, by the way, were ladies. We cannot let them be forgotten.

Secondly, we had over 600,000 Americans deploy and serve. Fifty years from now, 100 years from now that service, that sacrifice, needs to be remembered for posterity and for future generations. As you saw in the video, we liberated a country, Kuwait. And I know what some of you are thinking, probably the same thing I used to think: Well, that's kind of nice but really not that big of a deal.

I used to think that myself, until about three years ago at the Memorial Day parade up in Washington, D.C., where I had a group of young Kuwaiti kids come up to me and the group that I was with. They came up and shook our hands, and they said something to me that hit me right between the eyes. They said: "If it weren't for you Americans, right now we'd be Iraqis." And, ladies and gentlemen, that's the equivalent to somebody saying that we could be Canadians, we could be Mexicans, we could be Colombians, what have you. It is a big deal, and it's also a big deal the way it was accomplished. And hopefully the video reminded you of this.

We did this with a coalition of 33 other countries from around the globe, different languages, different cultures. We got together, we accomplished a mission. Heck, right now we can't even get 33, 34 states to agree with anything. Can you imagine 34 countries coming together and accomplishing something that changed the course of history, literally? That's exactly what had happened.

Last but not least, Operation Desert Storm was a turning point in our country's history. You see, our citizens finally came to the realization what a mistake and how deplorable it was the way that some of our Vietnam veterans were treated when they returned home. I can honestly say sincerely that I hope none of you in the room experienced that firsthand. But we came to the realization that that's something that never could be replicated; that it was wrong. Desert Storm allowed us to finally heal those wounds left over from Vietnam.

Ladies and gentlemen, I absolutely believe that if it were not for those lessons learned in Operation Desert Storm, I don't believe that our men and women who have been serving since 2001 in the War on Terror or who currently serve, I don't believe that they would be

treated with the level of dignity and respect that they absolutely deserve if it were not for those lessons learned.

And the last thing I'm going to say about the Vietnam connection, and there are many, we're only 15 years removed from the fall of Saigon, many Vietnam connections, a lot of people around the country will say to me: Well, Scott, you know, the reason why Operation Desert Storm was such a rapid and resounding success is because the Iraqis were so bad. As a Marine Corps infantryman, ladies and gentlemen, I don't agree with it one iota. I don't believe they were that bad. I believe we were that good. And the reason we were that good is because all of our leaders were Vietnam veterans. *(Applause)*

Those Vietnam veterans that were our leaders were not going to allow what happened the first time around happen to us, and I give them all the credit for my being able to stand here before you. *(Applause)*

Thank you. Now, where are we in the process of the memorial? Well, we just completed a three-year battle. I'm sorry, I'm not supposed to say that. It's a process. It's a legislative process. You have an idea for something, and in order for that idea to come to fruition, where do you have to go? You have to go to Washington, D.C., where all the smart people are...well, anyhow. *(Laughter)*

Of course I'm joking. We just completed that process. It was a back-breaking process of over three years. It culminated with the president signing into law our bill. That bill authorizes the construction of the memorial on federal land in Washington, D.C. That's through 100 percent private funding. So this is not going to take away from any existing veteran programs or taxpayer funding whatsoever.

We're very excited with the progress that we're making. Since the beginning of the year, we've been working with the National Park Service in order to identify the most suitable and appropriate location for the memorial. I'd like to recognize the gentleman who is spearheading that effort here. He is our design chair and a member of our board of directors. He's a retired lieutenant colonel, Kyle Leggs, from right here in Baltimore. Kyle, would you please stand up. *(Applause)*

So we're very excited with the progress that we've made. But we know that we've got a ways to go. Some of you may be thinking: Hey, how can we help this whole process? What can we do to help make this happen? Well, I'm glad you asked. We have a capital campaign that has just kicked off. We have a \$25 million budget that we're working with to make this memorial happen, and we plan to raise those funds during this 25th anniversary year, which started on August 2 and will run to next August 2. We have a short window of time that we want to operate with this.

The goal for the entire project, some of you may think this is a little bit ambitious, but we have a 36-month window of time that we're looking to do this. We don't want to draw this out, make this a long-term job any more than it already has. It's already been almost five years for me. But we want to get in and we want to get this done. We realize there are some things that are out of our control in dealing with the various commissions and with the federal government to do this. However, those are our intentions. I would really like to offer up to you the opportunity to partner. We can't do this alone, and we need your help.

You know, a lot of people, you'll talk about \$25 million, and I've said this before, and people say: Well, gosh, Scott, that is a huge financial hill to climb. I want to put something in perspective here. In 1919, the city of Kansas City raised \$2.5 million in ten days for the World War I Memorial. That's the equivalent to \$34 million in today's money. So we believe that the money is out there. It absolutely is.

The other thing I want to put in perspective is that we're in the middle of a political season, whether we like that or not, and we know that a lot of these candidates are raising hundreds of millions of dollars. Ladies and gentlemen, where does that money go? It's gone. Here we're talking about something that's going to honor and remember veterans and our country, and all of a sudden it's a big deal, \$25 million is a lot of money. I don't agree with that. I don't think that's the right track to take.

One last thing I want to put in perspective with the cost is that and, Mr. Commander, I'm going to take a little liberty with our numbers. I know it was quoted earlier 2.3 million, but for the sake of argument let's say that we're at 2 1/2 million members. Do you realize that that's the equivalent, if each one of our members gave up two Starbucks Frappuccinos, \$10 right here, the memorial is built. Done. Over.

The other thing I'd like to point out is that in our country we have roughly 25 million veterans. If each one of those veterans were to step up and donate just a dollar, we would be at our goal. This is realistic. The time is right. And as I mentioned before, earnestly and honestly seeking your partnership with this.

In the last seven days, we had been notified by another VSO that they donated a half a million dollars. We're very excited about that. A half a million dollars really helps us get going. But it's just a good start. I just want to again ask you all, whether it be at a national level, whether it be at a department level, whether it's at a district or a post level, please consider partnering with us so that we can do this. The time is right. The time is now.

Maybe you could do a fundraiser at a post level. Maybe there's something, a few of you I was talking with last night had mentioned a raffle. Maybe you have an idea that I've not even thought about. We would entertain anything and everything and just earnestly seek your partnership so we can make this memorial a reality.

I want to thank you all for your attention. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the greatest veterans organization in the world. God bless you all, have a great rest of your meeting, and safe travels to you all. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: A U.S. Army veteran, our next guest attended the University of Colorado using his GI Bill benefits. He continues serving in the Army Reserve, Marine Corps, and Marine Reserves. He was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 2008.

He is the only veteran in the Colorado delegation and the only member of Congress to have served in both the Gulf War and the later war in Iraq. He is the chairman of the Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Congressman Mike Coffman. *(Applause)*

**Address: The Honorable Michael Coffman
Chairman, Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee
U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

Thank you so much. I was Army in the Marine Corps, so there were some folks that would say I go both ways. *(Laughter)*

It is such an honor to be here today at the 97th National Convention for The American Legion. As a member of The American Legion in Colorado for over 20 years, I want to do a shout out to all my Colorado veterans that are here for this convention. *(Applause)*

I come from a military family. My father was a World War II veteran, My late father, a World War II veteran and Korean War veteran, a member of the greatest generation, fought in the Army infantry. As a young boy growing up, I wanted nothing more than to be a soldier like my father and follow in his footsteps. Although I thought it wasn't something I would do for a career, it was something I would do for a little while.

When I was in my junior year of high school, I convinced my parents by the end of that school year to sign for me so that I could join the United States Army. At 17, it required the approval of your parents. My father told me on thing. He said: If you're going to go in for the Army, you really need to sign up for three years or more and not for two years. Because if you're two years, you're going to be unassigned and they're going to put you in the infantry. My father was wounded in combat in the Korean War and then was transferred to the Army Medical Corps where he spent the second half of his career as an x-ray technician, retiring as an Army master sergeant. So I said: Dad, I talked to the recruiter. He

told me that I could serve for two years unassigned and I would not have to be in the Army infantry. So I served for the next two years in the United States Army infantry. *(Laughter)*

I completed high school through an Army program. I earned a diploma. I went to the University of Colorado under the GI Bill. I continued serving in the military through the Army Reserve program. Then before I graduated, I went to see my father with a bigger, glossier brochure about the Marine Corps Officers Program. My father said, "The Marines? All they have is infantry." I said, "No, Dad," and I ticked off all the jobs listed in the brochure; intelligence, logistics, supply, aviation. Of course, I became an infantry officer in the United States Marine Corps. *(Laughter)*

Having served my three years active duty commitment, I decided that I was going to finish. I had just done ten years now total combined. I was going to finish my career up, my 20-year career in the Marine Corps Reserves. I was going to come home to Colorado and take my leadership skills from the United States Marine Corps as an officer and apply it into business and I was going to have a leadership position in business, in management.

So I just remember going business to business to business. They all gave me the same response. They said: Thank you so much for your service, but, you know, we just don't think that there's a place here for you given your skill set. My resume had Army infantry, business degree. Marine Corps infantry. In the Marine Corps infantry it was infantry officer specializing in amphibious warfare. So I finally figured: Hey, what if I change my resume just a little bit, and instead of putting down I was an infantry officer specializing in amphibious warfare, if I put down that I was involved in international real estate, specializing in the acquisition of beach-front property. *(Laughter)*

That didn't work. But as a 27-year-old, I was able to take my savings from being an officer in the Marine Corps and put it down on a small business idea where I learned how to balance a budget, meet a payroll, run an organization efficiently enough to make a profit. Quality is not readily found in Washington, D.C. But let me tell you this. As hard as it was for me, it is much harder for most of the young men and women trying to return to civilian life from the military because they're not officers. They are junior enlisted. Oftentimes they have families and they don't have all those options.

So I think it's very important that we utilize the Post-9/11 GI Bill; that we expand the job training in terms of on-the-job training and apprenticeship training programs available where they can utilize their GI Bill to cover their living expenses.

Let's put our returning veterans back to work in job training programs that pay a living wage and give our veterans the job skills that will provide them with a pathway to achieving the American dream. *(Applause)*

When I was a young soldier, it was never a good thing when you had to report to the first sergeant. I remember as an Army private having some kind of a problem, I can't remember what it was, but it was significant enough where I went to my squad leader, my platoon sergeant, and now to the first sergeant. I remember reporting into his office, and I began telling him what my problem was. I got kind of midway through, and I remember he had an angry look on his face and he slammed his fist into his gray metal desk. And he said: Soldier, we don't have problems in this Army. We only have situations, and some situations just happen to be worse than others. So, soldier, what's your situation?

I stood there and I tried to figure out what he wanted. Then I finally figured out he did not want me to use the word "problem." He wanted me to use the word "situation" because in his mind he thought that if you use the word "situation" instead of "problem" that you were more optimistic about overcoming the challenges before you.

So I want to say today that I think we all know that we have some very serious "situations" when it comes to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Those responsible for the leadership failures within the VA must be held accountable, and the whistleblowers who have the courage to step forward must be protected. *(Applause)*

The VA has mismanaged its hospital construction projects. In April of 2013 a GAO report said even at that time that each of the four major hospital construction projects that

the VA had, each of them were hundreds of millions of dollars over budget, years behind schedule. And the one in Colorado is even worse now.

The Veterans Administration is a health-care provider and a benefits provider to the men and women who have served this country and earned those benefits. It is not a construction management entity. The Army Corps of Engineers is a construction management entity. They have built similar projects for the Department of Defense on schedule, within budget. That is their core competency. The VA must be stripped of its construction management authority, and that authority must be transferred to the Army Corps of Engineers. *(Applause)*

The VA has had a very significant scandal involving the fraudulent manipulation of appointment wait times that excluded veterans from care in order for VA personnel to get cash bonuses. One of the solutions has been the Choice Act. But the Choice Act must be made accessible in a way that veterans don't feel isolated and on their own. They must feel a part of the Veterans Administration. I think it's important to reform that program to make sure it works for veterans in a way that, again, they don't feel isolated.

The VA needs to change their health model and make it more accessible for women with the appropriate providers in the health-care system to serve the needs of our women veterans who are now 20 percent of all recruits throughout our military, are now women. And yet the VA system, the healthcare system does not reflect that. It must change to reflect the modern reality of women serving in our military. *(Applause)*

Vietnam, a war that I never served in yet had a great impact on me as a young person. My father's last assignment was in Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in the mid-1960s in Aurora, Colorado. It became the center for amputees coming home from Vietnam, soldiers wounded by mines and booby traps fighting in the jungles of Vietnam. As the '60s progressed, the casualties became larger and larger. I can remember in the late 1960s riding my bicycle onto the small Army hospital post, and the soldiers wore blue pajamas. They would come out to catch the morning sun in their wheelchairs, and mostly amputees, again. It would be a sea of blue as I was riding my bicycle in.

In the summer of '69, I had a bicycle wreck and I needed to get my knee stitched up. My father, the retired Army master sergeant then, took me to the orthopedic ward of the hospital. When that elevator door opened up into that floor, I remember there were soldiers in wheelchairs and gurneys who had very serious wounds that were going to be moved about the hospital to be worked on. I felt so embarrassed as a 14-year-old with this superficial wound in my knee as I began to navigate my way between these wheelchairs and gurneys among soldiers who had sacrificed so much for this country.

I volunteered after that experience with the Junior Red Cross, and we did things to make the lives of these wounded soldiers a little bit better. We did book drives and we did some watermelon parties in the summer and things like that. But I just remember the morale of those soldiers was so low; that they were isolated from the outside communities, nobody came and visited them but their immediate families; that as the American people became more divided in their support for the war in Vietnam, they also became more divided in their support for those who fought in that war. As a result, those who fought in Vietnam were never truly welcomed home. We must never do that again to any veteran returning from war to this country. Never again. Never again! *(Applause)*

I feel as if I've come full circle, and now as a member of the Armed Services Committee, a member of the Veterans Committee, I often go and visit our wounded who are at the joint services facility now at Bethesda. It is a hospital where our wounded are brought to once they're stabilized in theater, often come through Germany and then come through there first before they're moved. Some do their rehabilitation there; others move on.

First of all, the casualty rate is very low now. Thank God for that. But I can remember, after the surge of Afghanistan, visiting our wounded. There was a wounded corporal, a double amputee above his knees and lost part of his hand who had just come in, and I went

to visit him. After I visited him, a doctor came up to me and said: Congressman, would you visit the rest of the wounded, please? It would mean a lot to them.

What had happened in Afghanistan is that we got better in surveillance of the roadways where the Taliban were planting IEDs to destroy our armored vehicles. We had up-armored our vehicles. We had better equipment in terms of roadway surveillance detection. So they changed their tactics and instead they used the same explosives to make antipersonnel IEDs for dismounted troops. So we got a lot of amputees, but very serious amputees. Some double amputees above the knee so high up that no prosthetics would work to help them. There was literally nothing to work with. All the way up to their hips.

The corpsman accompanied me room to room. I always asked them before I went in. I don't want to look shocked when I look a soldier or a Marine or an airman, sailor in the eye. And I said: What is it? It was the same in every room: Double amputee. Bilateral amputation above the knees. It was room to room.

In the last room, there were two Army airborne soldiers, and they got hit hard, and double amputees above the knees, both of them, balancing themselves in a wheelchair, clearly in pain. One looked up to me, and without hesitation, he didn't complain about why him, didn't take pity on himself, didn't say, "Why did I become a soldier? Why infantry? Why Afghanistan?" He looked up to me and in a confident way said, "We live for one thing, and that is to be well enough when the soldiers from our unit in Afghanistan come home that we can meet them when they get off the plane." How incredible? (*Applause*)

How incredible is that? So long as there are Americans like those two soldiers, our country will remain strong. The American Legion will never forget the sacrifices of those two soldiers along with all the soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen who have made tremendous sacrifices in defense of our country. The American Legion works hard every day to make sure that this nation honors its obligations to those who have fought for our country long after they come home.

As a former soldier, a Marine Corps combat veteran, and as a member of The American Legion, I'm proud to stand with you today on behalf of all of our veterans who have served this great nation. God bless you, God bless The American Legion, and God bless this great nation. (*Applause*)

Presentation: Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy is given to the department that achieves the most outstanding results in conducting Americanism programs. These programs advance patriotism among the citizens of this nation and participation in our youth activities. Ladies and gentlemen, the winner of the Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy is the Department of Ohio. (*Applause*)

ANNOUNCER: Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy awarded to The American Legion Department of Ohio in recognition of the most outstanding Americanism program. Presented at the 97th National Convention of The American Legion, Baltimore, Maryland. Michael D. Helm, National Commander, and Richard W. Anderson, Chairman, The American Legion National Americanism Commission.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The Chair recognizes Richard Anderson of Connecticut, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Americanism, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Americanism Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut, Chairman

To the 97th Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Baltimore, Maryland, September 1-3, 2015: Forty-three members of your Convention Committee on

Americanism met at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 30, 2015, in the Hilton Baltimore, Holiday Ballroom, Section 4, Baltimore, Maryland, to discuss matters of Americanism-related resolutions assigned to the committee. A quorum was declared.

The committee organized by electing Richard W. Anderson (CT), Chairman and Charles Tucker (GA), Secretary.

The committee discussed 20 resolutions that were assigned to the group. The resolutions that were considered continue to reflect the desire by the Departments of The American Legion to address matters of patriotism and government, and to maintain strong general Americanism programs that complement the organization and benefit the nation.

A motion was made by Ida Jewell (IN) and seconded by Joshua Clement (MT) that the Convention Committee on Americanism authorize the chairman and secretary to sign and deliver the report, on behalf of the committee, to the National Convention. The motion was approved.

Of the 20 resolutions considered: 4 were Received and Recorded, 3 Referred to the Standing Commission, 10 Consolidated and Referred to the Standing Commission, and 3 Rejected.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 63 (MN): Americanism Booklet

Resolution No. 66 (AR): Veterans in the Schools Program

Resolution No. 73 (IL): English Language Be Declared as the Official United States Language

Resolution No. 84 (CT): Oratorical Judging Video

Referred to the Standing Commission

Resolution No. 9 (CO): Presentation of American Flags to the Families of Deceased Boy and Girl Scouts

Resolution No. 24 (PA): Anniversary of "In God We Trust"

Resolution No. 58 (VA): Amend Oratorical Contest Rules to Allow American Sign Language Interpreters

Resolution No. 5 (AK): Proposed Change to the Oratorical Contest National Finals (Consolidated with Resolution No. 18 (AZ), Resolution No. 80 (IL), Resolution No. 41 (MS), Resolution No. 6 (MT), Resolution No. 11 (NE), Resolution No. 82 (NM), Resolution No. 50 (NY))

Resolution No. 22 (TX) Revise Eligibility Requirements for The American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year (Consolidated with Resolution No. 46 (WA))

Rejected

Resolution No. 21 (TX): Scouting Square Knot Award

Resolution No. 44 (WA): Scouting Square Knot Award

Resolution No. 19 (AZ): Additions to Junior Shooting Sports Program

The Children & Youth Committee met on Sunday, August 30, 2015 at 9:00 a.m. in the Hilton Baltimore, Holiday Ballroom, Section 5, Baltimore, Maryland with forty-two members present. The meeting was called to order by Kimberly Mezger (IN), Assistant Director, Americanism Division. The meeting was organized by electing delegate Herbert J. Petit of Louisiana, Chairman and W. Fraizer Brinley of Connecticut as Secretary.

No resolutions were received for consideration.

The Committee was briefed on the important work of the Committee on Children & Youth and American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.

A motion was made by John Knox (MI) and seconded by Jim Costello (NE) that the Children & Youth Committee authorize the chairman and secretary to sign and deliver the report on behalf of the committee to the Convention Committee on Americanism for inclusion in its report to the National Convention. The motion was approved.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate for the Department of Connecticut, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Do I hear a second? ... *Second.*

Is there any discussion? All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed? The report of Americanism is adopted. Having completed the adoption of the Americanism report, it is appropriate to announce the winners of two Americanism awards.

Presentation:

Frank Belgrano, Jr. Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The Frank Belgrano, Jr. Trophy is given annually to the Department rendering the most outstanding service during the 12-month period beginning August 1 to the Boys Scout of America program.

This year's winner is the Department of California. (*Applause*)

Presentation:

Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy is given to the department within the United States documenting the greatest activity in operating The American Legion School Medal Program. The winning department shows what can be accomplished by an active and involved American Legion.

The winner is the Department of Maryland. (*Applause*)

Presentation:

Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I now have the pleasure of presenting the Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award to the department that raised the most money for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure for me to present this award to the Department of Florida. (*Applause*)

ANNOUNCER: The Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award presented by the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to The American Legion Department of Florida for the program year 2014-2015. In recognition of their designation as the number one department, in total contributions received from their volunteers, in support of our annual program designed to meet the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of our nation's children through productive and meaningful grants. (Applause)

Presentation: U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: It is now time for me to present the U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award. This award recognizes the collective efforts of The American Legion Family in a department. It goes to the department that collectively raises the most money for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. The winner of this prestigious award is the Department of Florida. (*Applause*)

ANNOUNCER: The U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award presented by the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Florida for the program year 2014-2015 in recognition of Outstanding Support for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. We thank you.

CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT BOLAND: Commander Helm, on behalf of the board of directors for the Child Welfare Foundation, it is indeed an honor to present you a five-diamond Child Welfare lapel pin. *(Applause)*

Commander, in my travels heading south on I-95, I come across Dunn, North Carolina, the home of Major General William C. Lee, the father of the airborne troops. I stopped, and I would like to present you Major General William C. Lee's Challenge Coin. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Wow. Thank you very much. If anyone has donations to the Child Welfare Foundation, I will now accept those on stage.

Donations to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): Thank you, commander. Once again, from the great state of New York, I have today a check for \$684.77, bringing our total contribution to the Child Welfare Foundation to \$21,015.08.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NE): The Department of Nebraska has an additional contribution of \$1,053.46. Thank you.

DELEGATE PAJAK (MA): Commander, from the Department of Massachusetts, Commander Louis Brault, Director Milton Lashes, Jodie Pajak, Children & Youth chairman, donate \$2,130.50.

DELEGATE LOWRY (IN): From the Department of Indiana, \$3,471.16.

DELEGATE SHAPPELL (WI): From the Department of Wisconsin, \$1,244.39.

DELEGATE WOELTJE (MO): From the Department of Missouri, our Past Commanders Club, and Sons of The American Legion, \$6,687.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WY): From the Department of Wyoming, on behalf of Post 14, check for \$2,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ND): From the great state of North Dakota, Child Welfare check for \$1,050.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): Department of Michigan is proud to donate to the Child Welfare Foundation \$2,000.

DELEGATE JURGENS (SD): Sturgis, Post 33, Department of South Dakota, donates \$100. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Thank you very much for those contributions. The Chair recognizes Ralph Bozella of Colorado, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado, Chairman

113 members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 AM on August 30, 2015, in the Baltimore Convention Center, Rooms 337 & 338, Level 300, Baltimore, Maryland to consider 29 resolutions and agreed on the following report that is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Louis J. Celli (MA), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Edward Lilley (MD), Team Leader for Health Policy, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. Ralph P. Bozella (CO),

Chairman of the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committee.

With unanimous consent, Phil Youngblood (GA) was elected as Committee Secretary; William J. Smith (PA) was elected Chairman of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee and John W. Hickey, Jr. (IN), as Secretary; James W. Stanko (CO) was elected Chairman of the Health Administration Subcommittee and Karen E.P. O'Donohue (UT) as Secretary; and R. Shuford Edmisten (NC) was elected Chairman of the National Cemetery Subcommittee; and Jack F. Stanley (FL) as Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Zachary Hearn (PA), Deputy Director for Claims to Claims and Rating, Roscoe Butler (MD), Deputy Director for Health Policy to Health Administration and Edward Lilley (MD), Team Leader for Health Policy to National Cemetery.

Prior to the Convention Committee's meeting, the National Adjutant appointed five Department Service Officers to the Special Department Service Officers Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Resolutions. In a preconvention meeting, the Department Service Officers screened and grouped the 29 resolutions based on their expertise and helped conserve the time of the Convention Committee substantially. A report of their actions, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committee for consideration. The Screening Committee was chaired by Ralph P. Bozella (CO), Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

- REGION 1 – Kenneth G. Connors (NJ)
- REGION 2 – Randall A. Fisher (KY)
- REGION 3 – Joseph T. Houghton (DE)
- REGION 4 – Wayne Macejak (IL)
- REGION 5 – Karen E. P. O'Donohue (UT)

The Resolutions Assignment Committee referred 29 Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation resolutions to the Convention Committee for consideration. The following actions on the resolutions were taken by the Convention Committee:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment.....	16
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved.....	2
Referred to the Standing Commission	4
Received and Recorded	4
Rejected	3

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committee's behalf.

A report of actions taken on the 29 resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

Approved Resolutions or Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 7: Black Hills National Cemetery Expansion

Origin: South Dakota

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Black Hills National Cemetery, located 2 miles east of Sturgis, South Dakota, is one of our nation's most sacred shrines representing an embodiment of the sacrifices that were made to uphold our country's ideals and freedoms; and

WHEREAS, More than 26,000 veterans and their dependents are buried there on just over 101 acres of land that was opened in 1948 and is currently expected to last through 2032; and

WHEREAS, The Black Hills National Cemetery is one of 131 National Cemeteries nationwide and like some other National Cemeteries, available land and space for future expansion is a concern; and

WHEREAS, The first contact between the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) concerning the transfer of 191 acres of land adjoining the Black Hills National Cemetery on the north side was made in 1998; and

WHEREAS, Under Statute 40 U.S.C. 472, the Bureau of Land Management has withdrawn said acres for the purpose of transferal to the National Cemetery Administration; and

WHEREAS, After nearly 18 years, the land deal between BLM and NCA is no closer to completion than the day it started; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion urges the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), and the U.S. Congress to work together to finalize the transfer of the BLM land to the Black Hills National Cemetery which will ensure ample land and space for future expansion.

Resolution No. 8: Oppose Closure of the VA Black Hills Health Care System's Hot Springs Campus

Origin: South Dakota

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
(As amended)**

WHEREAS, The men and women of our armed services have been at war for over a decade carrying out our nation's War on Terror; and

WHEREAS, Our nation's veterans have earned and deserve the highest level of care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, Veteran services have been offered by various agencies in Hot Springs, South Dakota for 109 years and has always provided exemplary quality of care for our nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, The community of Hot Springs, South Dakota continues to provide a positive environment conducive to healing our nation's Veterans who use the facility; and

WHEREAS, The community of Hot Springs and the VA Medical Center in Hot Springs, South Dakota is uniquely qualified to address the needs of our newest veterans; and

WHEREAS, Like those veterans who have come before, many of our newest veterans have special needs related to post traumatic stress, suicide prevention, substance abuse treatment and homelessness prevention; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion reaffirms its support for keeping the Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center and residential rehabilitation services in Hot Springs, South Dakota; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That, as a minimum, the VA create a Center of Excellence for the treatment of post-traumatic stress, substance abuse and homelessness prevention at the VA Campus in Hot Springs, South Dakota.

Resolution No. 28: In Vitro Fertilization

Origin: Pennsylvania

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
(As amended)**

WHEREAS, One of the Four Pillars of The American Legion is Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for our military, veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, The morale of the veteran and his family is a key part of his or her rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, Some veterans because of their injuries cannot have children without the assistance of reproductive technology; and

WHEREAS, The wars of the last decade have seen thousands of veterans leaving them unable to have children; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Health Care Act of 1992 prohibits the Department of Veterans Affairs from paying for IVF (In Vitro Fertilization), yet if they were still on active duty, the United States Government would pay for this treatment; and

WHEREAS, Money should not be the reason not to help these veterans become a family that should be a common right; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion urges Congress, the Administration and the Department of Veterans Affairs to properly fund an In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) program.

Resolution No. 32: Department of Veterans Affairs Provider Agreements with Non-VA Providers

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Non-VA Care is health care provided within the community to eligible veterans when Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities cannot provide needed health care; and

WHEREAS, VA has a long history of purchasing non-VA health care services based on issuing individual authorizations or establishing provider agreements with non-VA geriatrics and extended care facilities, to include (Community Residential Care, Medical Foster Homes, Adult Family Homes, and Assisted Living) as well as nursing homes such as: Community Living Centers, Community Nursing Homes, and State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, Federal Contracting laws and regulations (including the Federal Acquisition Regulation), requires that federal agencies adhere to such law and regulations, such as 48 Code of Regulations (CFR) Chapters 1 and 8; and

WHEREAS, The competition in contracting Act's overriding mandate is for agencies to conduct "full and open competition" in government procurements, which is obtained by competitive procedures as listed in 41 United States Code (USC) 3301(a)(1); and

WHEREAS, Under Federal Contracting laws and regulations, only a government contracting official can make sole source purchases, under the limited circumstances listed in 41 USC 3304 (a) (1-7),

WHEREAS, In March of 2015, it was reported that veterans residing at the Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital in Lincoln, Nebraska will no longer be allowed care at VA's expense because VA's Office of General Counsel has issued a ruling that VHA can no longer issue provider agreements, and must adhere to the Federal Contracting laws and regulations; and

WHEREAS, This change in VHA policy will require VA to make arrangements for the purchase of non-VA health care service by virtue of Federal Contracting laws and regulations, which does not take into account the veteran or family member preference; and

WHEREAS, If legislation is not enacted that would allow VA to enter into provider agreements with non-VA providers for necessary health care service for the care and treatment of eligible veterans, many non-VA providers and nursing homes will be forced to discontinue accepting veterans into their programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion supports legislation that would allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to enter into provider agreements with eligible non-VA providers to obtain needed health care services for the care and treatment of eligible veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the VA be authorized to obtain health care services from non-VA providers that are closer to where the veteran resides.

Resolution No. 64: Fit to Serve Initiative

Origin: Minnesota

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
(As amended and consolidated with Resolution No. 42 (WI))**

WHEREAS, Hearing loss and tinnitus rank as the two most prevalent service-connected disabilities for veterans receiving federal compensation over the last four years; and

WHEREAS, The high demand for Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) audiology services is growing at a rate of nearly 10% per year, and the VA is unable to meet that demand under its current system; and

WHEREAS, As a result of the claims backlog and limited VA sites, many veterans are experiencing long wait times for appointments, long distances to travel to the nearest VA facility, and limited hearing aid adjustment and follow-up services; and

WHEREAS, Currently the VA does not employ hearing aid specialists in their audiology clinics, as Title 38 U.S.C. does not give the VA express authority to hire hearing aid specialists; and

WHEREAS, Hearing Aid Specialists are state-licensed, healthcare professionals who have undergone training and accreditation processes, which typically includes successful completion of an apprenticeship training period, a distance learning course, comprehensive written and practical examinations to test knowledge and clinical competency, and tests of state and federal laws related to the fitting and sale of hearing aids; and

WHEREAS, In the private marketplace, licensed hearing aid specialists perform hearing evaluations, and dispense, fit, adjust and repair hearing aids for about 50% of the public; and

WHEREAS, The VA currently recognizes these professionals in its fee-for-service policy to provide hearing aid evaluations, and hearing aid fitting, dispensing, adjustments and repairs, yet due to existing restrictions, VA clinics rarely utilize these providers; and

WHEREAS, Inclusion of the nation's 9,000 licensed hearing aid specialists in the VA's provider network could significantly expand accessibility as they often operate in rural areas, and perform nursing home and in-home visits; and

WHEREAS, The increased use of hearing aid specialists by the VA could lead to shorter appointment wait times, more convenient care, and increased follow-up services for veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Fit to Serve program (www.fittoserve.us), established by the International Hearing Society, seeks to increase veterans' access to hearing aid specialists; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion supports the Fit to Serve initiative and federal legislation that expands the Department of Veterans Affairs' authority to hire and utilize hearing aid specialists to perform hearing aid testing and fitting and dispensing services.

Resolution No. 74: Compensation for Veterans Requiring Hearing Aids for Service Connected Hearing Loss**Origin: Illinois****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
(As amended)**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, After veterans are released from service they are able to apply for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation for their injuries and illnesses related to their active duty service; and

WHEREAS, The VA uses a standard schedule of ratings to determine the percent of disability compensation to assign; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans have suffered hearing loss from service due to loud noise exposure; and

WHEREAS, Many of these veterans are granted a 0% service-connected rating and this authorizes the VA hospital to furnish these veterans hearing aids as needed; and

WHEREAS, These hearing aids must be kept clean, properly stored when not in use, adjusted periodically and have batteries replaced when needed; and

WHEREAS, Although minor, these chores and maintenance do impact on a veteran's quality of life and loss of income on a daily basis and therefore should warrant a minimum compensable rating; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion support legislation to grant a minimum 10% rating for all veterans, who, due to their service-connected hearing loss, are furnished hearing aids.

Resolution No. 75: Restore VA's Informal Claims and Appeals Process**Origin: Illinois****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Since the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) first started processing claims it has always accepted any written correspondence from a veteran or claimant as an informal claim, as long as the correspondence was signed, the benefit sought stated or implied and the veteran's name was identifiable; and

WHEREAS, Once this informal claim was received, the VA allowed the claimant one entire year to finalize the claim by using the appropriate claim form; and

WHEREAS, With this procedure in place our veterans and claimants have become used to simply sending in letters stating they want an increase in their benefits or wish to appeal a VA decision and the VA would accept these letters and establish an official "date of claim" or "notice of disagreement"; and

WHEREAS, In March and April of 2015 the VA changed its procedures and has issued two new forms which the veteran or claimant must now use; and

WHEREAS, These forms are a 21-0966 "Intent to file a Claim for Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and /or DIC" and a 21-0958 "Notice of disagreement"; and

WHEREAS, If these forms are not used the VA will not accept any other correspondence as an informal claim or appeal; and

WHEREAS, Because of this many of our veterans and claimants may lose valuable months of possible entitlement or not have their appeals received in a timely manner; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion shall urge

the Department of Veterans Affairs to modify its current procedures to return to the previous acceptance of any writing correspondence from our veterans or claimants as an "informal claim or appeal" allowing them one year to finalize this action.

Resolution No. 77: Increased Accessibility to VA Claims Pertaining to Non-Disability Related Matters for Accredited Representatives

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

(As amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, It has accredited service officers in every department who assist veterans and their survivors in the filing of claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and will include claims not only for compensation and pension but also for health care and benefits; and

WHEREAS, These service officers have many tools available which are furnished by the VA and include access to various VA computer programs, including Map-d, Share, Capri and Veterans Appeals Control and Locator System (VACOLS); and

WHEREAS, These computer programs allow our service officers to track a claim in its various stages, from the initial establishment of the claim, the following development, and the final decision, and where necessary into the appeal process; and

WHEREAS, The program used to track appeals is called VACOLS and in this database our service officers can see when an appeal was started, the issue(s) involved, when the Statement of the Case (SOC) was issued, hearing requests and other information; and

WHEREAS, Service officers can use this database to answer appeal status questions from their clients in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, Appeals of denial of health care benefits e.g. denial of eligibility, refusal of payment for emergency services outside the VA hospital etc. are not entered into VACOLS until the veteran has either filed their Form 9 (substantive appeal) or requested a personal hearing; and

WHEREAS, Our service officers are finding it difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain (via computer access) the status of these appeals in their early stages, what the issues are, whether a SOC was issued or whether an appeal was even received; and

WHEREAS, Service officers must make numerous calls or send e-mails to the VA hospital to find out the status of these appeals in its early stages, thus wasting their valuable time; and

WHEREAS, If these types of appeals were immediately entered into VACOLS when the veteran first files their Notice of Disagreement, our service officers could have an immediate answer to appeal status inquiries through technological means; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion shall urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to modify its current procedures on hospital appeals to enter these types of appeals into the Veterans Appeals Control and Locator System immediately upon receipt of the veteran's or claimant's Notice of Disagreement.

Resolution No. 78: Extend Dental Care to Veterans with Service Connection of 50% or More**Origin: Illinois****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation and is constantly striving to improve the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefit programs; and

WHEREAS, One of the most important veterans benefit is eligibility for VA hospital care and the VA has established a system of priority groups in which the highest priority is assigned to service-connected disabled veterans, former Prisoners Of War (POWs), those who received a Purple Heart, returning combat veterans, etc.; and

WHEREAS, Under this current system any veteran with a combined VA service-connected rating of 50% or more is exempt from copayments for any inpatient or outpatient visits and is also exempt from any copayments for any prescriptions; and

WHEREAS, These same veterans with a rating of 50% or more must pay for any dental services they may need unless they are rated 100% service-connected disabled or former POWs or certain other categories; and

WHEREAS, It seems inequitable to charge these veterans for dental services when everything else is without charge; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to change the eligibility for free dental care to any veteran with a combined Department of Veterans Affairs service-connected rating of 50% or more.

Resolution No. 99: Complementary and Alternative Medicine**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) refers to treatments not considered to be standard in the current practice of Western Medicine; and

WHEREAS, In some locations, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provide CAM, such as: acupuncture, biofeedback, art therapy, tai chi, medication, breathing exercises, massage, and yoga; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Committee was formed in 2010 in order to investigate the existing science and procedures and alternative methods for treating TBI and PTSD not currently being employed by the DoD or VA for the purpose of determining if such alternative treatments are practical and efficacious; and

WHEREAS, In the wake of serious concerns about over prescription of medications at the Tomah Veterans Affairs Medical Center, the nation has become more focused on ensuring veterans and servicemembers are treated properly with opioid medications and do not suffer due to mixed drug toxicity; and

WHEREAS, CAM treatments should not be limited to treatment of veterans suffering from TBI and PTSD; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion urge Congress to provide oversight and funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for innovative, evidence-based, complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in treating various illnesses and disabilities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legions urges legislation that would improve pain management policies for the Department of Defense (DoD) and VA; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That DoD and VA accelerate research efforts to properly diagnose and develop CAM treatments as evidence-based.

Resolution No. 100: Non-Department of Veterans Affairs Emergency Care

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (U.S.C), Section 1703a states when Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities are not "capable of furnishing economical hospital care or medical services because of geographical inaccessibility or are not capable of furnishing the care or services required, the Secretary may contract with non-Department facilities in order to furnish medical care"; and

WHEREAS, VA is permitted under Title 38 (U.S.C.) § 1728 and 1725 to make payment and reimbursement to a claimant for emergency treatment provided to service-connected and nonservice-connected veterans with a timely filing limit for unauthorized inpatient or outpatient medical care claims (two years from the date of care for service-connected veterans, and 90 days for nonservice-connected veterans); and

WHEREAS, Several veterans have reported to The American Legion that delayed payments for emergency care by the VA to the non-VA provider have resulted in numerous credit issues for veterans; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long urged VA to adopt a more definitive policy on emergency care that is consistently applied at every VA Medical Center; and

WHEREAS, VA's policy cannot continue to result in unfair billing for veterans who require emergency care outside VA; and

WHEREAS, Veterans need a solid recourse plan on what to do in the event that VA delays payments of claims for emergency medical care furnished by non-VA medical providers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion support legislation urging the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to promptly pay non-VA providers for emergency care furnished; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA conduct outreach to veterans regarding the effect of delayed payments of claims for emergency medical care furnished by non-VA medical providers.

Resolution No. 101: Department of Veterans Affairs Recruitment & Retention

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion has consistently been concerned with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) leadership, physicians and medical specialist staffing shortages within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA); and

WHEREAS, Since The American Legion's System Worth Saving (SWS) Program's inception in 2003, The American Legion has tracked and reported staffing shortages at every VA medical facility across the country and shares those reports with Congress, VA Central Office (VACO), and the President of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that access to basic health care services offered by qualified primary care, specialty care, and mental health care providers should be available locally as often as possible; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's SWS 2014 executive summary found that several VA medical centers continue to struggle to fill critical leadership positions across multiple departments; and

WHEREAS, These gaps have caused communication breakdowns between medical center leadership and staff that work within these departments; and

WHEREAS, On January 30, 2015, the VA's Office of Inspector General (VAOIG) released their determination of the "Veterans Health Administration's Occupational Staffing Shortages," as required by Section 301, of the "Veterans Access Choice and Accountability Act (VACAA) of 2014"; and

WHEREAS, VAOIG's report determined that the five occupations with the largest staffing shortages were Medical Officers, Nurses, Physician Assistants, Physical Therapists, and Psychologists; and

WHEREAS, VHA is still struggling to achieve the appropriate balance of primary care and medical specialists across the country; and

WHEREAS, If the VA continues to struggle with retention and recruitment, the trend of closures (or continued closures) for multiple departments within VAMCs nationwide will continue; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion support legislation addressing the recruitment and retention challenges that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has regarding pay disparities among those physicians and medical specialists who are providing direct health care to our nation's veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Veterans Health Administration continue to develop and implement staffing models for critical need occupations; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA work more comprehensively with community partners when struggling to fill critical shortages within VA's ranks

Resolution No. 102: Priority Care for Medal of Honor Recipients

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Medal of Honor is the highest military decoration awarded to a member of the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, From the Civil War to the present Global War on Terror, this decoration has recognized those servicemembers who performed acts of uncommon valor far above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, The recipients have earned this award by displaying heroism and bravery while risking their lives during service to this great nation; and

WHEREAS, Currently, veterans awarded the Medal of Honor are assigned to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Priority Group 3 for enrollment in VA health care; and

WHEREAS, Due to limited funds, the VA set up Priority Groups to make sure that certain groups of veterans are able to be enrolled before others; and

WHEREAS, Medal of Honor recipients should be assigned the highest priority status for hospital care and medical services provided through the VA; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion urge Congress to assign Medal of Honor recipients to Enrollment Priority Group 1 for Department of Veterans Affairs health care.

Resolution No. 103: Fiduciary Responsibility

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Fiduciary Program was established to protect veterans and other beneficiaries who are unable to manage their financial affairs due to injury, disease, and age; and

WHEREAS, VA only determines an individual to be unable to manage their financial affairs after receipt of medical documentation or if a court of competent jurisdiction has already made the determination; and

WHEREAS, An Office of Inspector General (OIG) Audit of the Fiduciary Program's Effectiveness in Addressing Potential Misuse of Beneficiary Funds in 2010 identified the Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) failure to examine financial reports, as well as failure to timely respond to misuse allegations in 96 percent of the cases reviewed; and

WHEREAS, In fiscal year 2013, fiduciary personnel conducted 325 misuse investigations resulting in 118 fiduciaries being removed for misusing benefits; and

WHEREAS, An OIG Audit of Fiduciary Program's Management of Field Examinations in 2015 found that VBA staff did not meet timeliness standards for about 45,500 (42 percent) of approximately 109,000 pending and completed field examinations during calendar year 2013; and

WHEREAS, The VA OIG estimated that these untimely field examinations placed about \$360.7 million in benefit payments and about \$487.6 million in estate values at increased risk; and

WHEREAS, VA's current Fiduciary Program has been inadequate in its protection of benefits provided to veterans and other beneficiaries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion support legislation requiring the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide oversight over their fiduciary program and that it protects veterans and their beneficiaries who are unable to manage their financial affairs.

Resolution No. 104: Local Accredited Representative Access to Veterans Benefits Management System Decisions

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Veterans, their dependents, and survivors authorize service organizations to represent them with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims and appeals; and

WHEREAS, Service organizations employ accredited service officers co-located with VA Regional Offices (VAROs) to provide representation to individual claimants and/or appellants; and

WHEREAS, VA often transfers jurisdiction from regional offices for decisions; and

WHEREAS, VA does not currently inform the veteran's local representative of decisions made by VAROs not within the veteran's state of residence; and

WHEREAS, The representative at the local VARO needs access to VA decisions to help make sure they are correct before VA promulgates those decisions; and

WHEREAS, VA often promulgates decisions before the local representative has reviewed the decision, and if necessary, discussed it with decision makers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to keep the veterans' accredited service organization representatives at the local VA Regional Offices (VAROs) informed of all decisions made on claims and/or appeals of claimants/appellants who have assigned the service organizations as their VA accredited representative; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA inform representatives at the local VAROs of decisions by placing a filter in VA's Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) allowing local representatives to find their client's VBMS records, including but not limited to, rating decisions by conducting the client's state of residence search; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA set the VBMS system so a VARO cannot promulgate decisions until the accredited representation at the VARO either signifies the decision has been reviewed without significant concern(s), or after two full regular working days have expired; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA not promulgate decisions questioned by the local representative until VA responds to the local representative's concerns.

Resolution No. 105: Reiteration of the System Worth Saving Program

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 26 (PA))**

WHEREAS, The System Worth Saving Program has been valuable for both The American Legion and America's veterans since its inception in 2003 under Past National Commander Ronald F. Conley; and

WHEREAS, The program has influenced congressional action, administrative regulation, and has garnered presidential praise; and

WHEREAS, The System Worth Saving Program has evolved into a full-service benefits-delivery and watchdog program that has helped educate our federal government and our veterans as to the strengths and weaknesses of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system and all of the services that VA is responsible for delivering to veterans; and

WHEREAS, The VA continues to suffer under intense scrutiny and criticisms from the media, congressional representatives, and assorted others that seek to discredit the VA and undermine its value; and

WHEREAS, The VA "system" comprises all of the benefits programs overseen by VA; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion continues to believe that the VA is a "System Worth Saving"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That the primary purposes of the System Worth Saving Program be reiterated to state that it is the responsibility of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission and its assorted sub-committees to provide expertise at hospital visits and wherever else they can legally participate; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the System Worth Saving endeavor is a permanent program of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That national staff will arrange regular site visits and give proper notification to those invited from the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the findings will be reported annually to the National Executive Committee, Congress, and the President of the United States.

The following resolutions are being referred to the standing commission for staff study or appropriate administrative disposition.

There were (4) resolutions referred to the standing commission for staff study or appropriate administrative disposition.

Referred Resolutions

Resolution No. 43 (WI): Dependency and Indemnity Compensation for Surviving POW Spouses

Resolution No. 56 (OH): National Cemetery Eligibility for Burial

Resolution No. 71 (IL): Veteran Caretaker Stipend

Resolution No. 91 (NC): Presidential Memorial Certificates

Received and Recorded Resolutions**Resolution No. 13 (AZ): Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record****Resolution No. 17 (AZ): Timely Processing of Overpayments****Resolution No. 57 (VA): Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing****Resolution No 67 (NJ): Service Dogs for Injured Service Personnel and Veterans with Mental Health Conditions****Rejected Resolutions****Resolution No. 20 (TX): Establishment of a Veterans Affairs Regional Benefit Office in San Antonio****Resolution No 47 (WA): In-State Licensure for VA Healthcare Providers****Resolution No 52 (NY): Awarding of Benefits by the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans' Claims**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BOZELLA: Mr. Commander, I, Ralph P. Bozella of Colorado, a duly elected and registered delegate to this convention, move for the adoption of this report and respectfully submit it.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Do I hear a second? ... *Second.*

Is there any discussion? All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed? The report of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation is adopted.

Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: With the adoption of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation report, it is time to announce the winner of the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy. This trophy is awarded annually to the department that best supports and implements programs to benefit veterans, their families and their survivors. For the 2014-2015 program year, the trophy is awarded to the Department of Ohio. (*Applause*)

We're running ahead of schedule. We're going to try to do the National Security report. I now call on Mike Schlee, chairman of National Security, for the report of that convention committee.

Report: Convention Committee on National Security
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 30, 2015, 258 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security initially met in the Baltimore Convention Center, Rooms 340-342, Level 300. Mr. G. Michael Schlee (Maryland) was elected Chairman and Mr. E.C. Toppin (North Carolina) was appointed Secretary.

After the initial meeting, the following convention committees met, held elections and dealt with the resolutions assigned to them:

Aerospace

Roger Webster (MI), Chairman
 Anthony Heath (MA), Secretary

Conventional Armed Forces

Charles E. Kruger (MN), Chairman
 Kent Webber (DC), Secretary

Foreign Relations

Randall Fisher (KY), Chairman
 Robert Bryant (KY), Secretary

Law and Order & Homeland Security	George Wehrli (FL), Chairman James Chapman (VA), Secretary
Military Benefits & Quality of Life	Melvin Smullen (MD), Chairman Nola Maloney (FR), Secretary
National Guard & Reserve Forces	William Goede (MN), Chairman Dennis Duggan (MD), Secretary
Unconventional Forces & Intelligence	Chuck Roessler (WI), Chairman Robert Effler (MD), Secretary

At 11:00 a.m., Sunday, August 30, 2015, the delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security reconvened in the Baltimore Convention Center, Rooms 340-342, Level 300. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 25 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security or prepared by the Committee to meet issues which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. The Convention Committee authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report of the Convention Committee on National Security on behalf of its delegates and make technical and administrative corrections to the resolutions reported out of the Committee.

Aerospace
Roger Webster, Michigan, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 81: Support for Public and Private Manned Space Exploration

Origin: New Mexico

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Space Shuttle program was discontinued in 2004, and NASA and the United States are falling behind in space manned space exploration; and

WHEREAS, The Lunar Exploration Program Constellation was dismantled by President Obama; and

WHEREAS, The United States of America astronauts currently have to depend on foreign spacecraft and Russian, Soyuz spacecraft to transport them to the International Space Station (ISS); and

WHEREAS, The United States is losing technological, engineering, mathematical and scientific advantage over many foreign countries in aerospace, i.e.: Russia, China and Japan; and

WHEREAS, Manned deep space exploration has been nonexistent since the Apollo missions in 1975; and

WHEREAS, The United States is paying the Russian government \$80 million for every U.S. astronaut that is sent to the ISS at present time; and

WHEREAS, The Orion project will be a manned rocket mission into deep space to Mars and beyond into deep space; and

WHEREAS, United States technology, science, mathematics, physics, chemistry and the discovery of the unknowns of space will be in the forefront of mankind; and

WHEREAS, Mars will be at its closest distance to Earth (this is known as opposition), when the earth is at aphelion, (the furthest point from the Sun) and Mars is at perihelion, (the closest to the Sun) on the 27th of July, 2018, and the distance will be 35.8 million

miles with relative negative and positive distances related as time and distance before and after this date; and

WHEREAS, As stated by astronaut John Glenn, "The most important thing we can do is inspire young minds and to advance, the kind of science, math and technology education that will help you youngsters to take us to the next phase of space travel"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion shall endorse and support policies and legislation approved by the Aerospace Committee; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the United States of American resume its quest for manned space travel to Mars and deep space travel be fully funded and supported by Congress for NASA, to include the Orion Crew Vehicle, the SLS Space Launch System and the International Space Station, and private space programs to include Space X, Red Dragon (Mars concept), Dragon lab, Falcon 9, Merlin, Kestrel and Draco rocket programs.

**Conventional Armed Forces
Charles E. Kruger, Minnesota, Chairman**

Approved

Resolution No. 35: National Defense Budget

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion views a strong national defense as paramount to national security; and

WHEREAS, Army Secretary John M. McHugh and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno appeared before the House Committee on Appropriations subcommittee on defense on March 26, 2015 to urge Congress to prevent the return of funding caps imposed by the 2011 Budget Control Act, also known as sequestration; and

WHEREAS, Secretary McHugh stated, "As we face extreme instability around the world, we must have certainty here at home. Your soldiers deserve no less. We must have an end to sequestration this year, and we must have this budget"; and

WHEREAS, Gen. Odierno stated, "If BCA (Budget Control Act) caps (also known as sequestration) remain, we can no longer execute the defense strategic guidance. The decisions we make today and over the next several months will impact our nation for the next 10 years."; and

WHEREAS, Not only do the spending cuts downsize the force structure, but also reduce service members pay and benefits, which could potentially lead to the loss of highly trained men and women; and

WHEREAS, While the Department of Defense is content on shrinking the size and scope of the United States military, our major adversaries, Russia and China, along with rouge nations such as North Korea and Iran are ramping up their military stocks and capabilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion urge Congress to oppose the pending budget cuts in military spending proposed by the Department of Defense; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress not allow our military forces to reach a weakened state in these uncertain and perilous times.

Resolution No. 68: Prisoner of War Status Private for Patrick O. Ford**Origin: Missouri****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Legionnaire Patricia Ford Ivey having appeared before Bennett & Dennis Herrick Memorial American Legion Post 626 and offered testimony and evidence not previously seen to enlist our help in getting her Uncle Patrick O. Ford's cause of death verified as at the hands of the enemy while being a Prisoner of War; and

WHEREAS, Petty Officer Ford was serving as an aft machine gunner on River Patrol Boat (PBR) 750 which was ambushed from shore during a two boat combat patrol by a Viet Cong force using rockets and heavy machine guns on 21 June 1968, disabling his craft and sending it drifting directly toward the enemy position; and

WHEREAS, Records received by Petty Officer Ford's family have multiple causes of death to include drowning and machine gun fire at the time of PBR-750's ambush on 21 June 1968, and list him as Missing in Action from that date until 25 June 1968 when his body was recovered; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaire Ivey has been conducting interviews with Sailors who served with P.O. Ford who insist he made it to shore in order to provide covering fire before being captured by Viet Cong forces and subsequently tortured over several days and killed; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion support the change of status for the period of 21 June 1968 to 25 June 1968 from MIA to POW for Patrick O. Ford, Gunners Mate Second Class, United State Navy.

Resolution No. 69: Medal of Honor for Private Patrick O. Ford**Origin: Missouri****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Legionnaire Patricia Ford Ivey having appeared before Bennett & Dennis Herrick Memorial American Legion Post 626 and offered testimony and evidence not previously seen to enlist our help in getting her Uncle Patrick O. Ford's Navy Cross upgraded to The Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, Petty Officer Ford was serving as an aft machine gunner on River Patrol Boat (PBR) 750 which was ambushed from shore during a two boat combat patrol by a Viet Cong force using rockets and heavy machine guns on 21 June 1968, disabling his craft and sending it drifting directly toward the enemy position; and

WHEREAS, Although seriously wounded P.O. Ford returned a continuous volume of fire into the Viet Cong position until he realized the condition of his craft and crew at which time, in the face of point-blank enemy fire, and with his clothing on fire he assisted three of his more seriously wounded shipmates into the water to be picked up by the second boat; and

WHEREAS, P.O. Ford did not leave PBR-750 until he ensured there were no more survivors and when he did he took his M-60 machine gun with him and went away from rescue and towards the enemy, providing covering fire even while seriously wounded while the second boat retrieved the survivors from the water until he ran out of ammunition and was captured by the enemy, tortured and killed; and

WHEREAS, A review of The Congressional Medal of Honor Society's records show that out of 16 Medal of Honors awarded to Navy personnel in Vietnam between 1965 and 1972 half of these were officers, of the enlisted men two were awarded the Medal of Honor for saving the lives of officers, four were Corpsmen assigned to the Marine Corp, one was a construction engineer assigned to an SF Group (Army), and one, a Petty Officer First Class was serving as a Boat Commander and Patrol Leader; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion supports

the upgrade of the Navy Cross to the Medal of Honor for Patrick O. Ford, Gunners Mate Second Class, United States Navy.

Resolution No. 79: Medal of Honor for Private Dorie Miller

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Dorie Miller Post 915, The American Legion, Department of Illinois, is an organization of wartime veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation and also dedicated to building a proper monument to honor Navy seaman Doris "Dorie" Miller; and

WHEREAS, Doris "Dorie" Miller, a U.S. Navy mess man aboard the *USS West Virginia* when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, without any formal training in naval gunnery, after pulling a wounded officer and several of his fellow shipmates to safety, manned an anti-aircraft machine gun and shot down four enemy planes while damaging several others; and

WHEREAS, For this action Dorie Miller, for his heroic effort, was awarded the Navy Cross by Admiral Chester Nimitz; and

WHEREAS, Seaman Miller later served aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Liscome Bay* and was killed in action in December 1943 in the South Pacific; and

WHEREAS, Dorie Miller was one of the first heroes of WWII and his heroism, in part, helped the movement to desegregate the Armed Forces by proving that African Americans were suitable for combat duty; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That the American Legion urge Congress to award the nation's highest military honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor, posthumously, to Dorie Miller, United States Navy; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the nation fully acknowledge his distinguished devotion to duty, extreme courage and the total disregard of his own safety during the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 53 (NY): Cold Ward Service Medal

Foreign Relations Committee

Randall Fisher, Kentucky, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 38: Taiwan Defense Arms Sales

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, also known as Taiwan, is a long-time friend having fought with the United States against Japanese Imperialism during World War II and against communism during the post-war period; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is a major trading partner and democratic ally of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Asia-Pacific region; and

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8), the United States is committed to provide defense equipment and defense services, in such quantities that the Government of the Republic of China may maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion supports the sales of the latest American weapon systems, including naval vessels, submarines, military aircraft, high-tech electronics, communications equipment and air-defense missile systems to Republic of China of such quality and in such quantities so as to enable the Government of the Republic of China to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports the continued sales of sophisticated U.S. weapon systems, including, but not limited to, F-16 fighter aircraft, anti-submarine equipment and torpedoes, anti-aircraft/anti-missile systems, and electronics and communications equipment to Republic of China; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Government of the Republic of China be given preferential pricing for these items but not equal to that given to the U.S. government, to enable the Republic of China to purchase sufficient quantities of these items for their defense needs.

Resolution No. 40: South China Sea Island Building

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In the last 18 months, China has constructed more new island surface than all other nations have constructed throughout history and unlike other claimants, China has—at least briefly—placed military equipment on one of its artificial islands; and

WHEREAS, The South China Sea is international water and sovereignty in the area should be determined by the United Nations Convention on Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS); and

WHEREAS, UNCLOS states that countries can't claim sovereignty over any land masses that are submerged at high tide, or that were previously submerged but have been raised above high tide level by construction; and

WHEREAS, Control of the South China Sea would allow China to dominate a major trade route through which most of its imported oil flows; and

WHEREAS, It would also allow China to disrupt, or threaten to disrupt, trade shipments to all countries in East and Southeast Asia as well as deny access to foreign military forces, particularly the United States; and

WHEREAS, The floor of the South China Sea may contain massive oil and natural gas reserves and sovereignty over the region could give China a level of energy security and independence far beyond what it currently possesses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion urge Congress to use aircraft and naval vessels to assert freedom of navigation in the region, as demonstrated by the recent passage of the USS Fort Worth combat ship and the flight of the U.S. Navy P-8 Poseidon surveillance aircraft, over the Chinese construction at Fiery Reef; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support strengthening regional allies through intelligence gathering and surveillance capabilities, and provide them with updated military hardware to counter China's technical advantages in both quantity and quality.

Resolution No. 108: Oppose Iran Nuclear Deal

Origin: Convention Committee on National Security

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion views nuclear weapons development and proliferation a critical threat to national security; and

WHEREAS, Allowing Iran to develop or acquire a nuclear weapon would destabilize the entire Middle East and pose an eminent threat to Israel; and

WHEREAS, The Iran Nuclear Deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a non-binding executive agreement which was signed in Vienna on July 14, 2015 between Iran, and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council: China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States, and Germany (also known as the P5+1) along with the European Union; and

WHEREAS, The JCPOA allows Iran to retain its nuclear infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, Under the JCPOA, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors will have 24-hour access to Iran's declared nuclear sites but will be faced with a stipulated 24-day notification and appeal period when requesting access to Iran's military facilities or undeclared sites or suspected sites—thereby possibly allowing Iran to hide, remove or transport nuclear-weapon materials and operations in a clandestine manner; and

WHEREAS, Not all verification and monitoring mechanisms are defined in the JCPOA; and

WHEREAS, Important verification and monitoring mechanisms have been defined in agreements made solely between the IAEA and Iran separate and apart from the JCPOA and these same verification and monitoring agreements remain undisclosed to Congress or the Administration for review; and

WHEREAS, Diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Iran were extinguished in 1980 and therefore U.S. citizens are prohibited from being a part of any IAEA inspection team located in Iran; and

WHEREAS, The JCPOA removes a United Nations embargo prohibiting conventional weapons exports to Iran in five years and ballistic missile technology in eight years; and

WHEREAS, Ending the conventional-weapons embargo would permit Russia to sell Iran ballistic missiles which have the capability to reach Israel and overseas targets; and

WHEREAS, By lifting U.S. and international sanctions in accordance with the JCPOA, an estimated \$100 billion dollars will be released to Iran which may be used to fund terrorism against Americans, American interests and allies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion urges Congress not to lift any sanctions in connection with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action also known as the Iran Nuclear Deal until such agreement is amended by including all verification and monitoring mechanisms as well as including a provision stipulating unconditional access to every aspect of Iran's nuclear program—whether declared or undeclared—to inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency and that these amendments are ultimately agreed to in a timely manner by Iran and the P5+1; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the United States of America be prepared to exercise all options, up to and including military action, in the interest of preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Approved with Amendments

Resolution No. 37: POW/MIA Policies

Origin: Maryland

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)**

WHEREAS, American service members and civilians remain missing in action or otherwise unaccounted for from America's past wars and conflicts, and reports indicate that in former enemy areas where Americans could still be alive, information has been deliberately and cruelly withheld; and

WHEREAS, The families of POW/MIAs suffer untold uncertainty due to the lack of an accurate accounting for their missing loved one, often in spite of heroic efforts by U.S. specialists; and

WHEREAS, The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2010 called upon the Secretary of Defense to provide funds, personnel, and resources as the Secretary considers appropriate to significantly increase the capability and capacity of the Department of Defense (DOD), the Armed Forces, and commanders of the combatant commands to account for missing persons so that, beginning with fiscal year 2015, the POW/MIA accounting community has sufficient resources to ensure that at least 200 missing persons are accounted for under the program annually; and

WHEREAS, Advancements in science, forensic technology and foreign government cooperation have helped specific locations of alleged remains of US personnel to be recently identified by the U.S. Government; and

WHEREAS, Promising identification techniques involving radiographic comparison and facial superimposition have dramatically increased the U.S. Government's ability to identify remains of unaccounted for servicemen and civilians for whom DNA matching was not an alternative; and

WHEREAS, Each member of the DOD POW/MIA accounting community plays a vital role in the mission to account for missing and unaccounted for U.S. servicemen and civilians from our nation's past wars and conflicts; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Defense recently directed "complete reorganization" of the DOD POW/MIA accounting community, a consolidation encouraging to family members and veterans, though the end-result will require close scrutiny for viability; and

WHEREAS, The single agency that was formed as a result of the Defense Secretary's directive for "complete reorganization" was titled the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and is the agency responsible for policy, administration and operational implementation to achieve the fullest possible accounting for missing U.S. personnel; and

WHEREAS, The POW/MIA accounting effort should not be considered complete until all reasonable actions have been taken to achieve the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. personnel; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion advocates for the fullest possible accounting of missing Americans, in every country, on every continent; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes U.S. Government POW/MIA operations, though currently still inadequate, are achieving substantial progress; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion remains steadfast in our commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. military personnel and designated civilian personnel missing and unaccounted for from our nation's wars and conflicts; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to speak out on every occasion to expedite the return of U.S. personnel still missing and unaccounted for, regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to support legislation and policies that will use all reasonable resources to achieve the fullest possible accounting of all missing American service members and designated civilians regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to provide full funding, personnel, and any other resources for all members of the Department of Defense (DOD) POW/MIA accounting community, and to ensure these funds not be redirected by the DOD for any other purpose; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to continue to declassify all POW/MIA information (except that revealing intelligence

sources or methods) in a form readily available to the affected families and public review; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to establish a joint standing congressional committee on POW/MIA affairs to ensure continued priority action by the executive branch in addressing the POW/MIA issue; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to initiate or strengthen joint commissions with Russia, the People's Republic of China, and Democratic People's Republic of Korea to increase POW/MIA accounting and recovery efforts; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to take further favorable actions toward the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as Hanoi increases efforts to provide the fullest possible accounting for US personnel still missing in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia it controlled during the Vietnam War; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That "fullest possible accounting" is defined as turning over live prisoners, repatriating remains of those killed in action or who died in captivity, or providing convincing evidence when neither is possible.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 4 (AK): Taiwan Straits Dialogue

Resolution No. 39 (MD): Taiwan Straits Dialogue

**Law and Order & Homeland Security
George Wehrli, Florida, Chairman**

Approved

Resolution No. 48: Second Amendment

Origin: Washington

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, All members of The American Legion are wartime veterans who believe in the precepts of the Constitution of the United States; and

WHEREAS, At more than one time in the lives of these self-same veterans, he/she has sworn to "...uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States..." and upon entering the military include the phrase – "...against all enemies, both foreign and domestic; and

WHEREAS, In several states individual state laws have been created encroaching upon our "rights" under the Constitution; specifically, in abrogation of the Second Amendment; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is the largest veterans service organization in the world, being an effective voice against tyranny; and

WHEREAS, For the sake of all who have served in the military of the United States, and for the sake of our youth – the future of our country – The American Legion seeks to remind the elected Senators and Representatives of their obligation to listen to and vote in line with the wishes of their constituents; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That the United States should enforce the will of the citizens; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Those States, including the State of Washington, which have passed restrictive legislation, in deference to the Second Amendment, issue repeals at their earliest opportunity to reverse these unfair/unrepresented Firearm "regulations" which are in opposition to our rights under the Constitution.

Military Benefits & Quality of Life
Melvin Smullen, Maryland, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 23: Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance

Origin: Pennsylvania

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, One of the Four Pillars of The American Legion is National Security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for our military and their families; and

WHEREAS, Part of National Security is maintaining a strong military; and

WHEREAS, The morale of the military has a direct effect on strength of the military; and

WHEREAS, Some military families rely on food stamps and other programs to survive; and

WHEREAS, The majority of military families are not familiar with the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA Program); and

WHEREAS, Families must apply for these benefits and the DOD website dealing with FSSA had only 11,214 visitors which indicates not many families know of the program; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion urges Congress and the Department of Defense to support legislation to properly fund the quality of life features including the funding of the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance.

Resolution No. 27: Extended Care Health Option (ECHO)

Origin: Pennsylvania

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, One of the Four Pillars of The American Legion is National Security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for our military and their families; and

WHEREAS, Part of National Security is maintaining a strong military; and

WHEREAS, The morale of the military has a direct effect on strength of the military; and

WHEREAS, Some military members have special health needs for their families such as autism, intellectual disability, serious physical disabilities and all extraordinary physical or psychological conditions; and

WHEREAS, Children may remain eligible for Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) benefits beyond the usual TRICARE eligibility age limit age 21 or age 23 provided the sponsor remains on active duty, the child is incapable of self-support, the sponsor is responsible for over 50 percent of the child's financial support; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion urges Congress and the Department of Defense (DOD) to support legislation to properly fund the quality of life features including the funding of the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) which provides supplemental service to active duty family members with qualifying mental or physical disabilities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the DOD inform active duty members of this benefit.

Resolution No. 33: Support for Military Quality of Life Standards**Origin: Maryland****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for members of the Armed Forces, their dependents, military retirees, and survivors as people are the foundation of our Nation's fighting forces; and

WHEREAS, Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this nation to remain at peace; and

WHEREAS, Military compensation is only one factor in the quality of life equation as to whether good service members and their families remain in military service: Other major factors include fair treatment, career stability, regular promotions, adequate quarters, adequate health care, commissaries, and day care facilities, all of which ease the numerous sacrifices that are demanded of service members; and

WHEREAS, Our military retirees and their dependents and survivors are deserving and rightfully entitled to adequate health care treatment, concurrent receipt, and regular cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to military retirement pay and survivor benefit plans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion urges Congress and the Department of Defense to support and fund quality of life features including, but not limited to, the following: military pay comparability for the Armed Forces and regular increases in the Basic Allowances for Housing (BAH); renovation and construction of military quarters and increased funding for child day care centers and pay raises must be competitive with the private sector; adequate medical, mental, and dental health services; morale, welfare, and recreational facilities; non-privatized exchanges and commissary facilities, and the Defense Commissary Agency (DECA) and its functions should be retained and not relegated to the military services; preserving an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components; oppose any changes to the military retirement system, whether prospective or retroactive, that would violate contracts made with military retirees and that would undermine morale and readiness; requiring the Services perform mandatory physical examinations, without waivers, for all separating and retiring servicemembers within 90 days of separation from service; full funding concurrent receipt of military retirement pay, and VA disability compensation as well as Special Compensation pays for disabled military retirees; that the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (SBP/DIC) offset be eliminated; TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy program for Medicare-eligible military retirees, their dependents and military survivors, should be adequately funded; regular cost-of-living adjustments to military retirement and increased death gratuity payments; combat zone tax exclusions for service in South Korea; that Congress extend and improve additional quality of life benefits, allowances and privileges to the National Guard and Reserves involved in homeland security and other missions so as to more closely approximate those of the active force; military retirement pay and TRICARE health care for members of the Reserve Components should be authorized before age 60; tax credits to private businesses that pay the difference between military and civilian salaries to mobilized reserve component service members; restore travel exemptions for Reserve and Guard members for expenses associated with attending drills; military health care should also be provided to members of the Reserve Components and their dependents, who become injured while on active duty status regardless of the number of days served on active duty, to the same degree as active duty members under the same circumstances; and whenever a Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) is conducted, certain base facilities such as base medical

facilities, commissaries, exchanges and other facilities be preserved for use by active duty, reserve forces personnel, military retired veterans and their families.

Resolution No. 34: Department of Defense Military Retirement System

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this nation to remain at peace; and

WHEREAS, Preserving an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components is critical to maintaining an effective all-volunteer force; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has on several occasions conducted studies to change, modify, and update the military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, Recommendations from those studies have been repeatedly found to be unsatisfactory; and

WHEREAS, The July 2011 Defense Business Board study recommended significant changes in the current military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, Many of these same recommendations were made by the 1978 Presidential Commission on Military Compensation; and

WHEREAS, The 1978 report from the Congressional Budget Office addresses the significant risk to maintaining a viable volunteer force if dramatic changes to the current system are made; and

WHEREAS, In the attempt to slow the growth in military personnel costs, The Department of Defense 2013 Budget Request calls for the creation of an independent commission to study the military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, The Murray-Ryan Bill and the Bipartisan Budget Act 2013 were passed with the devastating cut to Military COLA included, though no input was received from the Department of Defense or the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC); and

WHEREAS, On February 12, 2014, under tremendous pressure from the military community, Congress overwhelmingly voted 95-3 to repeal the COLA cut for all military members who joined prior to January 1, 2014 and President Obama signed the repeal into law; and

WHEREAS, MCRMC released 15 recommendations to modernize the Uniformed Services' compensation and benefit programs today, 29 January 2015; and

WHEREAS, On March 25, 2015, The American Legion gave testimony before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, United States House of Representatives which states, "The American Legion does not support this (MCRMC's Modifying the Military Retirement Plan) proposal; there are too many questions about the implementation and concerns about how service members would be affected; however given that approximately four out of five (81 percent) service members do not serve the full 20 years in the military, it is worth examining possible solutions and measures which could provide some retirement benefits to those service members who depart from military service before the "20 year cliff"; and

WHEREAS, Any changes to the existing military retirement system may violate contracts made with military retirees and currently serving military personnel, and would undermine morale and readiness; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion oppose any changes to the current military retirement system which reduces the incentive for enlistment or re-enlistment.

Resolution No. 49: Space-A Travel for Unemployed and Disabled Veterans and Dependents**Origin: Washington****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Defense (DoD) in DoD Regulation 4515.13-R has established a program of travel known as Space Available Travel to allow authorized passengers to occupy DoD aircraft seats that are surplus after all required passengers have been accommodated; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of this privilege was to provide uniformed service members with a respite from the rigors of military service, and to provide retired uniformed service members with recognition for a career of rigorous duty; and

WHEREAS, The privilege is also extended to other categories of passengers, to include dependents, in support of the mission of the Uniformed Service members; and

WHEREAS, DoD regulation 4515.13-R does not provide for 100% disabled veterans, or 100% Individually Unemployed (IU) veterans, or dependents of 100% disabled veterans, or dependents of 100% IU veterans, to be eligible for Space Available Travel; and

WHEREAS, One hundred percent disabled veterans and 100% IU veterans may not have fulfilled the requirements for retirement, but have shown dedication to the DoD and a desire to retire by serving ten or more years of active duty service and separated due to their great sacrifice in the line of duty that resulted in a 100% disability rating or 100% IU; and

WHEREAS, Dependents of 100% disabled veterans and 100% IU veterans continue to faithfully support their disabled spouses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion urges Congress to authorize the Department of Defense to offer space available worldwide travel on military aircraft to 100% disabled veterans and 100% individually unemployed veterans who served ten or more years on active duty, and their dependents, be authorized to participate in Space Available Travel.

Resolution No. 60: Support for Concurrent Receipt of Military Retirement Pay and VA Disability Compensation**Origin: Minnesota****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security****(Consolidated with Resolution No. 51 (NY))**

WHEREAS, We reaffirm our support of veterans who have served our country as career military men and women; and

WHEREAS, These retired veterans were injured or disabled as a result of their service; and

WHEREAS, Military retirees have devoted more than 20 years to defending our country and democracy; and

WHEREAS, Military retirees are the only federal retirees who pay out of their own pocket for their service connected disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, Military retirees with 50% or greater service connected disabilities are able to receive both military retired pay and Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, All other federal retirees receive both retirement pay and disability compensation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion strongly support ending the unfair policy of forcing many military longevity retirees to forfeit some of their retired pay in order to receive equal amounts of disability compensation

from the Department of Veterans Affairs for those retirees with less than 50% service connected disability.

Resolution No. 107: Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission Positions

Origin: Convention Committee on National Security

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) was established by the National Defense Authorization Act FY 2013 Pub. L. 112-239, 126 Stat. 1787 (2013) to conduct a review of military compensation and retirement systems and to make recommendations to modernize such systems in order to:

1. ensure the long-term viability of the All-Volunteer Force by sustaining the required human resources of that force during all levels of conflict and economic conditions

2. enable the quality of life for members of the Armed Forces and the other uniformed services and their families in a manner that fosters successful recruitment, retention, and careers for members of the Armed Forces and the other uniformed services

3. modernize and achieve fiscal sustainability for the compensation and retirement systems for the Armed Forces and the other uniformed services for the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, MCRMC released 15 recommendations to modernize the Uniformed Services' compensation and benefit programs today, 29 January 2015; and

WHEREAS, MCRMC's 15 recommendations are as follows: Recommendation 1: Help more Service members save for retirement earlier in their careers, leverage the retention power of traditional Uniformed Services retirement, and give the Services greater flexibility to retain quality people in demanding career fields by implementing a modernized retirement system; Recommendation 2: Provide more options for Service members to protect their pay for their survivors by offering new Survivor Benefit Plan coverage without Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset; Recommendation 3: Promote Service members' financial literacy by implementing a more robust financial and health benefit training program; Recommendation 4: Increase efficiency within the Reserve Component by consolidating 30 Reserve Component duty statuses into 6 broader statuses; Recommendation 5: Ensure Service members receive the best possible combat casualty care by creating a joint readiness command, new standards for essential medical capabilities, and innovative tools to attract readiness-related medical cases to military hospitals; Recommendation 6: Increase access, choice, and value of health care for active-duty family members, Reserve Component members, and retirees by allowing beneficiaries to choose from a selection of commercial insurance plans offered through a Department of Defense health benefit program; Recommendation 7: Improve support for Service members' dependents with special needs by aligning services offered under the Extended Care Health Option to those of state Medicaid waiver programs; Recommendation 8: Improve collaboration between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs by enforcing coordination on electronic medical records, a uniform formulary for transitioning Service members, common services, and reimbursements; Recommendation 9: Protect both access to and savings at Department of Defense commissaries and exchanges by consolidating these activities into a single defense resale organization; Recommendation 10: Improve access to child care on military installations by ensuring the Department of Defense has the information and budgeting tools to provide child care within 90 days of need; Recommendation 11: Safeguard education benefits for Service members by reducing redundancy and ensuring the fiscal sustainability of education programs; Recommendation 12: Better prepare Service members for transition to civilian life by expanding education and granting states more flexibility to administer the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program; Recommendation 13: Ensure Service members receive financial assistance to cover nutritional needs by providing them cost-effective supplemental benefits; Recommendation 14: Expand Space-Available travel to more dependents of Service

members by allowing travel by dependents of Service members deployed for 30 days or more; and Recommendation 15: Measure how the challenges of military life affect children's school work by implementing a national military dependent student identifier; and

WHEREAS, On March 25, 2015, The American Legion gave testimony before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, United States House of Representatives and stated that The American Legion supports recommendations nos. 3, 8, 12, 14 and 15; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion testimony stated as well, that it does not support recommendations nos. 1, 2, 6, and 11; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion testimony also stated that it maintains no position in connection to recommendations nos. 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 13; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion National Security Commission has deliberated the merits of either supporting or not supporting each of the recommendations in which The American Legion previously maintained no position, i.e. recommendations 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 and 13; and

WHEREAS, In reference to Recommendation 4, current Title 10 Reserve Component (RC) statutory authorities and duty statuses are as follows: full mobilization, partial mobilization, Presidential reserve call-up, Major disaster/emergency response, preplanned combatant command, captive status, unsatisfactory participation (45 days), unsatisfactory participation (24 months), disciplinary action, annual active duty (up to 30 days), additional training and operational support, medical evaluation and treatment, medical care (duty < 30 days), retiree recall, muster duty, duty at the national guard bureau, aid for state governments, enforce federal authority, National Guard called to federal service, additional training periods, additional flight training periods, readiness management periods, funeral honors duty; Title 32 – National Guard required training and other duty, additional training and other duty, additional training periods, additional flight training periods, readiness management periods and funeral honors duty; Title 14 – U.S. Coast Guard emergency augmentation; and

WHEREAS, According to the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, the numerous criteria for determining Reserve Component statuses can make it difficult for military commanders to call RC members to duty because the current system is complex, aligns poorly to current training and complicates rather than supports effective budgeting; and

WHEREAS, The MCRMC recommends streamlining RC duty status to the following six categories: Title 10 Active Duty, Inactive Reserve Service, Federal Service (Presidential Call-Up), Title 32 Full-Time National Guard, Inactive National Guard, Title 14 Active Duty for emergency augmentation; and

WHEREAS, In reference to Recommendation 5, the MCRMC is calling for the creation of a four-star Joint Readiness Command to manage the readiness, as well as the interoperability, efficiency, and "jointness" of the entire military force, including medical readiness; and

WHEREAS, According to the MCRMC, this recommendation is made for fear of losing the life-saving capabilities developed during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom by joint-military medical personnel; and

WHEREAS, The ingenuity, adroitness and first-hand experience of U.S. medical personnel are the reasons for the development of these effective capabilities; and

WHEREAS, Each branch of the military can benefit from experience-based training and not necessarily by the creation of redundant bureaucracy or added layer to the Military Health System's command structure or the Defense Health Agency (DHA); and

WHEREAS, The Military Health System (MHS) is a global, comprehensive, integrated system that includes combat medical services, health readiness futures, a health care delivery system, public health activities, medical education and training, and medical

research and development. The fundamental mission of the MHS, providing medical support to military operations; and

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Defense, DHA is a joint, integrated Combat Support Agency that enables the Army, Navy, and Air Force medical services to provide a medically ready force and ready medical force to Combatant Commands in both peacetime and wartime; and

WHEREAS, In reference to Recommendation 7, Exceptional Family Members (EMF) are service members who have family members with special medical or educational needs and EMFs can register for TRICARE Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) program; and

WHEREAS, Children may remain eligible for ECHO benefits beyond the usual TRICARE eligibility age limit (age 21 or age 23 if enrolled in a full-time course of study at an approved institution of higher learning and if the sponsor provides over 50 percent of the financial support) provided all of the following are true: the sponsor remains on active duty; the child is incapable of self-support because of a mental or physical incapacity that occurs prior to the loss of eligibility; and the sponsor is responsible for over 50 percent of the child's financial support; and

WHEREAS, Lack of proper funding for maintaining DoD quality of life programs including ECHO, risks a deteriorating effect on military healthcare options specifically established to provide supplemental service and benefits to active duty family members with qualifying mental or physical disabilities; and

WHEREAS, In reference to Recommendations 9, any effort to reduce or dismantle the integrity of the military commissary system would be seen as a serious breach of faith with a benefit system that currently serves as a mainstay for the active and reserve components, military retirees and military survivors, and 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans, among other qualifying personnel; and

WHEREAS, In reference to Recommendation 10, Military compensation is only one factor in the quality of life equation as to whether a good service member and their families remain in military service and adequate access to child care is crucial to supporting valuable assistance that can ease the numerous sacrifices that are demanded of servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, In reference to Recommendation 13, MCRMC recognizes that some service members will continue to need financial help to purchase food for their families and the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (SNAP), better known as food stamps, is available to service members in the United States, however, the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA), the military's alternative to SNAP, is currently a second option, but only serves approximately 300 service members a year; and

WHEREAS, Considering the low number of participants, it appears that the majority of military families in-need are not familiar with FSSA due to the lack of promotion of the FSSA website by Department of Defense; and

WHEREAS, MCRMC recommends that FSSA should be retained for service members in overseas locations where SNAP is unavailable, but should be sunset over a two-year period in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, Military families in-need should be allowed more than one option when applying for assistance; and

WHEREAS, Lack of proper funding for maintaining DoD quality of life programs including FSSA, risks a deteriorating effect on overall morale; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion supports the following MCRMC recommendations: Recommendation 3: Promote Service members' financial literacy by implementing a more robust financial and health benefit training program; Recommendation 4: Increase efficiency within the Reserve Component by consolidating 30 Reserve Component duty statuses into 6 broader

statuses; Recommendation 8: Improve collaboration between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs by enforcing coordination on electronic medical records, a uniform formulary for transitioning Service members, common services, and reimbursements; Recommendation 10: Improve access to child care on military installations by ensuring the Department of Defense has the information and budgeting tools to provide child care within 90 days of need; Recommendation 12: Better prepare Service members for transition to civilian life by expanding education and granting states more flexibility to administer the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program; Recommendation 14: Expand Space-Available travel to more dependents of Service members by allowing travel by dependents of Service members deployed for 30 days or more; and Recommendation 15: Measure how the challenges of military life affect children's school work by implementing a national military dependent student identifier; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion does not support MCRMC Recommendation 1: Help more Service members save for retirement earlier in their careers, leverage the retention power of traditional Uniformed Services retirement, and give the Services greater flexibility to retain quality people in demanding career fields by implementing a modernized retirement system; Recommendation 2: Provide more options for Service members to protect their pay for their survivors by offering new Survivor Benefit Plan coverage without Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset; Recommendation 5: Ensure Service members receive the best possible combat casualty care by creating a joint readiness command, new standards for essential medical capabilities, and innovative tools to attract readiness-related medical cases to military hospitals; Recommendation 6: Increase access, choice, and value of health care for active-duty family members, Reserve Component members, and retirees by allowing beneficiaries to choose from a selection of commercial insurance plans offered through a Department of Defense health benefit program; Recommendation 7: Improve support for Service members' dependents with special needs by aligning services offered under the Extended Care Health Option to those of state Medicaid waiver programs; Recommendation 9: Protect both access to and savings at Department of Defense commissaries and exchanges by consolidating these activities into a single defense resale organization; Recommendation 11: Safeguard education benefits for Service members by reducing redundancy and ensuring the fiscal sustainability of education programs; and Recommendation 13: Ensure Service members receive financial assistance to cover nutritional needs by providing them cost-effective supplemental benefits.

Referred to Standing Commission

Resolution No. 25 (PA): Merge PX/BX Commissaries

Resolution No. 92 (NC): Retirement Benefits and Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) Gap

**National Guard & Reserve Forces
William Goede, Minnesota, Chairman
Approved**

Resolution No. 36: Support Veteran Status for National Guard and Reserve Servicemembers

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, For the purposes of this resolution, the term Reserve Component represents the National Guard, Air National Guard, and the Reserves of all U.S. Military and Naval Branches; and

WHEREAS, Any provision within the United States Code pertaining to both the Active and Reserve Components should also be true for the Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve in terms of receiving legal and technical veterans' status; and

WHEREAS, According to United State Code (USC) Title 38 - Veterans' Benefits, the term "veteran" is defined as "a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable"; and

WHEREAS, Also according to USC Title 38, "drills" and "active duty for training" do not qualify as "active duty" thereby excluding approximately 280,000 former Reserve Component retirees among other service members who have served in the Reserve Component from the honor of having the technical and legal status of the title: Veteran; and

WHEREAS, As USC Title 38 currently stands, any Reserve-Component service member who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable but never called to federal duty for other than drills or active duty for training is indeed entitled to benefits such as retirement pay, TRICARE, VA service-connection eligibility among other benefits but is still not however legally or technically considered a Veteran according to the letter of the law; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the military service of all those who serve in the Guard and Reserve who have supported and continue to support the deployments of the active duty component ensuring active units are fully prepared at all times; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion states that anyone who has in good faith taken the United States Armed Forces Oath of Enlistment or United States Uniformed Services Oath of Office for either full-time active military or naval duty, or for the National Guard, Air National Guard, Reserve Component, Coast Guard or Coast Guard Reserve and has honorably carried out the military obligations set forth within these oaths should be entitled to receiving the practical, technical and legal status of the title: Veteran; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation that amends any provision in the United States Code that excludes drills or active-duty-for-training from the legal definition of active duty to a provision that includes drills or active-duty-for-training in the definition of active duty under the law.

**Unconventional Forces & Intelligence
Chuck Roessler, Wisconsin, Chairman**

Approved

Resolution No. 106: Cybersecurity and Identity Theft

Origin: Convention Committee on National Security

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The security of the United States is being increasingly challenged by non-traditional threats which may extend the fields of battle and terrorism to cyberspace warfare; and

WHEREAS, The United States government maintains a comprehensive and integrated system of federal agencies, including the Armed Forces, law enforcement, intelligence, and public health, to detect, deter and defend against cyberspace warfare threats to critical government and private infrastructures; and

WHEREAS, Presidential Decision Directive 62 (PDD-62), titled Combating Terrorism established the National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counterterrorism; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recently discovered two separate but related cybersecurity incidents that have impacted the data of Federal government employees, contractors, members of the armed forces including veterans:

1. In April 2015, OPM discovered that the personnel data of 4.2 million current and former Federal government employees including members of the military and veterans had been stolen; this means information such as full name, birth date, home address and Social Security Numbers were affected; and
2. While investigating this incident, in early June 2015, OPM discovered that additional information had been compromised: including background investigation records of current, former, and prospective Federal employees and contractors; and

WHEREAS, OPM has concluded with high confidence that sensitive information—including the Social Security Numbers (SSNs) of 21.5 million individuals—was stolen from the background investigation databases; and

WHEREAS, This includes 19.7 million individuals that applied for a background investigation, and 1.8 million non-applicants, primarily spouses or co-habitants of applicants and some records also include findings from interviews conducted by background investigators and approximately 1.1 million include fingerprints; and

WHEREAS, Usernames and passwords that background investigation applicants used to fill out their background investigation forms were also stolen; and

WHEREAS, The Government Printing Office (GPO) has published registers of Commissioned Navy, Air Force, USMC and Army Officers on an unrestricted basis during the Vietnam Era; and

WHEREAS, These registers were published with Social Security Numbers (SSN) instead of Service Numbers; and

WHEREAS, Sometime later, one or more web-based business organizations digitized these unrestricted registers and subsequently posted the unrestricted registers on the Internet making them publicly available; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland, September 1, 2, 3, 2015, That The American Legion urge Congress to appropriate the necessary funding to combat both international and domestic cybersecurity threats to the United States in the 21st century; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to appropriate the necessary funding to any federal law enforcement agencies for the purpose of searching and removing Vietnam veterans' Social Security numbers from publicly available websites found on the Internet; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Federal investigators to request powers from the appropriate court to subpoena specific registers of enlisted personnel and Commissioned Navy, Air Force, USMC and Army Officers which include Social Security numbers belonging to any public library—which are vulnerable to computer scanning and Internet posting—for the purpose of classifying such registers as "restricted" or "restricted access"; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also urge the American public to be vigilant of cyberspace attacks, and that all efforts be made to detect, deter, and defend against the threats of cyberspace warfare, and to prosecute violators to the fullest extent of the law.

Mr. Commander, national officers, and fellow delegates. I am particularly pleased to announce the winners of the National Blood Donor Awards for this past year.

Category I - Departments with 100,000 or more members

Post & Individual Participation: Department of Minnesota

Category II - 70,000 to 99,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: Department of Maryland

Category III - 40,000 to 69,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: Department of Georgia

Category IV - 25,000 to 39,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: Department of Tennessee

Category V - 10,000 to 24,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: Department of Montana

Category VI - less than 10,000 members

Post & Individual Participation: No Submission

Many of our Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. A total of almost 4,500 medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2014-2015 are the Departments of Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and Tennessee. This speaks well for these Departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN SCHLEE: Mr. Commander, as a registered delegate to this Convention from the Department of Maryland, I move the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Do I hear a second? ... *Second.*

Is there any discussion? All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed? The report of National Security is adopted. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The donations to the Child Welfare Foundation was \$48,429.11. A longtime American Legion partner for putting on this convention gave me a check for \$5,000 for Operation Comfort Warriors. I'd like to thank Markey's for that. Tomorrow we will be collecting donations for Operation Comfort Warriors and any other miscellaneous charities that you might want to make donations to about 9:30 tomorrow morning on Thursday. Sergeant-at-Arms.

... *At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The time is now 1:41. The Convention will stand in recess until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning. Thank you, all.

... *At 1:41 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, September 3, 2015, at 9:00 a.m.*

**PROCEEDINGS
THIRD DAY**

Thursday, September 3, 2015

... At 9:00 a.m. the delegates assembled for the third day of the 97th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.

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

Call to Order

Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The convention will come to order. Sergeant-at-Arms. Delegates will stand and render a hand salute to the flag of the United States of America by the numbers.

... At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Randy Cash of North Carolina.

Invocation

Tierian 'Randy' Cash, North Carolina, National Chaplain

Good morning. Let us pray together and thank God for this beautiful day. Lord God Almighty in whose name the founders of this country won liberty for themselves and for us and lofted the torch of freedom for nations then unborn, grant that we and all the peoples of this land may have grace to maintain our liberties in righteousness and peace. Bless those today who defend our freedom and their families. As a great American Legion, Father, may we always look back with few regrets, may we look forward with hope and confidence, may we look around with gratitude and joy, look within with purpose and resolve, and look up with expectation and faithfulness. With this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Pledge of Allegiance

... At this time, the delegates recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The convention is now in session.

Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award

Michael D. Helm, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: We begin this morning by recognizing outstanding achievement in journalism that had a positive impact on a community.

The American Legion Fourth Estate Award is difficult to earn. It is a testament to the demanding nature of the competition and the quality of entries. Not only do the reporters have to be informative and entertaining, they have to provide a tangible benefit to society.

**Broadcast Category
CNN, Atlanta, Georgia**

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Being honored in the Broadcast Category is CNN. During its 2014 investigative reports of healthcare delays at VA hospitals, senior investigative correspondent Drew Griffin exposed a widespread national crisis which helped lead to the eventual resignation of VA Secretary Eric Shinseki.

The series, "Crisis at the VA," also helped lead to sweeping changes at VA, reforms that are still having an impact on how the agency cares for veterans.

... *At this time, the delegation viewed a video.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Accepting the award, from CNN, is Drew Griffin. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion 2015 Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of broadcast journalism is presented to CNN. During your year-long investigation into delays in care at Veterans Affairs hospitals, CNN exposed a widespread national crisis within the U.S. Veterans Affairs health-care system resulting in the resignation of VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. "Crisis at the VA." Presented at the 97th National Convention, September 3, 2015, Baltimore, Maryland.

DREW GRIFFIN: Good morning. This is going to go over the head of a lot of young people here, but when I read that this award was presented in the past to Paul Harvey and John Wayne, I thought for sure the selection committee must have made a mistake.

It's an honor to be on that list and an honor to be recognized along with my fellow journalist colleagues from CBS and *USA Today*, Ben and Brad. But more than who this award has been given to is humbling to know to whom it comes from. I really believe that I live in the greatest country in the world to practice what we do. *(Applause)*

Without hesitation, I can walk out and just give hell to any politician across the country for just about anything. *(Applause)*

We can go to a cabinet secretary and say to his face that we believe he's lying. We can go to senator and say he is not doing his job. We can go to the administration and say they are not living up to their promise, a promise that they were sworn to uphold, without any fear that I will be carted off to jail. In fact, I might even get an award for some of that work.

That's the freedom of the press. We at CNN exercise that freedom of the press not lightly and not without knowing who earned it for us, which is why what we did with this VA investigation, which is not over, was, in no small part, a way to show you, the people that have preserved this freedom of the press for us, that we have your back and we're going to try to do our best to protect those who protect our right to have freedom of the press in this country. *(Applause)*

By doing right by you, I think we do right by Americans to uphold and to preserve the rights that I think we all need to protect every day. You may have heard good words about the VA earlier this week from somebody. I want to tell you that we don't believe it's over, not by a long shot. We know that the wait times are not down. We know that the wait lists are not gone. We know that the Choice Program is something that many of you don't choose. And we're on it, and we have your back.

But today I just want to humbly say thank you on behalf of CNN and on behalf of our investigative team; my producer, Nelli Black, who is with me today; Anderson Cooper, who is a champion of your cause; and our president, Jeff Zucker. Thank you from the bottom of our heart for this most prestigious award. Thank you so very much. *(Applause)*

Online Category **CBS News, New York, New York**

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The Fourth Estate Internet/New Media Award goes to CBSNews.com. With its series "Tapping Into Controversial Back Surgeries," the CBS News team gathered and provided data that showed a small group of doctors were responsible for a disproportionate amount of painful and costly surgeries.

After the story aired, the FBI, Justice Department, and Health and Human Services Inspector General used the data in their own investigations.

... *At this time, the delegation viewed a video.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Accepting the award is senior investigative producer Ben Eisler. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion 2015 Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of online journalism is presented to CBSNews.com. "Tapping into Controversial Back Surgeries." Your investigative reports brought needed scrutiny on the disproportionate number of painful, potentially harmful and unnecessary procedures performed by certain doctors accused of putting profits before patients. Presented at the 97th National Convention, September 3, 2015, Baltimore, Maryland.

BEN EISLER: Good morning. Thank you so much. We are incredibly grateful for this. Though I must admit that in a roomful of veterans and servicemembers, I think we feel like the last people that should be getting an award. To start, I just wanted to thank all of you for your service. *(Applause)*

I'd also like to just quickly thank Len Tepper as the head of the investigative unit at CBS News for letting us journalists work on issues that they're really passionate about. I'd like to thank my family for tolerating my inability to have intelligent discussion about anything but this project for six months.

We're dedicating this award to two veterans that have meant a lot in my life. The first is my grandfather. He served in the Navy during World War II and passed away last year. This was his suit. Just don't ask me to button it. Ever since I was a toddler, he would tell me stories, and he showed me how powerful they can be. And he worked hard so that I could pursue a career like journalism.

The second person that we want to dedicate this award to is a surgeon that helped us with the story. His name is Eugene Carragee. First of all, Dr. Carragee is a leader in the field. He's chief of spine surgery at Stanford and editor-in-chief of the *Spine* medical journal. Dr. Carragee is also, as I mentioned, a veteran. In 1992 he was severely wounded during an artillery bombardment with U.N. peacekeeping forces in Cambodia. In 2007 he suffered burns, a collapsed lung, and a dislocated shoulder as a command surgeon in Iraq. He received a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star.

If this wasn't enough, in 2011 Dr. Carragee took on one of the world's largest medical device companies exposing how it downplayed serious risks in one of its most profitable products. For this he received death threats. Last year, while a friend of mine was in Stanford Hospital after an emergency spine surgery, Dr. Carragee insisted on coming to see him despite the fact that his own young son was going through difficult medical treatments. As soon as his wife arrived, Dr. Carragee came by and he spoke to my friend with a level of compassion that I rarely see not just in medicine but in life.

I mentioned Dr. Carragee because he's the last person that should be expected to continue to make sacrifices, and yet he keeps giving. When I feel like giving up, he inspires me to keep fighting for the public good because I know I could never leave him in the trenches. So this is for him and my grandfather. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Print Category **USA Today, McLean, Virginia**

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: This year's Print Category Award goes to a previous Fourth Estate winner, *USA Today*. In his three part series, "Fugitives Next Door: Crossing State Lines to Freedom," senior investigative reporter Brad Heath found significant flaws in the police departments and prosecuting offices across several states, which allowed almost 200,000 fugitives to escape justice merely by crossing state borders.

... *At this time, the delegation viewed a video.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Accepting the award is Brad Heath, reporter for *USA Today*. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion 2015 Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of print journalism is presented to USA Today. Your series of investigative reports prompted police and prosecutors to reconsider or reverse decisions to let thousands of fugitives avoid arrest by crossing state lines. "Fugitives Next Door: Crossing State Lines to Freedom." Presented at the 97th National Convention, September 3, 2015, Baltimore, Maryland.

BRAD HEATH: Good morning. I'm from *USA Today*, so I will keep this short. I just want to start by telling you, on behalf of *USA Today*, how much we all appreciate being recognized by people who have performed such great service for our country and how humbling it is that you think our work in some small way is worthy of your recognition.

It's a curious thing to work for a newspaper. I get a lot of telephone calls from people asking: "Can you help me?" And my usual answer is to say: "The most I can ever do for anybody is write a story about something."

And when I say it, it doesn't feel like I'm offering to do very much, and then every once in a while I really get a reminder of the power that words and pictures can have to make a positive impact in someone's life. I think that is what our founders had in mind when they envisioned a free and vigorous press.

I'd be remiss if I didn't take a moment to thank the phenomenal team at *USA Today* for their support and to say a word about the editors who have given us the freedom to explore and indulge our curiosity and the dozens and dozens of journalists across our company who worked long hours to turn that into a reality. We really wouldn't be able to do this kind of work without that support, and it's amazing to see newspapers doing it.

I think where I'd end is where I began. You all have done so many wonderful things for this country that it is truly humbling to be here. And on behalf of *USA Today*, I really just want to say thank you and I hope we can continue doing work that will be worthy of your respect and recognition. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: At the conclusion of the next report, we will be accepting donations to Operation Comfort Warriors and any other Legion program donations that would you like to make.

A graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, our next speaker retired from the Army in 2009 and was sworn in as deputy secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission in 2014. The ABMC administers our nation's overseas commemorative cemeteries and federal memorials. Our guest previously served as executive director and chief of military history at the U.S. Army Center of Military History in 2011. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Robert Dalessandro. *(Applause)*

**Address Robert J. Dalessandro
Deputy Secretary, American Battle Monuments Commission**

What an honor it is to be here to speak with you today. I'm not going to talk to you about the American Battle Monuments Commission, which, of course, is my primary duty, and we have the honor to maintain and operate all our overseas cemeteries and memorials. And if you haven't seen any of those at Normandy or other of our sites, the Punchbowl out west, please take some time and visit those. We pay tribute there to the service of all of the branches, and every day it is a privilege to wake up and do that.

Before I begin, and I'm going to talk to you this morning a little bit about the World War I centennial, which is a good warmup for The American Legion centennial. I want to do two things. I want to give a shout out to my post, Post 24, Alexandria, Virginia, and to our American Legion representative. Jim Whitfield is The American Legion representative to the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission. Thanks, Jim. *(Applause)*

So this morning on behalf of the World War I Centennial Commission, I would like to thank you for your time today, for the opportunity to share my thoughts, and for your efforts on behalf of the Centennial Commission in the future.

The World War I Centennial Commission has two missions: education and commemoration. Education because too many Americans, particularly our younger Americans, have little knowledge or understanding of The Great War and its continuing relevance to the 21st century.

We still live under the long shadow of World War I in so, so many ways. At the beginning of the war, the United States was an agrarian debtor nation and it was inward looking, a minor power on the world stage, our army smaller than that of Romania.

By war's end, the United States was a creditor nation, an industrial nation, and its world was leading the rest of the world in economic and military power. In the spirit of a then popular song, "How Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm (after they've seen Parree?)," Americans now saw themselves as active participants for the good in world affairs. For the good.

The service in our armed forces of African Americans, of immigrants, of women working in the military and the women working in industry at home and providing humanitarian service overseas served as a kindling that sparked the Civil Rights Movement. Here's an interesting fact: Of four adult males of service age in tribal nations, one of them wore the uniform in World War I. One in four. That's a stunning statistic, and people need to hear stories like that.

At the commission, we need The American Legion to serve as our active partner to help us tell these stories. Our country and the world need to hear about the service of over 4.7 million Americans in this war. Today's young people should hear about the 198,000 Texans who served in World War I, the 400,000 New Yorkers, the 324,000 Pennsylvanians, the 200,000 Ohioans. Every state and territory overwhelming answered the call to serve.

Let me be clear: We need you, everyone out there on the floor, the membership of The American Legion, and we need the social media impact that it brings, we need the prestige that The American Legion brings to tell these stories loudly and proudly because it's vitally important that we understand how this war shaped our nation and the world we live in today. And, yet, so few Americans do.

At the World War I Centennial Commission, we aim to fix that. We have an ambitious multiyear program that covers educating the American public and, as I've mentioned, in particular, American youth about these triumphs and these tragedies of this world-changing event. In partnership with The History Channel, the National World War I Museum in Kansas City, and the Pritzker Military Museum & Library in Chicago, we have outlined a comprehensive educational plan that will reach more than 10 million middle and high school students, and there will be broader programs that will be available to the public at large.

Our second thank you, and I'll tell you, we have reached already 250,000 teachers, teachers, to teach them the importance of service that everybody on this floor knows right now. Our second mission is commemoration, to remember and honor a forgotten generation who not only served heroically in this war and helped to win it but who then came home and became the mothers and fathers of the greatest generation.

Congress authorized the Centennial Commission to establish a National World War I Memorial on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. This memorial will figuratively stand side-by-side with the National World War I Museum in Kansas City and literally with the memorials in the National Mall to the three other great wars of the 20th century. And like so many of the recent memorials that pay tribute to our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coastguardsmen, we receive no public funds in our authorization. So this memorial project and all the commission's work is possible only through private donations and the support of groups like the Legion. So we need you.

We need your help now because things are moving quickly. The design competition for the National World War I Memorial was announced earlier this year, and over 350 submissions came in from all over the world. Just weeks ago the five finalists in the National World War I Memorial design competition were announced. The five draft designs were here at this convention earlier this week, and I hope some of you took time to drop by and review them and share feedback with us. You could also visit worldwar1cc.org to view these fascinating design concepts and share your thoughts with us. Once completed, this memorial will be the largest gesture of appreciation to American servicemen and women in a generation, and each of you can be part of this process.

Don't think this is just a Washington, D.C., operation. We have state chapters starting all over the country, and you can find those by visiting worldwar1cc.org and connect with these groups already active in your own state.

The cost of World War I was high. More than 116,000 Americans died during the war. More than in the Korea and Vietnam Wars combined. Given the length of our involvement, it was a terrible and bloody war. But there's a higher cost if we do not pay tribute to this generation of veterans. How can we turn to young people who are today thinking of joining the military and be honest in telling them that their service will be remembered in the future? We need to enlist you. We need you to sign up and show up and make sure that service of 5 million Americans receives the honor, respect, attention, and dignity it deserves. If we come together and coordinate a sustained national tribute to those who served in World War I, then we can turn to those young people thinking of enlisting and we can be honest in telling them that their service mattered and that it will always be remembered. *(Applause)*

On the eve of the centennial, we must embrace this moment to recognize World War I and the World War I generation. We today, all of us, can build their legacy and install them in a place of honor alongside those millions who served in the 20th century's other great conflicts. It is our task to ensure that this generation is not forgotten. It is our mission to provide a voice to these Americans who can no longer speak. And by doing so, we send a powerful message to veterans of later wars who are still now with us that 50 or 75 or 100 years from now they, too, will never be forgotten. *(Applause)*

On behalf of the World War I Centennial Commission, I thank you for your attendance here today, I thank each of you for your service, and I hope you will get involved and help us pay tribute to the 4.7 million Americans who wore the uniform in World War I. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Donations: Operation Comfort Warriors

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I will now accept donations for Operation Comfort Warriors and any other Legion programs. Will National Vice Commander Richard Neville assume duties.

... At this time, Nation Vice Commander Neville assumed the Chair.

DELEGATE OWNSBY: Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion, commonly called FODPAL, gratefully donates \$500 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

DELEGATE MATTICE (ID): On behalf of the Department of Idaho and its 9,000 members, we would like to make a donation to Operation Comfort Warriors of \$908.20.

DELEGATE ABERNATHY (FR): Commander, on behalf of Paris Post 1, Paris, France, Department of France, \$500 to Comfort Warrior.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much, commander. Ladies and gentlemen, let's keep Operation Comfort Warriors going. Remember that name, Operation Comfort Warriors. From Indiana, I have a check for \$120 from Hoosier Girls State. I have a check from Knightstown Home Post 152 for \$714; Booneville Post 200, \$500; Sergeant Major Raymond Oeth from Missouri, \$25; Post 18, Bloomington, Indiana,

\$6,000; Crawfordsville Post 72, \$250; Newburgh Post 44, \$500; Hoosier Boys State, \$2,258; another check for Sergeant Major Raymond Oeth from Missouri, \$25; American Legion Riders Post 290 from Rosedale, \$4,000; 8th District Sons of The American Legion, \$300; a check in memory of Jerry Stoner, \$50; a check from Eric Baggett for \$100. A total from Indiana, \$14,742.

DELEGATE KELLOGG (MN): On behalf of the great Department of Minnesota, a check for \$1,000 for Operation Comfort Warriors.

DELEGATE SCHMIDT (OR): On June 18th, 2015, three Boy Scouts sponsored by Astoria Post 12 in Astoria, Oregon, set off on a bike ride. It was no ordinary bike ride. It was a bike ride in the name of Operation Comfort Warriors. Explorer Scouts, Bryce Nurdling, an Eagle Scout, accompanied by Ryan Tallman and Jonathan Williams and also a 70-year-old Vietnam combat medic decided to go on this ride and end up at Ground Zero in New York City. Traveling 3,600 miles in 59 days to raise awareness of Operation Comfort Warriors, arriving at Ground Zero as a stark reminder that terrorism has come to America, but also as the boys crossed the finish line, it was also a reminder of why we have a need for Operation Comfort Warriors. Don Child, the combat veteran, Vietnam veteran medic, said: "I wanted to ride with the boys in honor of my father because my father was a Legionnaire and always mentored young people, and that was a tribute to this Legionnaire." So, commander, I think we have something in memory and in honor of three scouts who, thanks to a post in Oregon, made a program happen to give our youth an opportunity, and such a program and such a journey and such a success renews our capacity in the youth of America.

DELEGATE HELICKSON (OR): Commander, on behalf of Scout Post 255 and Astoria Post 12, I would like to present this check to you for \$20,000.

DELEGATE HODGBOOM (WA): From the Department of Washington, I have a check here for \$350 for the Operation Comfort Warriors. And an alibi for yesterday, I missed the ceremony, for the Child Welfare Foundation I have check here for \$4,704.87.

DELEGATE CRAIGIE (NE): Commander, the state of Nebraska has already donated \$12,335 to Operation Comfort Warriors this year. I have additional checks: one from the Millard Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society for \$1,125, and the Millard American Legion Rider Chapter 374 for \$3,884, totaling \$5,009.

DELEGATE WOELTJE (MO): The American Legion Family of the Department of Missouri proudly presents a check for \$6,726 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

DELEGATE PETERS (NY): Good morning, Commander Mike. This morning we have checks amounting to \$48,967.48 for Operation Comfort Warriors. That brings our grand total of contributions to American Legion charities for this year, \$256,573.15. Thank you, Commander Mike.

DELEGATE JURGENS (SD): From the Department of South Dakota to Operation Comfort Warriors, \$400.

DELEGATE ORROCK (SD): And on behalf of Post 22, Rapid City, state championship baseball team, the Post 22 Hardhats, \$1,223.

DELEGATE STELACIO (PA): From the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, my predecessor, Commander Dennis Haas, Project Operation Comfort Warriors, \$33,855.35.

DELEGATE WILSON (NJ): Department of New Jersey donates \$1,000 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

DELEGATE BRAULT (MA): Lou Brault, Sandra Kee, Department of Massachusetts, the Department of Massachusetts donates \$9,960 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

DELEGATE LYSAGHT (SC): On behalf of the family from the great state of South Carolina, the home of the 2015 World Series champions, we have a check for \$1,395 to bring our total to \$5,443. Thank you.

DELEGATE VAN KURAN (CA): On behalf of the Department of California, I'd like to make another Legion's program donation: Post 419, \$702, Auxiliary Unit 419, \$100, to the Child Welfare Fund. ... *At this time, National Commander Helm resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Americans love a good comeback, and that is the best way to characterize what has happened to The American Legion Department of Oklahoma. When the department leadership was found to have engaged in serious wrongdoing, The American Legion brought in a new, untainted team to straighten out the mess. Emergency funds were lent to the department so it could recover from what was illegally taken. The new leadership team was unconnected to the previous regime and brought back the ethical principles and dedication to the Four Pillars upon which The American Legion was founded. With us for a presentation is a man who served on the new leadership team, a veteran who played a large part in restoring integrity to the Department of Oklahoma.

I made a couple of trips into Oklahoma, one time to take their charter back to them and then to make a visit. So I've spent some time with the department commander that I'm about to introduce. What a great Legionnaire. He turned that whole department around, never took no for an answer. There was always a better way to do it, and Tim brought that to it. He is an Iraq War veteran and a retired sergeant first class from the U.S. Army. Please give a very warm welcome to the 2014-2015 department commander of Oklahoma, Timothy W. Smith. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Timothy W. Smith, Past Department Commander
The American Legion Department of Oklahoma**

Keeping it short and sweet because we're ready to go home, I think. To the national commander, the national adjutant, the National Executive Committee, an amazing national staff that we have with this organization: It's with great honor that our department was very frugal with our finances and very innovative with our revenue enhancement, and today I can return to the coffers our first payment to the national treasurer in the amount of \$100,000. *(Cheers and applause)*

Presentations

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I would now like to call my family to the lectern. First of all, not only is this my family, it also represents a big portion of my American Legion post and auxiliary back in Lebanon, Nebraska. *(Applause)*

You know, as the years went on, you heard me use the "cluster of light" so many times. And certainly that little spot down there on the Beaver Creek in southwest Nebraska, this is one of those great clusters of light. You know, when I first started in The American Legion, we had about, I don't know, 29 or 30 members in our post. Today we have 33 members in our post. *(Laughter and applause)*

We didn't have a whole lot to grow with due to the declining population. But we've always found that way to remain there and continue to serve those people in our community. Everybody uses our little American Legion post, a little 40-by-60 building, for everything; church groups, alumni, weddings, funerals, whatever it is. That's where you go because that's the only place that has wheelchair accessibility and those kind of things.

This is my brother Jim. He's always been a great supporter of this effort. Believed in it probably before I did. But once he saw that it was going to happen, he worked hard to make it happen. That's what he did in his military career in Special Forces, was make things happen. And I just want to thank him.

And also my sister-in-law, Janice. I had an effort this year of making sure that immigrants to this country were accepted and become citizens: Number one because it's an

American Legion thing and the right thing to do; number two because my sister-in-law, Janice, is one of those. Thank you, all. Give her a round, great round. *(Applause)*

My sister Kathy. My sister CeAnne and my brother-in-law Marty.

Natasha and Andrew right here. Natasha and Andrew live in North Carolina. They are my niece and nephew-in-law for me, but my brother Fred, a retired Army lieutenant colonel, who passed away a few years ago. And thank you for being here. *(Applause)*

Ray and Myrna Hague, this is the reason the post and the unit keep on going, because of these two. Ray, back in his young day, taught my brother how to work, and did a good job of it. My father might have had a little hand in that, too, and I worked a little bit there, too. And Myrna, too. What a great couple. Very close family friends, and glad to have them here. First convention, first National Convention. *(Applause)*

This is my oldest boy, Aaron, and Robie. Last year when I was elected, you saw them up on the screen. They were over in Kuwait, but now they're here. They're still at Fort Hood, Texas, and now they're here to be with me, graduates of West Point, and so proud of both of them. *(Applause)*

Then Rebecca. This is my favorite daughter. Always said that. She always smiled, thought it was so cute. Then later she said, "But, Daddy, I'm your only daughter." I looked her square in the eye, and I said, "And thank God for that." *(Laughter and applause)*

And her husband, Jaron, my favorite son-in-law. And today is their anniversary. *(Applause)*

And I have a son Jacob who graduated from the Air Force Academy and is in Oklahoma; I have a son Matthew who is a third-year student at Kansas State University in Manhattan and in the ROTC program. And so they couldn't be here. But guess what? Come here, buddy. Here he is, the littlest. This is Timothy. And he's also, as you noticed, he's also the biggest. There he is. *(Applause)*

Last but not least, of course, the First Lady of The American Legion. This is my wife, Debbie. You call her First Lady. I call her Honey Bear. *(Cheers and applause)*

Sandy, get over here. This is my most important part of my American Legion department family. This one here is the one that keeps that membership and the train to run on time at the department headquarters. Let me see. Oltman, Bokemper, Craig, Burkhart, and Salak. That's it. So five adjutants, and she's the one that holds it all together. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

Would my national vice commanders please come forward? First, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge National Vice Commander Bill Bryant, who is at home recovering nicely from surgery. Our thoughts and prayers remain with him. All of my vice commanders have represented me well during the past 12 months. I appreciate your devotion and sacrifice for this great organization. As a token of my appreciation, I would like to present you each with a gift. Thank you all very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAGGAN: Before we work on you, commander, there's an individual that does a lot of work for us, but he doesn't realize how much work he does for us and gets very little accolades for it.

I was over at my mother's house the other day, and I found a box of cigars that my grandfather used to smoke. Now, my grandfather passed away about 35 years ago, so I hope these are still good cigars. *(Laughter)*

If we could have Don come up. I'm under the understanding that Don is going to go home and sit on his front porch and watch his wife take care of the farm. So he needs something to keep him occupied.

What he's got here, I lost my gun-running license when I retired from the Air Force, so he's got two items that will be in Nebraska for him. One is an antique Stevens 12-gauge shotgun and the other is a Remington 870 with three barrels.

DON SUCHY: Thank you very much, everybody. I appreciate it. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAGGAN: We're not done yet, commander. We're taking personal privileges here. Okay, now it's time to take care of the national

commander. We got a little something, if the boys would unroll it. We didn't get you much, but it's something you can hang up in your garage. And when you drive in every day, you'll remember us. *(Laughter and applause)*

Commander, that's not all we got you. You see a little something over here to the right side of the poster? You're going to have to have a pickup truck to pick it up because it's sitting in the Sears hardware store in McCook, Nebraska.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: All right. Thank you. Timothy! Hey, Timothy, more stuff to work with. *(Laughter)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAGGAN: Let me say, commander, in closing, from the five of us, we thoroughly, thoroughly enjoyed working for you this year, and we hope we cross each other's paths in the future. Thank you, commander. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: You know, yesterday we had a little table set up in the back where there was some of my leftover stuff, and we just asked for a donation and we got rid of most of it. I thought we was going to have a report here on that, and as they were doing that, you saw my brother sneak up. I thought it was pretty nice stuff, but he wrote "junk bought." So I thought it was like trinkets and rosary beads and that kind of stuff. But, anyway, that amount out there added \$2,024 to the NEF. *(Applause)*

Today's donation to Operation Comfort Warriors brought in \$133,987.34. That brings the total for donations for the year to \$7,255,173.75. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I now call on the national historian, sergeant-at-arms, the national chaplain, and my aide to come forward. You each played important roles in the success of our organization during the past year. I salute you for your service. Please accept these gifts as a token of my appreciation.

Here's my national sergeant-at-arms. Tell you what, he comes out there from that same "cluster of light" area, out there in District 9. Back in 1977-'78, me and him kept a pretty hot path all across Nebraska, going to a lot of American Legion meetings, having a lot of fun and enjoying ourselves and socializing, scaring the rest of the department because they couldn't figure out why we were there. They thought we had some purpose of some kind, and our only purpose was to enjoy the comradeship of other Legionnaires. So I want to thank Leon. The little gift isn't enough, but just personally thank Leon for coming back this year and serving as my national sergeant-at-arms. *(Applause)*

Did I tell the story about Sue falling and she bruised herself up a little and when she got to the doctor, the only thing they could find wrong with her was that she had a hairline fracture in her thumb? You know what she told me? When she showed it to me, she says: "Look, didn't even break my nail." *(Laughter)* I asked her again. It's still in good shape.

Also for my aide, Don Suchy. Don, thank you very much. Don and I rode back and forth to Indianapolis many years. He served on Children & Youth and I served on Foreign Relations and then VA&R. Made a lot of trips back and forth. We got it figured out that we could meet somewhere and drive together. Normally I was the one that drove, or I'm the one that sat in the driver's seat.

Always as we drove along, every now and then I'd either maybe doze a little bit or maybe not be paying attention and hit the rumble bars on the left. Don, that made him a little bit nervous. But then he noticed also I'd hit the one on the right side every now and then, too. So we've driven a lot of miles back and forth between Indianapolis, and we've had a lot of crisscross along with that. He always thought he was going to get some rest since I was driving, but I'm pretty sure I got more rest on the way home than he did. *(Laughter and applause)*

DEBBIE HELM: Marge has traveled with us and has been a great companion, and I told Mike he got something very nice for her.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: That's why I wanted to make sure she give it, because Mike didn't get nothing very nice. *(Laughter)*

I wanted the proper person that got it to get credit for it.

DON SUCHY: Mike, on behalf of Sue Mason, Leon Hagan, Randy Cash, and myself, we want to give you a small token of our appreciation for the journey that you took us on.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: "The path to this moment wasn't always easy or clear, but you made it." It's from the chaplain, the sergeant-at-arms, the aide, and the historian. \$200 gift card. Thank you all very much. *(Applause)*

Next we have a few words from National Adjutant Dan Wheeler.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Thank you, Mr. Commander. With your permission I'd like to call on Ann Rehbein, wife of Past National Commander David Rehbein, for purposes of a presentation.

ANN REHBEIN: Commander Helm, I'm sure you remember that during the spring meetings of The American Legion that Kathy Wheeler and I organized a day of service to make Quilts of Valor. I am happy to tell you that six tops were completed as a result of that day and will be awarded when they are completely finished. It was a great day because we also invited all of the Legionnaires to come in, sit down and sew two strips of fabric together so they could have a hands-on experience in creating a Quilt of Valor. The Quilts of Valor Foundation is a grassroots organization founded in 2003, and since that time over 123,000 quilts have been awarded. *(Applause)*

Thank you. And so today it is my great pleasure on behalf of the Quilts of Valor Foundation to award this Quilt of Valor to you, stitched with honor on that spring day in May by all of your fellow Legionnaires.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Wow. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: I'd now like to ask the national judge advocate, national treasurer, and your two executive directors to join me here. Mr. Commander, you are the epitome of a family man, patriot, veteran, Legionnaire, and friend. Your national staff is sorry to see you go, but we're glad to have been part of the journey with you. Since the beginning of mankind, there have been hunters and gatherers. Our national commander is kind of both. He served with the 82nd Airborne, so he's not someone to mess around with. But like all of our national commanders, he's been a gatherer; plaques, trophies, pins, blankets, steins, medals, medallions, clocks, commemorative plates, but no pounds, he's quick to tell you.

You received a lot of wonderful keepsakes as you traveled around the country thanks to dedicated Legionnaires such as yourself. So what do you do with all these mementos? You place them in a glass display cabinet for all to see. It could forever serve as a testament to the generosity that all of you have shown to our national commander. So we have here a small gift for you from your national staff to help you out. Be sure to hold it up so everyone can see it. A nice little curio cabinet. *(Laughter and applause)*

Actually, Mr. Commander, there is a real cabinet which will be delivered to your home in Arcadia, Kansas. Most importantly, your wife, Debbie, approved this new addition to your house. So we want to thank you for a terrific year. We've enjoyed serving with you, and we're looking forward to serving with you for many years to come.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Thank you. Thank you very much. I can feel my time slipping away, but I do want to get one more shot at The American Legion. In my year as your national commander, I've tried to do the best that I could. I want you to understand that a national commander works and does what he or she does because of what you have done at this convention. The resolution process is what moves me as your national commander forward. I know that not always do you agree with every resolution that we passed, but it doesn't matter: We came here together, we sat down and we discussed and we fought. But at the end of the day, that is what the national commander does: He leads from those resolutions.

We've got two-point-some million American Legionnaires, and I know we can't make everybody happy. So then the national commander gets letters from those people who think that he or she, those statements they make, are too far on the right. And then, lo and behold,

the next day you get a letter from a Legionnaire who thinks that your statements are too far on the left. And it's pretty hard to occupy both of those positions just being one individual.

So to all of you who might have fallen into either one of those categories, just remember that what I did, what we do as an organization, comes from you. So I just ask, now that this convention is going to come to an end, that you take these resolutions and be willing to stand with your national commander as you stood with me and make this not only a better organization but a better country. *(Applause)*

National Vice Commander Gerald Jacobs, will you please take the gavel and preside over the next order of business. ... *At this time, National Vice Commander Jacobs assumed the Chair.*

Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander

John A. Brieden, III, Past National Commander (Colors)

John P. 'Jake' Comer, Massachusetts, Past National Commander (Plaque)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER JACOBS: After we have served this past year as national vice commanders, I am honored to represent all members of The American Legion in presiding over the next order of business. This is the time when we present to our national commander, Michael D. Helm, the Colors of his year in office and a plaque. At this time I call on Past National Commander John Brieden of Texas to present the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BRIEDEN: I call on the seven-consecutive-time National Champion Color Guard from the Harrisburg Post 472 of Houston, Texas, to bring your Colors front and center. ... *At this time, the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BRIEDEN: Commander, let me start by saying it's an honor to present your Colors. I want you to look at that red banner of The American Legion national organization. Last year, in presenting your Colors to you, I charged you to remember that it stands for God and country. It stands for the Four Pillars of this organization. It stands for the four goals in our Preamble that says, "We associate ourselves together for the following purposes."

You served us well. You've served us in front of Congress, you've served us in the White House, you've served us at the VA, and, in fact, you served us all across this great country and all across the world. But I know that with all that you've done, you're probably most proud of serving with the Legion Family and bringing these groups together as a Legion Family. And all of that is wrapped up in this banner.

Last year I also told you to look at Old Glory and remember that you gave an oath when you entered the service and said you would protect this country, that flag, its constitution, our form of government against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Now as you look at both of those colors and as you take off a red hat and put on a blue hat, I want you to always look at those colors and be proud of the year that you've had. I'm proud of you. In fact, this organization is proud of you. *(Applause)*

We're lucky to have had you this year. I also want you to look at that red banner and, just like you still serve America, understand you still serve The American Legion. So we expect some more out of you. *(Laughter)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Color Guard, retire my Colors. ... *At this time, the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BRIEDEN: Thank you for the honor of doing this part of the ceremony.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Thank you, Commander Brieden. You and so many other past national commanders have been so helpful to me simply by providing textbook examples on how to represent The American Legion as a national commander. I only hope to be able to provide the same wise counsel and advice to my successors as my predecessors have provided me. I will always treasure your friendship.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER JACOBS: I now call on Past National Commander John P. "Jake" Comer of Massachusetts to present the plaque to our outgoing national commander. *(Applause)*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Commander Mike Helm, I cannot be more proud. He started out with me in 1987-'88 as one of my department commanders from the great state of Nebraska. You are one of four of the individuals that served with us that went on to become national commander. You are probably the last.

You've been a great advocate for our veterans, their families, and The American Legion. You have led us with strong principles, devotion, and clarity indeed. You helped set a path for the Legion's complicated but necessary relationship with the Department of Veterans Affairs. I'm happy to present to you a plaque which attests to your election to the high office of national commander of The American Legion in the year 2014-2015.

It is given in appreciation of your dedicated leadership and in recognition of your devoted service to God and country and in token of the high esteem of your fellow Legionnaires. It is presented this third day of September before the delegates assembled at the National Convention in Baltimore, Maryland.

Like the Colors, this plaque, as you have it on your wall, as I have mine, will represent, and you'll see it every day, and it will come to being and you will be forced to understand where this plaque has been. It's been all over the nation. It's been all over the world. It has represented our American Legion with you as our leader everywhere that you went.

Just seeing him operating up here around this podium, AAA battery, going all the time. He's outstanding. And we're so proud, so proud of Mike, Debbie, his family as they conclude their service, outstanding service, to The American Legion and God and country. Commander Helm, congratulations. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Past Commander Comer, thank you very much. Your wise counsel has been truly valued by me. My motto for the year has been "Stay the Course," and it was a course that has been set previously by you and so many great Legionnaires and, of course, our organization's founding fathers. There have been so many wonderful people that I have met over this past year and so many Legionnaires, Auxiliary members and Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Riders that has made this an unbelievable year for me. Jake, I thank you for your support, and even though my year is winding down, I am extremely excited about the activities and programs that The American Legion family members are going to continue to do for their communities. Thank you very much. *(Applause)* ... *At this time, National Commander Helm resumed the Chair.*

Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: We have now come to a special order of business, the election of national officers. The national judge advocate, Phil Onderdonk, will read the rules of convention governing the nomination and the election of officers.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE ONDERDONK: Mr. Commander, the rules for election of national officers.

Rule 15 final sentence: Election of National Officers shall be by roll call.

Rule 17: Prior to the election of National Officers, the National Commander shall appoint, subject to approval of the Convention, a Judge of Election and such number of tellers as he deems necessary, provided that the total tellers appointed shall be an odd number. In a contested election, each candidate going to the ballot should be entitled to one teller of his choice.

Rule 18: Nominations for National Officers shall be from the floor on roll call of the departments alphabetically arranged. Each department may present as many candidates as it chooses.

Rule 19: Nominating speeches for National Officers shall be limited to five minutes each. Not more than two seconding speeches shall be made for any candidate, and said speeches shall be limited to three minutes.

Rule 20: When more than two candidates are nominated for any office, balloting shall continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes of the Convention, except in the election of National Vice Commanders.

Rule 21: In a contested election for National Vice Commanders, balloting shall continue until (a) majorities and (b) pluralities are established for one or more candidates under the following provisions:

If, on any ballot taken, less than five candidates receive the necessary majority to elect, the candidate or candidates receiving a majority vote shall be declared elected and a new ballot shall be taken for the remaining number of places to be filled, the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes on the preceding ballot shall be disqualified; except should two candidates remain to fill one place, a new ballot shall be taken.

Rule 22: The Convention will nominate and elect a National Commander and five National Vice Commanders, in this sequence.

Rule 23: At the conclusion of balloting on the National Vice Commanders, each Department Delegation Chairman shall deliver a written ballot to the tellers. Such ballots shall be in the hands of the tellers before communication is made to the National Commander for announcement of the results.

Mr. Commander, that completes the reading of the rules pertaining to the election of national officers.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: As chairman of this convention, I now appoint as judge of the election David W. Salak, adjutant of the Department of Nebraska; and as tellers of the election, Charles R. Knox, adjutant, Department of Georgia; Jared R. Dyer, adjutant, Department of Oregon; and David A. Kurtz, adjutant, Department of Wisconsin.

Will the judge and tellers of this election please come forward? ... *At this time, a musical interlude was played.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Thank you, Peter. Let the record show that Joe Simms is substituting for Charlie Knox. National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler will now call the roll of the departments. The purpose of the roll call is to receive nominations for national commander of The American Legion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HARTLINE (AL): Mr. Commander, I am David Hartline, chairman of the delegation from the great state of Alabama. Alabama wishes to yield to the Department of Georgia.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MASH (GA): Mr. Commander, Tom Mash, chairman of the delegation, Department of Georgia. Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize Past National Commander Jake Comer for the purpose of a nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The Chair recognizes PNC Comer.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Thank you, Georgia. I feel like I'm part of you every day. Will all our Georgia representors please rise. I send this message to the nation on behalf of all of you. Thank you. *(Applause)*

It's a special honor when Dale called me one evening and asked if I would do his nominating speech. I do want to say that his first choice, and rightfully so, was Charlie Knox from the Department of Georgia, a great, great Legionnaire. Charlie just felt that he couldn't get up here and make his speech, but I think he could. So on behalf, with you, Charlie, I'm honored to be here representing you.

Dale Barnett is a retired military officer. He was commissioned in the U.S. Army in 1974 after graduation from the United States Military Academy at West Point. Imagine that. He served 22 years of commission service in a variety of stateside and overseas locations. He served in combat in the first Gulf War as a battalion executive officer in a mechanized infantry unit earning a Bronze Star. His military decorations also include a

Legion of Merit and many other responsible medals. He retired in August 1996 as a lieutenant colonel. As a former Air Force guy with three stars, I'm impressed with that. And that's from Fort McPherson, Georgia. He transitioned into his second career as a high school social studies teacher and coach. His original roots was a Hoosier from Indiana. He's a Hoosier. But he went on to Georgia, and he's been a Georgia Peach ever since. *(Cheers and applause)*

Being at Fort Benning, Georgia, he and Donna felt this is where they wanted to stay and grow with their family. As I look out at the front row here and I see that family, wow, all those youngsters, and I know they are very proud of dad and grandpa today, because his theme, as we're going to know it more and more as we move along, "Duty, Honor, Country."

And we are ready to walk with you, Dale, with your walking awareness tours that are going to take you throughout these great United States. He's going to speak for The American Legion, and in his walking tour it's going to be more because we must remind the American people of who we are. Too many, often today, they don't know what The American Legion is all about. They say, "Who?" We have been here almost 100 years and they still have individuals that want to know who we are.

With all we've done, with Dale it's going to be an awakening to them when he walks through your town, your city, and your state. He's going to remind them of the GI Bill that he was responsible working for. He's going to remind them of the many baseball programs. He's going to remind you of Shelby, North Carolina, and our World Series. He's going to remind them of the Scouting program, one of the largest programs in the nation, because he served as an Eagle Scout himself.

So Dale was selected when he went into the educational level as a Creekside High School Teacher of the Year for 2005-2006. He's a national board-certified social studies teacher, and he coached varsity baseball, junior varsity basketball, and varsity boys and girls cross country during his teaching career. Always with the youth. Always with the future Americans, as he did when he served. His main thrust is Boys State and Boys Nation. He goes on there each year. Why? Because he loves the kids. He loves what our program is all about. He retired from teaching at the end of the 2011 school year. He's retired because now he is ready to serve all of us. You will see that as he's done in the past. He's come into our states. What an outstanding individual we have witnessed come to the podiums, as I know he did in Massachusetts.

Dale is an active American Legion member serving in many leadership positions, including Georgia State commander in 2007-2008. So all I can tell each and every one of you is that we are in line for another outstanding leadership year. He's going to follow Mike Helm and all of us that have followed in the past, he's going to continue to do the job for us because when we hear, we forget; and when we see, we remember; it's when we do, we understand. God bless you all. *(Applause)*

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KLINE (AK): Mr. Commander, Scott Kline, chairman of the delegation from Alaska. Mr. Commander, Alaska yields to Montana.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HANCOCK (MT): Mr. Commander, Roger Hancock, chairman of the delegation from Montana. Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize Merv Gunderson for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The Chair recognizes Merv Gunderson.

DELEGATE GUNDERSON (MT): Duty. Honor. Country. Those are more than words. They form a credo that our national commander candidate lives by. That credo will be the guiding principle as Dale assumes the leadership position of The American Legion.

Dale has spent his life serving our country and his fellow veterans. From his initial start at the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1970, Dale's dedication to military excellence has been a hallmark of his career. Following graduation from the United States Military Academy in 1974, Dale's military career continued until his

retirement in 1996. Dale retired from the United States Army at the rank of lieutenant colonel. During his service in the military, Dale received many medals and awards. His decorations include the Legion of Merit; the Bronze Star; Meritorious Service Medal, third award; Army Commendation Medal; Army Achievement Medal; National Defense Service Medal with two Bronze Service Stars; Humanitarian Service Medal; Army Service Ribbon; Overseas Service Ribbon, two awards; Kuwait Liberation Medal; Combat Infantryman badge, Parachutist badge, and Pathfinder badge.

Each of the service awards is a testament to Dale's leadership excellence. Dale's education includes graduation from the United States Military Academy at West Point where he studied international relations and public affairs. He was conferred with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1974. Dale received a Master of Science degree in Business Administration from Boston University in 1982. Finally, Dale attended the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1988.

In 1996 Dale joined American Legion Post 105 located in Fayetteville, Georgia. He remains a member of that post today. Dale has held post offices of adjutant for two years and commander for two years. He was chairman of the district Boys State Committee, the Red Ribbon Committee, and High School Oratorical Committee. Dale served his district as senior vice commander and district commander. At the department level, Dale worked on The American Legion Boys State staff from 1999 to 2014. He was Georgia's district vice commander from 2002 to 2004. He served as Department of Georgia treasurer from 2004 to 2006. In the 2006-2007 year, Dale served as Department of Georgia senior vice commander and then as department commander in the 2007-2008 year. At the national level, Dale served on The American Legion Boys State staff from 2005 to 2014. He was national Membership & Post Activities chairman from 2008 to 2010. Finally, Dale served as Economic chairman for 2010 to 2013.

From his beginnings in Post 105 through today, Dale has proven he has the desire to serve his fellow veterans and our communities. His leadership ability has been honed since graduation from the United States Military Academy at West Point. Dale is now ready to assume the position of national commander of The American Legion. He is the right man at the right time for the job. As a duly elected delegate to the 97th American Legion Convention from the Department of Montana, I proudly second the nomination of Dale Barnett as your next national commander. *(Applause)*

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JAIME (AZ): Mr. Commander, Andy Jaime, chairman of the delegation of Arizona. Mr. Commander, Arizona yields to North Carolina.

DELEGATION SECRETARY STANCIL (NC): Mr. Commander, Frank Stancil. I'm secretary of the delegation from North Carolina. Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognizes Bill Oxford for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The chair recognizes Bill Oxford.

DELEGATE OXFORD (NC): Legionnaires, delegates, and special guests of the 97th National Convention, I am Bill Oxford, an authorized delegate from the Tar Heel state. That's the Department of North Carolina and home of the American Legion World.

Our candidate today grew up in central Indiana, the Hoosiers, where he attended Whiteland Community High School. In high school he was student body president, captain of the basketball and track teams, and president of the Methodist Youth Fellowship. He attended Hoosier Boys State in 1969, and that event convinced him to attend the Military Academy at West Point. At West Point he earned his commission as a second lieutenant in the United States Army and was active in the Cadet Scouting Council, a cadet Sunday school teacher, and on the indoor and outdoor track teams.

Here's a good point, a good time to introduce one of his friends. At West Point our candidate became friends with Mike Krzyzewski who now coaches Duke University and the U.S. Olympic team. They played basketball together at West Point. Almost. Coach K made the Army team and our candidate didn't. *(Laughter)*

After his military career, our candidate retired to the Atlanta, Georgia, area and became a national board-certified social studies teacher and coached basketball, baseball, and track. His coaching successes include regional championships for boys and girls track teams. He was named Teacher of the Year at Creekside High School in 2005 and 2006 and is also an Eagle Scout merit badge counselor. As an active member of his community, he's an active member of Post 105, the SAL, ANAVICUS, the Past Commanders Club, the VFW, and the Atlanta Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Along the way, our candidate married his high school sweetheart, Donna. And, Dale, you didn't tell me how good looking she was. They actually went to their high school prom together. They have a beautiful family: daughters Michelle, Andrea, Desiree, Kathalyn; and son, Joseph. Michelle is married to Ryan Blevins, and they have given our candidate two grandchildren, Heather and Daniel. Now, Andrea has also given our candidate two grandchildren, Joanne and Brandon.

And in closing, if you remember from Tuesday, Former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel asked us to reflect on who The American Legion is, where we're going, and the leadership it will take to get us there. So if we consider that task carefully and look at any leadership model, we can find words like "duty, honor, country, courage, commitment," and I think it's absolutely fitting how those words perfectly describe our candidate.

It's an honor and a privilege for me to second the nomination of Dale Barnett from the great state of Georgia to the high office of national commander of The American Legion for 2015 and 2016. ... *At this time, a demonstration of support ensued.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The convention will come to order. The adjutant will continue the roll call.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AR): Second the motion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FLOREZ (CO): Tom Florez, department commander and duly authorized delegate of the Centennial State of Colorado, home of the Past National Commander Tom Bock, VA&R Chairman Ralph Bozella, and long-serving adjutant under 25 department commanders, Pat Smith, duly and proudly second the nomination of Dale Barnett. Thank you.

DELEGATE HANSEN (CT): Butch Hansen, past department commander, second the motion for Department of Connecticut.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MICHAEL (DE): Bob Michael, chairman of the delegation, second the motion for Dale Barnett.

DELEGATE CUFFEE (DC): Warren Cuffee, NEC, District of Columbia, seconds the nomination of Dale Barnett.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CONTI (FL): Jay Conti, Sr., delegate chairman, proud home of Past National Commander Clarence E. Hill, seconds the nomination for Dale Barnett as national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ABERNATHY (FR): Mr. Chairman, I, Keith Abernathy, commander of Department of France, as a duly elected delegate from the Department of France, the birthplace of The American Legion and the 97th American Legion National Convention, seconds the nomination and proudly casts its 10 delegate votes for Dale Barnett of Georgia for national commander 2015-2016.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SIEGFRIED (HI): Marvin Siegfried, delegation chairman from the Department of the Aloha State of Hawaii. We second the nomination of Dale Barnett for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN THURLOW (ID): Mike Thurlow, delegation chairman from the great state of Idaho, and we second that nomination as well.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IL): Illinois, the home of the national president, seconds the nomination.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN): The Department of Indiana proudly seconds the nomination of Hoosier-born Dale Barnett for the high office of national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): The Department of Iowa would like to proudly second the nomination for Dale Barnett.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN VAIL (KS): Raymond Vail, Commander of the Great Sunflower State of Kansas, seconds the nomination of Dale Barnett for national commander.

DELEGATE COFFMAN (KY): Randall Coffman, National Executive Committeeman, Department of Kentucky. Kentucky proudly seconds the nomination of Dale Barnett for national commander of The American Legion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JACKSON (LA): Louisiana Delegate Chairman James Jackson, our second for Dale Barnett.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ME): Delegation of Maine seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN TROTT (MD): Lew Trott, delegation chairman for the state of Maryland, home of the 97th National Convention, seconds the nomination of Dale Barnett.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BRAULT (MA): Mr. Chairman, Lou Brault, delegate chairman, Department of Massachusetts, home of Past National Commanders Jake Comer and Paul Morin, also home of the no longer suspended Tom Brady of New England Patriots, casts all its votes for Dale Barnett.

DELEGATE WOOD (MX): Mike Wood, Department of Mexico, number one in membership, seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WALLACE (MI): Chairman, I'm Jim Wallace, delegate chairman, Department of Michigan, home of Past National Commanders Tom Cadmus and Robert Spanogle. I would like to second the nomination of Dale Barnett as our next national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MOON (MN): The Department of Minnesota seconds the nomination.

DELEGATE GOSA (MI): Robert Gosa, the NEC from the great state of Mississippi, the Hospitality State, proudly seconds the nomination of Dale Barnett for the national commander. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): Department of Missouri, home of Harry S. Truman, our first Legionnaire president, and home of the two currently best teams in the National League in St. Louis Cardinals and the Kansas City Royals, we second the nomination. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NE): Department of Nebraska, home of Past National Commander Bill Galbraith and our National Commander Mike Helm, seconds the nomination for Dale Barnett.

DELEGATE MICHALSKI (NV): Ron Michalski, NEC, Department of Nevada, we second the motion for Georgia Peach Dale Barnett.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DIONNE (NH): Bob Dionne, delegate chairman for the great state of New Hampshire, the Live Free or Die State, would like to second the nomination for Dale Barnett.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WILSON (NJ): Mike Wilson, delegate chairman for the great state of New Jersey, seconds the nomination for Dale Barnett.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATION CHAIRMAN (NM): Mr. Commander, delegate chairman, Department of New Mexico, Land of Enchantment, we second the nomination for Dale Barnett.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PETERS (NY): Mr. Chairman, Frank Peters, chairman of the delegation from the great and generous Department of New York, home of Past National Commander Fang Wang, and our great National Executive Committeeman, Stanley H. Clark, proudly seconds the nomination for Dale Barnett for national commander.

DELEGATE KRAUSE (ND): Mr. Chairman, Robert Krause from the great state of North Dakota, home of Past National Commander, the Honorable H.F. "Sparky" Gierke. We second the nomination for Mr. Dale Barnett.

DELEGATE HILLIARD (OH): Mr. Chairman, Department Commander, Past Commander Dave Hilliard, home of the Buckeye State, The Ohio State, the National Championship, seconds the motion for national commander.

DELEGATE SMITH (OK): Timothy Smith, authorized delegate from the Department of Oklahoma, seconds the nomination.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATION CHAIRMAN (OR): Oregon's delegation chair seconds the nomination for Dale Barnett 2015-2016 national commander. Thank you.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN STELACIO (PA): Pennsylvania delegate chairman Mike Stelacio, home of Past National Commander Dominic DiFrancesco, Past National Commander Ronald F. Conley, proudly seconds the nomination of Dale Barnett.

DELEGATE SCHOLTEN (PI): Herb Scholten. Our delegation proudly nominates Dale Barnett for the office of national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN COLON (PR): Mr. Chairman, Pedro Colon, chairman of the delegation of Puerto Rico, Island of Enchantment, proudly seconds Dale Barnett for next national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SCHIERSCHMIDT (RI): Bob Schierschmidt delegate chairman, state of Rhode Island, proudly nominates Dale Barnett.

DELEGATE LYSAGHT (SC): Joe Lysaght, department commander for the great state of South Carolina, in case any of you have forgotten, we do have the World Series Champions, we second the nomination for that wonderful Georgia Peach, Dale Barnett.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JURGENS (SD): Mr. Chairman, Tim Jurgens, duly elected delegate and delegate chairman from the great state of South Dakota, home of Mt. Rushmore and birthplace of American Legion Baseball, proudly seconds the motion for Dale Barnett, national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PATTERSON (TN): James Patterson, delegation chairman from the wonderful Volunteer State of Tennessee, seconds the motion for Dale Barnett.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SPARKS (TX): Lynn Sparks, delegate chairman from the Lone Star State, home of the National Commander's Honor Guard, home of John A. Brieden. The Department of Texas seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN STEPHENSON (UT): Mr. Chairman, Paula Stephenson from the Department of Utah, delegate chair, and the home of the infamous William E. Christoffersen. We second the motion for Dale Barnett for the next national commander.

DELEGATE BUSHAW (VT): Commander, Barbara Bushaw from the beautiful state of the Green Mountains of Vermont seconds the motion for Dale Barnett.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN RHOADS (VA): Mr. Chairman, Gerald Rhoads, delegation chairman for the Department of Virginia and the home of Past National Commanders Butch Miller and Dan Dellinger, proudly second the nomination of Dale Barnett of Georgia.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HODGEBLOOM (WA): Mr. Chairman, Dave Hodgebloom, the delegate chairman for the state of Washington, the home of the Seahawks, the Evergreen State. I second the nomination for Dale Barnett for the next national commander.

DELEGATE SMITH (WV): I'm Kenneth Smith, department commander from the great state of West Virginia and the home of Miles Epling, past national commander. We all proudly second the nomination for Dale Barnett as next national commander.

DELEGATE PUDDY (WI): Jeff Puddy, department vice commander of Wisconsin, seconds the nomination and pledges its entire delegate strength of 69 votes to Dale Barnett of Georgia.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN UHRIG (WY): Mr. Chairman, Doug Uhrig, delegation chairman from Wyoming. We would like to second the nomination of Dale Barnett to be our next national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN VAN KURAN (CA): Larry Van Kuran, chairman, delegation, Department of California, the Sunshine State and the home of Past National Commander Bruce Thiesen, seconds the nomination of Dale Barnett for the next national commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, that completes the roll call. There were no additional nominations.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I now recognize from the floor microphone one.

DELEGATE BOWEN (CO): Mr. Commander, Jay Bowen, delegate from Colorado. Mr. Commander, in view of the fact that there is but one candidate for national commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this Convention, close nominations, and that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Dale Barnett be elected national commander by acclamation. I will now make the first motion. Mr. Commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the national commander and the nomination and election of the national vice commanders which rules shall be reinstated at the conclusion of the election for national vice commanders.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: There is a motion before us to suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the national commander and the nomination and election of national vice commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election of national vice commanders. Is there a second? ... *Second.*

Hearing a second, this motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye. Opposed, nay. Motion carried. I now recognize from the floor microphone two.

DELEGATE MARR (KS): Mr. Commander, I'm Terry Marr from the state of Kansas, registered delegate. Mr. Commander, I move that nominations for the office of national commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: We have a motion that nominations for the office of national commander be closed. Is there a second? ... *Second.*

Hearing a second, the motion to close nominations is a non-debatable motion and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. All opposed signify by saying nay. Carried. I now recognize from the floor microphone one.

DELEGATE PASNON (NY): Mr. Commander, Paul H. Pasnon, delegate from New York. Mr. Commander, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Dale Barnett be elected national commander by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Is there a second? ... *Second.*

Hearing a second, there is motion before us that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Dale Barnett be elected national commander by acclamation. All those in favor of the motion signifying by saying aye. Those opposed by saying nay. Motion carried. I now call on the national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, as national adjutant, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for the election of Dale Barnett as the national commander of The American Legion. *(Cheers and applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I declare Dale Barnett elected national commander of The American Legion. *(Cheers and applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Will the sergeant-at-arms assist the new national commander of The American Legion to the platform. He will be escorted to the

state by the Georgia State Patrol officers. The Chair recognizes Past National Commander David Rehbein for the purpose of administering the oath of office to the new national commander of The American Legion.

Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Commander Barnett, will you join me at the podium, please. Donna, would you like to be with us?

Commander, as we begin this important step in your life, I know that you as well as I are thinking of Past National Commander Bob Turner who would be standing in this place if it weren't for the challenges that he and Betty are facing together and experiencing. We think of him, and I hope every member of the Legion family in this room will spend a moment today thinking of those challenges and helping them to gain the strength to overcome them.

This is the first of many steps that you will take this year as you lead us down the path of walks to raise awareness of The American Legion. As you lead us across this country, as you look over my shoulder, behind you stand a group of Legionnaires that, when you need strength, draw on it from them, Legionnaires that have worn that cap. Over my other shoulder are all the members of the Legion Family that are also there to support you this year in your year as national commander. We all look forward to your leadership.

And now if you would raise your right hand. Say your name and repeat after me.

I, Dale Barnett, do solemnly pledge myself to perform faithfully and impartially the duties of the office of national commander of The American Legion. And I further pledge that I will support and defend the Constitution of The United States of America and the National Constitution and Bylaws of The American Legion and that I do not subscribe to the principles of any group opposed to our form of government, so help me God.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Ladies and gentlemen, the 2015-2016 national commander of The American Legion, Dale Barnett. *(Cheers and applause)*

... At this time, the delegation viewed a video.

NATIONAL COMMANDER BARNETT: My wife and I dated in high school. She stayed with me for four years during my academy experience. We got married two weeks after graduation. She has been a real supporter of The American Legion as a unit president. We're raising three children at this time in the home. So if you see me with a bunch of young kids, they're mine. They're a wonderful family, and they're looking forward to the experience of my year as commander. It's going to be tough being away from the family for a year, but they've been very understanding about it and very supportive. I thank my family for giving me the opportunity to serve.

I first joined The Legion when I was getting ready to retire out of the military. And the reason I joined the legion, I wanted to be involved in my community because of my Boys State experience. I didn't have any idea that it would ever take me the route it has taken me to this level of leadership in the organization. But I just wanted to join in order for the opportunity to give back to the community.

The American Legion has been so good to me because, as a teacher and as a coach, I was able to bring The American Legion to some students that needed the mentorship, that needed the opportunities that I received as a youth growing up in central Indiana, I was able to provide to some of my students here in the greater Atlanta area as far as opportunities, be it the Constitutional Oratorical Contest or the Boys State, Girls State.

There were so many opportunities. I will tell you The American Legion, anytime I needed help for students in need, they were always willing to provide that for me. I'm so, so happy about what we do in The American Legion with our Children & Youth programs, our Americanism programs.

I think The American Legion provides a vehicle for all of us to give back to our communities. There's something in some of our programs for somebody no matter where you're at. You can be in the remotest location in the United States, or you can be in New York City. But our programs reach out and they touch the lives of young people and older people. We're a service-oriented organization. We need to remain so. That's what we were built upon with our Four Pillars. I think we'll continue to be successful in our second century if we stay true to our traditions and our foundational base. (Applause)

**Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander
Dale Barnett, Georgia**

Past National Commanders, fellow Legionnaires, family and friends, it's quite an honor to be selected to represent the greatest and largest veterans service organization in the world.

I want to thank my personal friend and mentor, Past National Commander Jake Comer. We spent many, many days together in the last years doing Legion business. I thank him for the confidence that he has in me to lead this great organization. I want to thank Merv Gunderson and Bill Oxford for their seconding of my nomination, and I want to thank PNC Rehbein for administering the oath of office.

But first I want to thank my family. I think the video that you just saw says a lot about what I think about family values. My wife and I dated, as the video talked about, since high school. We've been together through wars, through peace, through many, many family difficulties. But we are a family, and what a beautiful family I have. *(Applause)*

I'd like to introduce my family, if I may. From right to left, when I call your name, just stand up. Desiree, she just learned how to drive so don't get in her way; Kathalyn, who is a seventh grader; and Joseph, who is in SAL and very active in Scouting. My wife, Donna. And then my daughter Michelle, who is an Auxiliary member, as well as my wife, and her daughter, Heather. Her husband, Ryan. And always closing his eyes is Daniel. He entertained everybody in the front row.

But then next to them is a very, very special couple. My sister Melinda and her husband. You notice he's got an Indiana Legionnaire cap on. So we won't hold that against him. They have worked hard for my campaign, and I appreciate them. I also have our Georgia State Troopers. *(Applause)*

What a good-looking crew. We are so proud of them. Earl Prince, Russ Covington, Andy Sinquefield, and Tommy Crafton. And they work on the Boys State staff.

My NECmen, Charlie Wessinger and Phil Youngblood, I thank all of them. And our commander this year, Thom Mash, who told me this was going to happen many, many years ago, and I told him he was crazy. So, Thom, thanks for trying to convince me this could be a possibility for me. And last year's commander, Randy Goodman, who did so much. *(Applause)*

But there's three people who aren't with us today who would like to be here today. I know that Past National Commander Dave Rehbein talked about Bob Turner. As you know, Bob's wife, Betty, suffered a stroke on August 10. But Bob's back in Georgia doing what Bob does best: Taking care of his wife. I was in the room when he made a very difficult call for him to national headquarters to say that he couldn't fulfill the duties today. But I guarantee you, Bob, and I know he's listening, we love you, we love Betty, we pray for her recovery, we pray for your strength. If you would please join me, because I know he's listening out there, a big round of applause for Past National Commander Bob Turner and his wife, Betty. *(Cheers and applause)*

Mr. Knox also had to leave, he's been my mentor and supporter over the years, to take care of his wife. Because that's the right thing to do, to take care of family.

Our past NECman, Ray Hendrix, who also is back in Statesboro, Georgia. But they were true leaders that taught me about leadership in the American Legion.

Commander Mike Helm, I want to congratulate you and Debbie for an absolute incredible year. What a great commander you've been. *(Applause)*

Your leadership has been unwavering. My children love him. He's always there with a smile, so active. I just thank you and Debbie for your mentorship for Donna and I.

I've got a group of young men in the second row. Gentlemen, I want you to stand, please. My classmates from Class of 1974, Company H-1 at the United States Military Academy: Colonel Bruce Palmatier, Bob Foss, Tom Gandy and Neil Krukar and Colonel Dave Stinson. Thank you. *(Applause)*

I want to thank Team Georgia. You've been supportive, so supportive, of the campaign, raising money, volunteering, receptions. But I want to especially thank two gentlemen that have done so much for me as campaign managers, Mr. Charlie Tucker, who started the campaign, and Mr. Dewey Moss. What a great job they've done for me. *(Applause)*

I've been able to visit 49 out of 50 of the states during my visits. I have learned a lot about the unique challenges of The American Legion across our great nation. I hope that has prepared me and readied me to take on the challenges we have in the future.

I want to congratulate my fellow Legion family members for their election this week. National Auxiliary President Sharon Conatser and Sons of The American Legion Commander Kevin Collier. Sharon, Kevin, and I are truly dedicated to the principles of duty, honor, country. We are working together and planning together to make this the greatest American Legion year that is possible.

But I want to get personal with you right now. The American Legion has shaped my life. You've heard some of the words by those gentlemen that nominated me and seconded. I went to Hoosier Boys State in 1969. It planted seeds for my attendance, and it was only because of The American Legion and Boys State that I think that I was selected to attend the Military Academy. It led to an opportunity of service, which was such an opportunity. I put that uniform on with such joy and such honor. If you have the membership shirt on, and I'm sure most of you have seen it on the sleeve, are those three words: Duty. Honor. Country.

If you think about duty, the first lesson of basic training was to know your job and to do it the best you could because your life depended on it and the life of your buddies. But in the American Legion, people depend on us each and every day to do the right thing, to get them to appointments, to mentor the youth, to help families in need.

Honor. It's an honor to wear the military uniform, and I'm sure many of you still have your uniforms, and you're proud to share those stories. But I'm also proud to wear the uniform of The American Legion. It's an honor to be in this organization and to serve alongside you. I guarantee you, your communities respect what you do and they understand what you do each and every day that makes their communities a better place.

Country. Our country needs us. It's the greatest country on Earth. I'm so proud to be an American. I'm so proud to be standing before you today to say I'm part of the greatest organization that, since 1919, has been fighting for the principles that has made this country great, and we will continue to fight for those principles in the next generation. Our country needs us, and we must step forward now. *(Applause)*

So this year, when you see those words, I want to challenge you. When you see them with your eyes, I want you to live it in your heart, and I want you to execute it with your body and soul. Duty. Honor. Country.

My special project this year is the National Emergency Fund. It has unique meaning to Georgia. Our state was hit by floods in 1994, and it was the NEF that came to the aid to many in Georgia. We had a past National Executive Committeeman who every year we had a big banquet that he started before he passed away that raises money for the NEF. We believe the NEF is important in Georgia, and I know those who have been affected by various disasters like Katrina and Sandy and Moore, Oklahoma, we need to continue to support those. I don't know if I can be a \$7 million commander, but I do want to set one

particular goal: I would like to see us raise \$1 million this year for the NEF, because it does so much for so many people. *(Cheers and applause)*

It's been mentioned a couple times, and it's something I'm extremely excited in, our Walk for Veterans. I got to tell you that National Adjutant Wheeler, when I first said that, thought I was a little bit crazy, because he said, "What in the world would you want to do and try to get some of our older members out there to walk? They have trouble walking to the bathroom." *(Laughter)*

I said, "That's not what it's about. It's about we walk for veterans each and every day in our communities." We help our kids, we mentor our kids. We do things for our community. I want to walk with all the people we touch, and that's a lot of people. That's the kids that go to Boys State, Girls State, the scout troop, the JROTC unit, the baseball team. Those are the people we touch. I want them to invite their parents, their grandparents, people in the church, political figures, and I want you to walk and I want you to tell your story about why you joined The American Legion and why you stay a member in the American Legion.

I guarantee you, because I've heard many of your stories, that when people in your community walk with you and walk with us and learn about what we're doing, and I want the family to do it, that we're going to see people join this organization, we're going to see goodwill and public relations, and we're going to get the message of The American Legion out to the communities. We have special shirts that Emblem Sales has made. They're very low cost. Have a very liberal return policy if you order too many. If you run out, they'll get them to you quick. We want to make this a success. We already have many planned in Kansas City, Missouri. It's a big one. We're going to do at the World War I Memorial. We've got one planned next week at the 9/11 observance in New Hampshire. We're going to walk in Texas. We're going to walk in Indiana hopefully in conjunction with the fall conference. We're planning those all over the country. If we have any residue funds that are earned in those walks, I request that we give it to the NEF.

I would like to transition into some continued concerns that The American Legion has that on your behalf I will continue to champion. First is VA health care. I want each and every one of you to know that I pledged to the VA secretary you have pledged to the VA that it is a system worth saving. We're in it together, and we're going to do everything possible to make the VA health-care system provide the best health care in the world to our veterans, because they have earned it and they deserve it. *(Applause)*

We will continue to look at the timeliness of VA claims, appointments, and services as well as the accuracy of that reporting. I applaud Secretary McDonald for authorizing overtime to address many of these issues. However, we will continue to partner through our network of service officers, volunteers in town hall meetings to monitor and to work with VA to ensure timely delivery of health care. We will continue to support the further empowerment of the VA management to hold people accountable in the VA system who do not perform and provide that quality health care to our veterans. *(Applause)*

I know we've heard it this week, and we continue to hear it, and I know there's been a study of alternative medical treatments for TBI and PTSD. The American Legion is on record to ensure that we do everything possible to provide the best treatment and to continue to research with foreign nations, foreign military, sports, like the National Football League, to ensure that we are providing the state-of-the-art health care for our TBI and PTSD patients. The American Legion wants to build bridges with the VA. I will guarantee you, I will do that and I will be your spokesman in that area.

Got to give a little warning here. I know that I don't have to tell you that it's the presidential campaign season. It's dominating the news. From time to time you will have to address issues or make statements about particular speeches or a candidate's plan for the VA or the military. Our positions are very easy to access. You voted on the resolutions. You've done your work. You can find them on our websites. We encourage the candidates for all political offices to address these issues. We hope that you'll insist that the candidates

talk about issues that impact veterans. But remember, if you're representing the American Legion, stick to our positions and not the person. We are nonpartisan. We endorse no candidate. Remember, we are about policies, not personalities. *(Applause)*

Lastly, I'd like to highlight the fact that we're rapidly approaching our 100th birthday. You might have noticed in my video, my home post, which I've got a couple of post members here, was built in 1935 by the WPA, and it's a log cabin. We're awful proud of what we do in Post 105 in Fayette, Georgia. We have a culture of growth. Since I've been a member, we've grown from 81 members to 307 members. *(Applause)*

Last year we sent over 50 students to Boys and Girls States. All of us need to encourage growth. We need to capture our histories. We need to tell our stories to our communities. That's why these awareness walks are such a great time. Maybe you need to get some of your history. I know in our post we have a little information sheet about how our post was built, about our programs. Our communities want to know more about the history of The American Legion and how your post has impacted it. And, of course, always ask them to join this great organization.

In closing, I have a quote that I have often used: Don't count the days; make the days count. I challenge each of you today to dedicate yourself to the principles of duty, honor, country. Make each and every day count. I know Jim Koutz is over here to my right. I'm going to steal a line from him: Make every day Veterans Day.

God bless you for what you do for The American Legion. Thank you for your confidence in me. God bless this great organization. God bless the United States of America. Thank you all very much.

First Lady Presentation

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Ladies and gentlemen, as a point of personal privilege, I would like to call on Mary Ludwig, wife of Past National Commander Daniel Ludwig, for a presentation to Mrs. Barnett on behalf of all of the past first ladies of The American Legion. Mary?

MRS. LUDWIG: Donna, on behalf of us former first ladies, I want to extend our best wishes for the coming year and welcome you as our first lady. *(Applause)*

MRS. BARNETT: Thank you, Mary. *(Applause)*

Election of National Vice Commanders

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I now recognize microphone two.

DELEGATE CAMPBELL: Mr. Commander, James Campbell, delegate and commander of the great state of Ohio. Mr. Commander, since the rules of this Convention have been suspended, I move that nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor of this Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: There is a motion before us that nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor. Do I hear a second?

... *Second.* Hearing a second, the motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Those opposed by nay. Motion carried. We will now entertain nominations for the office of national vice commander from the floor. I now recognize microphone one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GREELING (AR): Mr. Commander, I'm Jacob Greeling, chairman of the delegation from Arkansas. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Marvin Jumper for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Marvin Jumper is recognized.

DELEGATE JUMPER (AR): Good morning. Commander Barnett, Commander Helm, distinguished guests, my fellow Legionnaires, ladies and gentlemen, it is my honor

and privilege to place into nomination for national vice commander of The American Legion an individual who is highly deserving of such a great honor.

From the great state of Arkansas, home of The American Legion Department of Arkansas, which was granted the fourth charter issued to a department in 1919, I place the name Jimmy F. Lane into nomination for the high position of national vice commander.

Legionnaire Lane was born on June the 7, 1944, in Jonesboro, Arkansas. He earned his membership eligibility by serving in the United States Air Force during the Vietnam War from 1962 to 1968. Jim has served the department in numerous positions of increasing responsibility. He has served as post adjutant, post commander, department foreign relations chairman, district commander, National & Homeland Security Council, and as northeast area vice commander before being elected department commander in 2013.

Jim graduated from Bono High School in Bono, Arkansas. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering from Arkansas State University. He went on to a successful 35-year career with General Motors Corporation, retiring as a fleet account executive. Jim is married to his lovely wife, Brenda. They have a daughter, Micha Lane; son, Jimmy Darren Lane; and two granddaughters, Alexis Lane and Payton Lane. He resides in Jonesboro, Arkansas, where he is a member of The American Legion Pickett Post 21.

Not only does he have the support of his post, his district, and his department, Jim has a personal endorsement and support of Arkansas Governor, Asa Hutchinson; U.S. Congressman Rick Crawford; and Secretary of State Mark Martin.

I humbly ask you to join with me and support Jimmy Lane for national vice commander, for God and country. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Recognize microphone two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JAIME (AZ): Mr. Commander, Andy Jaime, chairman of the delegation from Arizona. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Dick Perry for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Dick Perry is recognized.

DELEGATE PERRY (AZ): National Commander, national officers, and delegates, my name is Richard Perry. I'm an authorized delegate to this convention. I wish to introduce George E. Cushing from the Department of Arizona.

George served in both the Army and the Air Force, retiring from the Air Force. George attended Texas A&M, majoring in education. He entered the Army in 1960. After basic training, he went to technical school where he was trained to be a crypto operator and repairman. His first assignment was to Fort Sam Houston with the Fourth Army headquarters. During his off-duty hours, he participated as a member of the Army Honor Guard at headquarters. His next assignment was to headquarters joint United States Military Advisory Group in Bangkok. During his tour of duty in Thailand, he volunteered to participate in special operations of a highly classified nature. He saw service in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia in support of these operations. George served in the Army five years.

George returned to the service after a five-year absence, joining the Air Force. He retired from the Air Force as a senior master sergeant. He then went to work for Lockheed Martin aeronautics division with 25 years of service. He retired as a senior field engineer.

George then became very involved with various veterans organizations. George has been a Legionnaire for 32 years. He served as post commander, district commander, department vice commander, and in 2011-'12 was Department of Arizona commander. He was judge advocate for two years. He is still serving as part of the Honor Guard at the national cemetery in Phoenix. He is on the Department Legislative Committee. At the national level he is serving on the VA&R Commission and the National Cemetery Committee. George was The American Legion representative to the United Arizona Veterans Commission and has served on the board of directors.

He is also past commander of Northwest Valley Veterans Association and served in that capacity for three years. The Northwest Valley Veterans Association is a patriotic

organization comprised of the representatives of 15 locally and nationally recognized United States veterans organizations, operating in the northwest valley of Phoenix.

For this work with the veterans and local community, he was honored by being inducted into the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame in the Class of 2006. The membership elected George to serve as director, representing the western part of the state from the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame. In 2007, George was selected as a recipient to the prestigious Hon Kachina Volunteer Award with 3,000-plus hours of service with the Honor Guard at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona by their board of directors, made up of business and civic leaders. In 2008 George was appointed by the governor of Arizona to the Military Family Relief Fund Advisory Committee as well as the Veterans Service and Advisory Commission, where he has served as chairman.

George has been married to his lovely wife, Jan, for 42 years. They have four children, ten grandchildren, two great grandchildren. I am honored to nominate George Cushing to the office of national vice commander, 2015-'16. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Recognize microphone one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN L'HEUREUX (ME): Mr. Commander, Paul L'Heureux, chairman of the delegation from Maine. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Maine's past national commander, Anthony Jordan, for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Past National Commander Anthony Jordan is recognized.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER JORDAN: Thank you Commander. Commander Helm, I come before you today to nominate an outstanding Legionnaire from the Department of Maine to the high office of national vice commander. John W. Hargreaves has distinguished himself as a leader within his department.

An Army veteran of the Vietnam War, he attained the rank of Sergeant E-5, awarded the Bronze Star. Released from active duty Christmas Day 1969. He took advantage of the GI Bill, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the University of Maine in 1975. He received his CPA in 1977, and he worked as a CPA for many, many years. Also owned his own business and later concentrated on taxation before retiring.

He has been a very busy, active Legionnaire, also within his community. He's been active serving on school committees, budget committees. He's also been involved with Scouting as a scout leader. Even a Little League baseball coach. His Legion career spans over 30-plus years in the American Legion. A post commander, a post finance officer for over 18 years, served on many committees within the department and in many capacities. A department finance officer for many years, a department vice commander, a department commander, and a National Executive Committeeman. I believe he enjoys leadership positions, whether a chairman of a committee or serving as an officer. He has made a total commitment to The American Legion and is willing and ready to carry the torch of leadership within his assigned region.

The Department of Maine feels honored to have its candidate have the opportunity to serve the national organization as a national vice commander. John is married to a lovely lady, Jennifer, and they have three adult children. As an authorized delegate to this 97th National Convention, it is my honor to place in nomination the name of John W. Hargreaves for the high office of national vice commander for the year 2015-2016. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I now recognize microphone two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MOON (MN): Mr. Commander, Peggy Moon, chairman of the delegation from Minnesota. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Tess Davis for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Tess Davis is recognized.

DELEGATE DAVIS (MN): Good afternoon. Commander Helm, delegates to the 97th Convention, I am here to place in nomination the name of a Legionnaire from Minnesota who has long served his post, his district, and department. He is a 47-year member of The American Legion. Immediately upon his honorable separation from active duty with the United States Navy, he joined Post 347 in Beroun, Minnesota, where the sun always shines.

Time permits me to list a few of his duties and positions held in those 47 years, to note: That in 1976, at the young age of 27, he was the first Vietnam Era veteran to be elected district commander in Minnesota. He has served as department vice chairman of Children & Youth, Oratorical chairman, vice director of American Legion Baseball, and in 2009 he served Minnesota as our 93rd commander.

He currently serves on the National Americanism Commission. But more than positions held, he has become a resource of Legion history, program knowledge, and a mentor to younger Legionnaires. If asked something he doesn't know, he will seek out the expert in that program area to get the correct answer.

William O. Machart Post 347, the mighty 10th District, and the Department of Minnesota have unanimously endorsed him. As a duly elected delegate to this convention, I place in nomination for national vice commander my mentor, my best friend, the love of my life, my husband, Alan A. Davis, Sr. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I now recognize microphone one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN OATMAN (WI): Mr. Commander, Dale Oatman, chairman of the delegation from Wisconsin. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Denise Rohan for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Denise Rohan is recognized.

DELEGATE ROHAN (WI): Mr. Commander, past national commanders, national officers, fellow delegates, and guests, I am Denise Rohan, a duly elected and registered delegate to this convention from the Department of Wisconsin. It is an honor to stand before you to place into nomination the name of a man who has not only been my mentor for 15 years but someone I am proud to call my friend.

He served in the U.S. Army from 1966 to 1968, spending 13 months in Germany. He has been a Legion member since 1989 and a paid-up-for-life member of the Bates-O'Brien-Howe-Wiegel-Roelli Post 214 in Darlington, Wisconsin, where he chartered a Sons of The American Legion squadron and continues to be their advisor.

He has served all the usual offices at the post, county, district, and department level and continues to be a leader today. He has been a commander at all levels. He was our National Executive Committeeman from 2008 to 2014. He's a member of the National Foreign Relations Council and National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Council. He served as a liaison to the National Convention Commission and the Internal Affairs Commission.

David is also a charter member of The American Legion Riders in the state of Wisconsin and serves on the National American Legion Advisory Committee to Internal Affairs. He continues to serve as post membership chairman; post, county, and district judge advocate; and on the Wisconsin Department Policy Committee. He was the Department Membership Recruiter of the Year in 1995. And thanks to his mentoring and leadership, his county has one of the highest membership penetration rates in the state of Wisconsin of over 55 percent.

When he ran for commander, one of his themes was to be a mentor. And that is exactly what he has done and continues to do for the Legion across the state of Wisconsin. He has completed both the paper version and the online version of The American Legion Extension Institute and encourages others to do the same.

This man is no stranger to being away from home and dedication to a job. His 50 years of employment with the Darlington Dairy Supply Company has given him the opportunity to work in 27 states and also in Canada. His employer understands David's commitment to The American Legion and supports him in his work for our veterans, their families, and

our communities. In addition to his Legion work, Dave has served on the Darlington City Council for 22 years and currently serves as a City Council president. He is also the chairman of the Darlington Police Commission.

David is married to Donna, and they have three children, Sonja, Shane, and Shad, a daughter-in-law, Brenda, and one grandson, Andrew. His family fully supports him in his Legion career. Donna has also proven her support by riding with him on nine of the national American Legion Legacy Runs. The Department of Wisconsin endorsed him for national vice commander during our 93rd Annual Convention in July 2011. It is with great pride that I nominate David L. Gough from the Department of Wisconsin for the high office of national vice commander of The American Legion for the year 2015-2016, and I ask for your support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I now recognize microphone two.

DELEGATE PAJAK (MA): Mr. Commander, Jodie Pajak, delegate from Massachusetts. Mr. Commander, I move that the nominations for the office of national vice commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: We have a motion that nominations for the office of national vice commander be closed. Is there a second? ... *Second*. Hearing a second, the motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Those opposed by nay. Motion carried.

The Chair recognizes microphone one.

DELEGATE BOLAND (FL): Mr. Commander, Dianne Boland, delegate from Florida. Mr. Commander, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Jimmy Lane, Arkansas; George Cushing, Arizona; John Hargreaves, Maine; Alan Davis, Minnesota; and David Gough, Wisconsin, be elected national vice commanders by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: We have a motion that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Jimmy F. Lane of Arkansas, George E. Cushing of Arizona, John W. Hargreaves of Maine, Alan A. Davis, Sr., of Minnesota, and David L. Gough of Wisconsin be elected national vice commanders by acclamation. Is there a second? ... *Second*.

Hearing a second, the motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Those opposed by nay. Motion is carried. I now call on the national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, as national adjutant of the American Legion, I cast one vote, representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention, for Jimmy F. Lane, George E. Cushing, John W. Hargreaves, Alan A. Davis, Sr., and David L. Gough for the offices of national vice commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: I declare Jimmy F. Lane, George E. Cushing, John W. Hargreaves, Alan A. Davis, Sr., and David L. Gough elected national vice commanders of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

Will the new national vice commanders come to the platform to be introduced and sworn in? *(Applause)*

At this time I am honored to swear you in to your newly elected office as a national vice commander. I know you will uphold the trust that has been placed in you by the comrades who nominated and supported you and the Convention delegates that elected you. I trust you will fulfill every obligation required of you. I challenge you to familiarize yourselves with the duties of your office and carry them out with the same spirit from which The American Legion was founded.

The welfare, success, and integrity of this great organization depends on you, as you travel in the departments and throughout this country promoting the mandates of The American Legion as approved by the National Convention and the National Executive Committee. It is your duty to protect the good name of The American Legion with the

people of our great nation that you meet as you travel; help them to know the Legion's purposes and policies. Remember the Four Pillars that motivate us as members to serve this nation. As you serve, always remember there is no rank, for we all serve as equals. We all are aiming for the same goals, the ideals of justice, freedom, democracy, and loyalty.

This means you should always employ the cardinal principles of The American Legion to all of those that we serve: The rehabilitation of all disabled veterans and the care of those who now suffering from wounds, disease and want, to include the care of their family members; the education of our children; educating citizens on the ideals of true Americanism; and maintaining a strong national defense. In your travels representing The American Legion, always practice these Four Pillars in your promotion of service to the community, state and nation. Please raise your right hand and repeat after me. ... *At this time, the national vice commanders were administered the oath.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Congratulations, national vice commanders.

I now call on Past National Commander James Koutz of Indiana to present the Colors to our incoming national commander.

Presentation: Colors to Newly Elected National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you, Mr. Commander. Legionnaires and guests, please rise for the presentation of our National Colors by the National Color Guard Champion from Post 472 of Houston, Texas, to our National Commander Dale Barnett. Color Guard, present the colors to the new national commander of The American Legion. ... *At this time, the Colors were presented.*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Hand Salute.

... *At this time the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Two! National Commander Dale Barnett, would you please join me here at the podium. You stand before this Convention having received a unanimous vote of confidence in your ability to represent not only Legionnaires but also all American veterans in the coming months. As a veteran, I know you are up to the challenge. You have served The American Legion in numerous capacities over the years, including a former Hoosier Boys Stater, all your post-, district-, and national-level appointments and elections. The delegates know that you are the right man to carry this organization forward for the coming year. May the Colors that we present you today be a source of inspiration and pride. National Commander Barnett, God bless you and The American Legion as you lead us in this coming year. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER BARNETT: Thank you. Thank you, commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Color Guard, return the Colors of the national commander of The American Legion to post. Hand Salute! ... *At this time, the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Two! Thank you all very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: This is an exciting time for any National Convention. We have elected a new national commander and look forward to a time of growth and community involvement. This is also the time when the American Legion Auxiliary elects a new president, as this important part of our Legion Family is also poised for a bright future.

The woman chosen to lead the American Legion Auxiliary has worked many years for veterans and their families. She served as first lady of The American Legion during the term of her husband, Past National Commander Marty Conatser, in 2007 and 2008. Eligible for Auxiliary membership through Marty's service during Vietnam, she is also eligible through her son, Rick, who served during the Gulf War. She is a member of Urbana, Illinois, Auxiliary Unit 71 and has served in the Auxiliary at all levels. Retired from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, she is an active member of her community

and Faith United Church. Please give a warm American Legion welcome to National President of The American Legion Auxiliary Sharon Conatser. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Sharon Conatser, Illinois, National President
The American Legion Auxiliary**

Commander Mike, Commander Dale, Commander Kevin, first of all, I want to thank The American Legion delegates for electing Dale Barnett as your national commander. I'm so looking forward to working with Dale and traveling with Dale and Donna this year. I know it will be great. When my husband was national commander and I served as first lady of The American Legion, we were fortunate enough to meet Dale and Donna as Dale was a department commander when Marty was national commander. So that special bond has been there, and we so look forward to the continued friendship.

This year I will be using "Keeping the Promise" as my theme. "Keeping the Promise" can mean whatever you want it to mean, but most importantly we need to keep the promise to ourselves for the veterans, for the active-duty military, and for our communities. We need to keep the promise to The American Legion Family that we will be a family and that we will work together for the betterment of all three organizations.

As I stand before you, there is one very special Legionnaire that's not here with us today, and that is Past National Commander John Geiger. John Geiger from Illinois always said to us: When you make a decision, is it good for you and for The American Legion Family? Then it's fine to do. But if a decision you make only benefits yourself personally, then it's probably not going to be worth your time to do because you would only hurt the organization. So I will serve with that this year; that I will put the organization and I at the top to work for the betterment of our organizations.

I want to say thank you very much for having me here today. We look forward to working together with Dale and Donna and Kevin, and we hope one year from now when we're here you all will say "Job well done," because we will try our hardest for all of you. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The man chosen to lead the Sons of The American Legion is a 31-year member of Squadron 1 in Anchorage, Alaska. His eligibility is from his grandfather, Charles W. Moeller, an Army veteran of World War I. He is a patient services supervisor at a Children's Miracle Network hospital. His theme is "ROCKED." An acronym for Remembering Our Commitment, Keeping it Every Day. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Kevin Collier. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Kevin Collier, National Commander
Sons of The American Legion**

What a great honor and privilege it is to be addressing The American Legion. So thank you for allowing me these few moments to address you, even though Mike said something about half an hour or something, but I promise I will not do that.

Ladies and gentlemen, you want to know where I came up with the theme of "ROCKED," Remembering Our Commitment? Well, as proud possessors of a priceless heritage, I was at a squadron meeting reciting the Preamble to our Constitution, and it hit me, that's what we're all about, is remembering our commitment. Just like each and every one of you raised your right hand and made that commitment to serve the United States, and now you are continuing to do that by serving in The American Legion and continuing to serve our veterans, continuing to serve the Four Pillars.

That's what we do, and that's what we are going to continue to do this year, working together side by side with Dale and Sharon and Maggie with the Junior Auxiliary. We can

never forget our juniors and our younger SAL members. They're our future leaders, so I always try to include them as they're part of our family.

We're going to have a fantastic year as we work the Four Pillars, remembering our commitment to serve the Four Pillars, to serve our community, to serve our nation. I would like to thank each and every veteran here for your service. If it was not for your service, this would not be the great country that it is. I'm going to remember my mentor's advice, remember the three B's: Be brief, be seated, be humble. God bless each and every one of you, God bless our troops, God bless our nation, and "ROCK" on. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Commander Collier, please remain with us for a few moments. Also, National Commander Barnett and National President Conatser, please join us. Ladies and gentlemen, National Commander Barnett, National President Conatser, and Sons of The American Legion National Commander Collier, our dynamic leadership team for the upcoming year. (*Applause*)

Just a reminder that the Post-Convention NEC meeting will occur in the Convention Center, Rooms 339-342, immediately following adjournment. All the new national officers are to attend. Is there any further business to come before this convention? Please uncover as National Chaplain Cash offers the benediction.

Benediction

Tierian 'Randy' Cash, North Carolina, National Chaplain

Let us pray. Today we have celebrated past achievements and, Lord, we ask Your support in new beginnings. May Your presence, peace, and care always accompany Mike Helm and his family. We pray that wisdom, compassion, and creativity will mark the leadership of Dale Barnett.

And now, Father, the Lord is our God, we thank You for leading us and guiding us over this past week. Bless The American Legion, bless our great nation, and may we always continue to follow You. In Your holy name I pray. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Sergeant-at-Arms, retire the POW/ MIA flag.
... *At this time, the POW/MIA flag was retired.*

Retirement of Colors

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: The Color Guard will retire the flag of the United States. The delegates will stand and hand salute on my command. Hand Salute!

... *At this time, the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HELM: Two! The time is 12:40. I now declare this 97th Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned, *sine die*.

... *At 12:40 p.m., the 97th Annual National Convention of The American Legion was adjourned.*

**2015 OFFICIAL AWARDS
ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANNUAL RECIPIENT(S)**

The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal Award: Awarded annually to an individual(s) or organization for their outstanding service to the nation and to the programs of The American Legion by nomination by department action or by the National Commander.

RECIPIENT: Senator Chuck Hagel, Former Secretary of Defense

American Legion Baseball Graduate of The Year Award: Presented to the major league baseball player who played American Legion Baseball as a teenager and best exemplifies the principles and purposes of the program in sportsmanship, citizenship, general good conduct, integrity and playing ability.

RECIPIENT: Alex Gordon – Kansas City Royals

Bob Feller American Legion Pitching Award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player recording the greatest number of strikeouts during the regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.

RECIPIENT: Jordan Ragan, Post 15, Medford, OR (23 strikeouts)

Commissioner of Baseball Trophy: Awarded annually at the Major League World Series to that baseball team which becomes the National Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.

RECIPIENT: Chapin Post 193, Chapin, SC

Dr. Irvin L. "Click" Cowger Memorial R.B.I. Award: Awarded annually to The American Legion Baseball player who is credited with the most runs batted in by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.

RECIPIENT: Justin Hawkins, Post 193, Chapin, SC (12 RBI's)

Ford C. Frick Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department having within its jurisdiction the runner-up team in the National Finals of The American Legion Baseball program.

RECIPIENT: Crescent City Post 125, New Orleans, LA

The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department which has rendered the most outstanding service during the year to the program of the Boy Scouts of America.

RECIPIENT: Department of California

George W. Rulon Baseball Player of the Year: A Plaque is presented to recipient by appropriate official upon conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series. Citation is presented to recipient at a special Hall of Fame ceremony at Cooperstown, NY, the following summer.

RECIPIENT: Justin Hawkins, Post 193, Chapin, SC

The Howard P. Savage, Jr. Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department having the baseball team which becomes the Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.

RECIPIENT: Chapin Post 193, Chapin, SC

Jack Williams Memorial Leadership Award: Awarded annually to the manager and coach of the national championship team, as representative of the adult leadership Jack Williams stressed during his lifetime.

RECIPIENT(s): Manager: Ken Minasian – Coaches: Daniel Gregory, David Coats, Marion Baker and Michael Robertson, Chapin Post 193, SC

James F. Daniel, Jr. Memorial Sportsmanship Award: Awarded to The American Legion Baseball player participating in the World Series that represents the principle of good sportsmanship emphasized by the program.

RECIPIENT: Ben Hess, Crescent City Post 125, New Orleans, LA

American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Trophy: Awarded annually in four categories to the top performing Individual and Team in the Sporter and Precision categories competing in the annual USA Shooting National Junior Olympic Air Rifle Championship who are members of clubs and teams affiliated with The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program.

RECIPIENT(s): Precision Team: Hardcore 4, Post 233, Loganville, GA – Dana Bowen, Rachel Kimbell, Mary Pratt and Dakota Spivey

Precision Individual: Sarah Sutton, Black Swamp Junior Rifle Club, Post 114, Oak Harbor, OH

Sporter Team: Zion Benton NJROTC, Post 865, Zion, IL – Justin Hamilton, Jaycie Hoenig, William Newman and Howard Norrish

Sporter Individual: Gabriel Palermo, Freeport High School NJROTC, Post 139, Freeport, IL

The American Legion Baseball "Slugger" Trophy: Plaque is presented to recipient, or designated representative, by appropriate official upon the conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series.

RECIPIENT: Ben Hess, Crescent City Post 125, New Orleans, LA (.488 batting average)

Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department within the continental limits in the United States showing the greatest Americanism activity in use of The American Legion School Medal Awards.

RECIPIENT: Department of Maryland

The American Legion Baseball "Big Stick" Award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player having the highest total number of bases as determined by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.

RECIPIENT: Justin Hawkins, Chapin Post 193, Chapin, SC (31 total bases)

Spafford National Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department of The American Legion having within its jurisdiction the winner of the National High School Oratorical Contest.

RECIPIENT: Department of Florida

Francis M. Redington Sportsmanship Award: Awarded annually to the athlete competing in The American Legion Junior Air Rifle National Championship who best exemplifies good sportsmanship and fair play.

RECIPIENT: Howard Norrish (Post 865), Zion Benton High School
NJROTC, Winthrop Harbor, IL

Daniel J. O'Connor Award: Awarded annually to that Department attaining the greatest number of percentage points compiled from information contained in the Consolidated Post Reports and supporting Department narrative. (Originally named the William Randolph Hearst Trophy)

RECIPIENT: Department of Ohio

The American Legion and Scouting "Square Knot" Award: This award is designed to recognize American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion members who are actively involved in the Scouting program. This award is not meant to be a selective or limited award, but one that is available to any American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member who completes the requirements for the award. The Award is meant to recognize dedication and work required by an American Legion, American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member to assist in furthering the Scouting program in The American Legion.

RECIPIENT(s): 2013 – George M. Harrison, David F. Jennemann, Jr., Larry E. Wittmayer, William H. Greenleaf, John De Young. 2014 – Thomas J. Pendergast, Charles A. Spitz, Gilbert C. Harper, Tim L. Liffbrig, Peter K. Walsh, Ronald L. Layman, Richard L. Hawkins, Bobby H. Barnes, Robert Wojcikowski, Ronald E. Foster, Russell W. Loquist, Randy B. Strickland, Peter R. De Kramer, Ralph Rivera, Bruce A. Winslow, Michael E. Jones, Richard L. Mills, Michael B. Quintin, Melvin Parsons, Kenneth C. Nichols, Thomas M. Mechler, Frederic M. Sieg, James A. Ashe, Leroy Williams, Lyle E. Miller, Jeffrey S. Burt, Horace, H. Robbins, Jr., Joseph Thomas, Frank Abate, Jr., Arthur Smith, Gerald A. White, Tom Dobelbower. 2015 (as of 8/27/2015) – Raymond Untiet, Albert Gangolf, Wayne Newland, Deana Rowe, Lowell Badgley, Ronald LaRose, Marvin R. Levy, Stephen Mataraza, Gerald A. White, Joseph Thomas.

The American Legion National Education Award: Awarded annually to an individual, group or organization that has promoted the education programs of The American Legion, including the promotion of "Need A Lift?", correspond to the goals of The American Legion or has promoted or advanced education programs at the national level.

RECIPIENT: Mrs. Nesse Godin, Holocaust Survivor, Silver Spring, MD

The American Legion Canadian Friendship Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of authentic veterans' organization in Canada. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans' affairs and in the development and perpetuation of the spirit of international good will and comradeship between the United States and Canada and between their veterans' organization and The American Legion.

RECIPIENT(S): *INDIVIDUAL* – Omer J. Brunet *ANAVICUS* – *None Awarded*

Department Award for 100% Post Children & Youth Reporting: Awarded annually to those Departments which achieve 100% of Posts indicating Children & Youth activity on Consolidated Post Reports.

RECIPIENT: Departments of Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Virginia and Wisconsin

National Employer of Veterans Award Recipient(s): Awarded to an employer in recognition of outstanding achievement in the employment and retraining of veterans.

RECIPIENT(s): **Category I** The Home Depot, Atlanta, GA

2014 **Category II** Frito-Lay, Austin, TX

Winners **Category III** Veteran Energy, Houston, TX

Note: The 2015 National Employer of Veterans Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2016 National Convention.

National Employment Service Award Recipient(s): Awarded in three categories: Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) of the Year; Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) of the Year; Employment Service (ES) Office of the Year.

RECIPIENT(s): LVER of the Year: Frankie Billingsley, Fort Wayne, IN

2014 DVOP of the Year: Linda "Michele" Scuito, Lufkin, TX

Winners ES Office of the Year: Ohio Means Jobs Columbus-Franklin County, Center, Columbus, OH

Note: The 2015 National Employment Service Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2016 National Convention.

Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award Recipient: The program is a joint project between the National Organization & the AETNA Company, to award those Posts that enhance the lives of disable persons by providing opportunities for their participation in community activities.

RECIPIENT(s): Bobby Dodd Institute, Atlanta, GA

2014 Winner

Note: The 2015 Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award Recipient will not be announced until 2016 National Convention.

National Employer of Older Worker Award Recipient: The program provides an Employer of Older Worker Award for a company that consistently hires older workers, especially veterans and serves as an inspirational recognition of a company with a record of support and commitment to the hiring of America's older workers.

RECIPIENT(s): Sturdevants Auto Parts, Sioux Falls, SD

2014 Winner

Note: The 2015 National Employer of Older Worker Award Recipient will not be announced until 2016 National Convention.

National Department History Contest Awards: Awarded annually at the Fall Meeting of the National Executive Committee to those contestants entered in the National Department History Contest having submitted the One-Year History Narrative or Yearbook of the Department which best meets the standards established for that particular competition.

RECIPIENT(s): Department of North Carolina (One-Year Narrative History)

Department of Nebraska (One-Year Yearbook History)

National Post History Contest Awards: Awarded annually to those contestants entered in the National Post History Contest deemed by a duly authorized panel of judges to have submitted the One-Year History of the Post which best meets the standards established for the competitions.

RECIPIENT(s): Banks Post 90, Banks, OR (One-Year Narrative History)
Carroll Post 143, Carrollton, GA (One-Year Yearbook History)

International Amity Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of an authentic veteran organization established in the territory of any of the nations associated as war-time allies of the United States of America. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans affairs and for service and contributions made in the development of international good will and comradeship between their organization and The American Legion.

RECIPIENT(s): None awarded for 2015

Distinguished Public Service Award: Awarded annually by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the Commander's Advisory Committee at the time of the annual Washington Conference. It may be awarded to one or more person(s) of the United States Congress.

RECIPIENT(s): Ashton B. Carter, Secretary of Defense

The Arthur D. Houghton Sons of The American Legion Trophy: Awarded annually to that Detachment of Sons of The American Legion in each of five membership categories (I – 200-1,000 members; II - 1,001-3,000 members; III - 3,001-6000 members; IV – 6001-12,000 members; V – 12,001 or more), each of said Detachments attaining the greatest percentage of increase over previous year's membership when compared with all Detachments in its category.

RECIPIENT(s):	Category I	Detachment of Utah
2015	Category II	Detachment of Oregon
Winners	Category III	Detachment of Iowa
	Category IV	Detachment of Arizona
	Category V	Detachment of Florida

General Henri Gouraud Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department in each of six categories established by the National Membership and Post Activities Committee, each of said Department having been the first in its respective category to attain or exceed its nationally assigned membership quota (effective 1986).

RECIPIENT(s):	Category I	None qualified
	Category II	None qualified
	Category III	Department of Georgia
	Category IV	None qualified
	Category V	None qualified
	Category VI	None qualified

General John J. Pershing Honor Award: Awarded annually to that Department having the greatest percentage of its posts receiving the Honor Ribbon for having 100 percent or more, of the post's previous year's membership enrolled for the coming year by December 31, and having reported such achievement to National Headquarters by not later than January 31.

RECIPIENT: Department of South Dakota

Henry D. Lindsley Trophy: Awarded annually to the Department attaining the highest percentage of membership over its preceding year's membership by March 31.

RECIPIENT: None awarded for 2015

The American Legion National Recruiter of the Year: Awarded annually to the individual certified with the highest number of new members recruited from among all of the departments.

RECIPIENT: Edgar J. Johnson, Department of Georgia

North Carolina Trophy: Awarded annually to the Department, not included among the several state Departments or the Department of the District of Columbia, attaining the highest percentage of membership as of March 31, over its preceding year's membership.

RECIPIENT: None awarded for 2015

O. L. Bodenhamer Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department designated to lead the parade at the time of the ensuing National Convention.

RECIPIENT: Department of Georgia

The American Legion Air Force Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class at the Air Force Academy who demonstrates the highest proficiency in all academic subjects.

RECIPIENT: Cadet Rebecca A. Esselstein

The American Legion Coast Guard Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class of the United States Coast Guard Academy who is considered to have personally excelled in athletics.

RECIPIENT: Ensign Christian Brindamour

The American Legion Merchant Marine Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the Merchant Marine Academy, enrolled in the Pre-Commissioning Seminar Course, and selected by the Academy Faculty, as achieving the highest grade pertaining to a 1,000-word composition dealing with the subject of National Security.

RECIPIENT: Midshipman Jake B. Wade

The American Legion Military Academy Award: Awarded annually to cadet of the graduating class at the United States Military Academy with the highest standing in Chemistry.

RECIPIENT: Cadet Matthew Bryan

The American Legion Naval Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the United States Naval Academy who stands highest in those English, History and Government courses taken to complete a Foreign Affairs major.

RECIPIENT: Ensign Andrea Howard

National Commander's Blood Donor Awards: Presented to departments in different sized categories for participating in The American Legion's Blood Donor Program.

RECIPIENT(s): Category I **Departments with 100,000 or more members:**

Post Participation: Department of Minnesota

Individual Participation: Department of Minnesota

Category II **Departments with 70,000 to 99,999 members:**

Post Participation: Department of Maryland

Individual Participation: Department of Maryland

Category III Departments with 40,000 to 69,999 members:

Post Participation: Department of Georgia

Individual Participation: Department of Georgia

Category IV Departments with 25,000 to 39,999 members:

Post Participation: Department of Tennessee

Individual Participation: Department of Tennessee

Category V Departments with 10,000 to 24,999 members:

Post Participation: Department of Montana

Individual Participation: Department of Montana

Category VI Departments with less than 10,000 members:

Post Participation: No Submission

Individual Participation: No Submission

The American Legion National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award: To recognize an outstanding law enforcement officer as selected from Department law enforcement officer winners for distinguished on-and off-duty service. The accomplishments for which the award is presented shall have been in accordance with, or in furtherance of, established American Legion policies or programs and it shall have contributed to the preservation of law and order as well as the American way of life.

RECIPIENT: Deputy Sheriff Ben Adams, Marion County Sheriff's Office, Ocala, FL

The American Legion National Firefighter of the Year Award: To recognize an outstanding firefighter as selected from Department for distinguished on-and off-duty service. The accomplishments for which the award is presented shall have been in accordance with, or in furtherance of, established American Legion policies or programs and it shall have contributed to the preservation of law and order as well as the American way of life.

RECIPIENT: Steven Brune, West Point Rescue, West Point, NE

Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department giving the highest degree of support to the ROTC program within its jurisdiction, based on criteria drawn up by the National Security Commission.

RECIPIENT(s): Departments of Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota and Tennessee

The American Legion Fourth Estate Award: Awarded to press, radio, TV, or other communications media; to associations of same, to owners, executive heads or staff members; such award to be in recognition of outstanding service to community, state, or nation, which service shall have been in accordance with or the furtherance of established American Legion policies and programs.

RECIPIENT: Newspaper: USA Today; Broadcast: CNN; Internet: CBSNews.com

The American Legion National Commander's Public Relations Award: Awarded to an outstanding individual and/or organization for distinguished public service in the field of communications.

RECIPIENT: None Awarded for 2015

The American Legion Patriot Award: Awarded to an outstanding citizen who has demonstrated a profound and exceptional commitment to military personnel and their families.

RECIPIENT(s): The Oak Ridge Boys

The American Legion Spirit of Service Award: Awarded annually by the Department of Defense and the five military departments that have identified the most outstanding men and women that have received press coverage in Armed Service News dispatches, the Pentagon Channel, their military base newspapers and their hometown publications.

RECIPIENT(s):

Army:	Sgt. Danielle M. Salley
Navy:	HM2 Fredelyne Dolores
Marine Corps:	Sgt. Stephen K. Little
Air Force:	SrA Richard L. Baskerville
Coast Guard:	PO2 Casey B. Lawrence

Arch M. Cantrall Trophy: Awarded annually to that American Legion Band winning first prize in competition with all other American Legion bands during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.

RECIPIENT: None awarded for 2015

Glen R. Hillis Trophy: Awarded annually to that Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.

RECIPIENT: Harrisburg Color Guard, Post 472, Houston, Texas

The Lemuel Bolles Trophy: Awarded annually to that band winning first prize in competition with all other bands during the annual National Convention.

RECIPIENT: None awarded for 2015

William F. Lenker National Service Trophy: Awarded annually to that State Department of The American Legion excelling in welfare work for war veterans, providing the membership of that Department shall be no less than 80% of the membership of the preceding year.

RECIPIENT: Department of Ohio

The American Legion 96th Annual Report

FOREWORD

The American Legion continued to have a strong year under the leadership of National Commander Michael D. Helm, Nebraska. Membership was strong with 2.2 million veterans in more than 13,000 posts throughout the nation and overseas. We recorded another year of rewarding service to America, her veterans, and their families.

The American Legion National Headquarters is located in Indianapolis, Indiana. In addition to the Indianapolis facilities, offices are maintained in Washington, DC, to house those organizational functions requiring a close working relationship with the Congress and the appropriate agencies of the federal government. The editorial and advertising staffs of *The American Legion Magazine* are located at The American Legion's Indianapolis Headquarters.

The National Commander's report is published herein as a part of the National Convention proceedings. Reports of the other national officers, the national commissions, financial statement with accompanying data, and a report of the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary are included.

Throughout the year, the two organizations continued to provide vital leadership to the nation and, through our activities and programs, contributed significantly to the preservation of the American way of life. We are proud of our accomplishments and look forward to the challenges ahead in the coming year.

Daniel S. Wheeler
National Adjutant

EXCERPTS FROM CONSTITUTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION ARTICLE II

Nature

Section 1. The American Legion is a civilian organization; membership therein does not affect nor increase liability for military or police service. Rank does not exist in the Legion; no member shall be addressed by his military or naval title in any convention or meeting of the Legion.

Section 2. The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.

ARTICLE III

Organization

Section 1. The American Legion shall be organized in Departments and these in turn in Posts. There shall be one Department in each state, in the District of Columbia, and there may be one Department in each territory and insular possession of the United States. The National Executive Committee may establish Posts in the territorial and insular possessions of the United States and foreign countries, and shall designate the Department under whose jurisdiction they shall function, but this shall in no way affect the status of Departments already established.

ARTICLE IV

Eligibility

Section 1. Any person shall be eligible for membership in The American Legion who was a member of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Air Force of the United States and assigned to active duty at some time during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990 until a date established by Congress for ending the Desert Storm period; all dates inclusive, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of his entry therein, served on active duty in the armed forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any said periods; provided however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation, or continued honorably after any of said periods; provided, further, that no person shall be entitled to membership who, being in such service during any of said periods, refused on conscientious, political or other grounds to subject himself to military discipline or unqualified service.

Section 2. There shall be no form or class of membership except an active membership, and dues shall be paid annually or for life.

Section 3. No person may be a member at any time of more than one Post.

Section 4. No person, who has been expelled by a Post shall be admitted to membership in another Post, without the consent of the expelling Post except that where such consent has been asked for and denied by such Post, he may then appeal to the Executive Committee of the Department of the expelling Post for permission to be admitted to membership in another Post, and shall be ineligible for membership until such permission is granted.

ARTICLE V

National Convention

Section 1. The legislative body of The American Legion shall be the National Convention, except as otherwise provided in the Constitution and By-Laws.

Section 2. The time and place of the National Conventions shall be determined by the National Executive Committee, which shall have authority to change such time and place for sufficient reasons to it appearing.

Section 3. In the National Convention each Department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each one thousand members, or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention and whose registration fees, as fixed by the National Executive Committee, for its total authorized delegate strength, have been paid, and to one alternate for each delegate. The delegates shall be chosen not less than 2 weeks before the National Convention at Department Conventions or in any other manner specified by the Department Constitution.

Section 4. Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote. The vote of any registered delegate absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his Department. Alternates for registered delegates shall have all the privileges of registered delegates except that of voting. A registered delegate is one who has received his credentials after his registration fee has been paid.

Section 5. A quorum shall exist at a National Convention when 60 percent of the Departments are represented as provided above.

Section 6. The National Executive Committee shall provide a Uniform Code of Procedure for the orderly organization and operation of National Conventions with continuing power of revision, and said Code shall be applicable at all National Conventions

unless it is amended, suspended, or repealed by a majority vote of the total authorized representation at a National Convention.

ARTICLE VI

National Officers

Section 1. The National Convention shall elect a National Commander, and five National Vice Commanders, who shall serve without seniority. No two Vice Commanders shall be chosen from the same Department. No person shall be eligible for re-election to the Office of National Commander or National Vice Commander.

Section 2. Such officers shall serve until the adjournment of the succeeding National Convention following their election and thereafter until their successors are chosen. Vacancies in these offices occurring between National Conventions shall be filled by election by the National Executive Committee, and any member of The American Legion, in good standing, shall be eligible for election to such vacancy. Provided, however, that no Past National Commander or Past National Vice Commander shall be elected to fill any vacancy in these respective offices.

Section 3. The National Executive Committee at its first meeting following the National Convention shall appoint the National Adjutant, National Treasurer, National Judge Advocate, National Chaplain and National Historian, such officers to hold office at the pleasure of the appointing power. All persons having the custody of funds shall give adequate bonds, which shall be approved by the National Executive Committee.

Section 4. All Past National Commanders, while in good standing in their respective Posts, shall be members for life of the National Executive Committee, without vote, and shall also be life delegates to all National Conventions of The American Legion, with vote, to be exercised by them with their respective Departments.

ARTICLE VII

National Executive Committee

Section 1. Between National Conventions, the administrative power shall be vested in the National Executive Committee, which shall be composed of the National Commander, the National Vice-Commanders, and one National Executive Committeeman and one alternate from each Department to be elected as such Department shall determine, the alternate to act only in the absence of the National Executive Committeeman.

Section 2. The term of office of such National Executive Committeeman and alternates shall be two years. The term of office of each National Executive Committeeman and alternate shall commence immediately upon the adjournment of the National Convention next ensuing after their election and shall end at the adjournment of the second next succeeding annual National Convention.

Section 3. Members of the National Executive Committee shall be delegates to the National Convention with vote, which vote shall be exercised with their respective Departments, except that the vote of the National Commander shall be exercised only in his capacity as chairman of the National Convention.

Past National Commanders

Keith Kreul, Wisconsin
 Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland
 John P. Comer, Massachusetts
 Hon. H. F. Gierke, North Dakota
 Miles S. Epling, West Virginia
 Robert S. Turner, Georgia
 Dominic D. DiFrancesco, Pennsylvania

Bruce Thiesen, California
 William M. Detweiler, Louisiana
 Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota
 Joseph J. Frank, Missouri
 Anthony G. Jordan, Maine
 Butch L. Miller, Virginia
 Hon. Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho

Richard J. Santos, Maryland
 Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania
 John A. Brieden, III, Texas
 Thomas P. Cadmus, Michigan
 Thomas L. Bock, Colorado
 Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts
 Martin F. 'Marty' Conatser, Illinois
 Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan

David K. Rehbein, Iowa
 Clarence E. Hill, Florida
 Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska
 Fang A. Wong, New York
 Richard M. Pedro, New York
 James E. Koutz, Indiana
 Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia

National Executive Committeemen

Willis Frazier, Alabama
 James E. Pisa, Alaska
 Richard W. Perry, Arizona
 James V. Bynum, Arkansas
 Hugh E. Crooks, Jr., California
 Francis W. McCurdy, Colorado
 D. Joseph Jackson, Connecticut
 Kenneth G. Whitman, Delaware
 Warren N. Cuffee, D.C.
 Dennis R. Boland, Florida
 John H. Miller, France
 Charles F. Wessinger, Georgia
 Marvin R. Siegfried, Hawaii
 Thomas E. Mattice, Idaho
 Larry W. Moore, Illinois
 Paul I. Steward, Indiana
 Bruce C. Feuerbach, Iowa
 David O. Warnken, Kansas
 Randall Coffman, Kentucky
 Charles D. Aucoin, Louisiana
 John W. Hargreaves, Maine
 Elbert D. White, Maryland
 Steven M. Jimmo, Massachusetts
 Michael D. Wood, Mexico
 John H. Skinner, Michigan
 Raymond DeZurik, Minnesota
 Robert E. Gosa, Mississippi
 Charles W. Goodin, Missouri

Mervin G. Gunderson, Montana
 Jerry Landkamer, Nebraska
 Ronald L. Michalski, Nevada
 Earlon L. Beale, New Hampshire
 Daniel E. McCole, New Jersey
 Felix M. Trujillo, New Mexico
 Stanley H. Clark, New York
 Bill G. Richard, North Carolina
 Robert L. Krause, North Dakota
 Robert J. Kimball, Ohio
 Jerry A. Ball, Oklahoma
 Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon
 Robert C. Miller, Jr., Pennsylvania
 Herbert J. Scholten, Philippines
 Ildefonso Colon, Jr., Puerto Rico
 David A. Golde, Rhode Island
 Mickey C. Taylor, South Carolina
 Paul A. Evenson, South Dakota
 Alvin R. Brown, Tennessee
 James E. Prendergast, Texas
 Terry D. Schow, Utah
 Royal E. Sheeley, Vermont
 Thomas E. Saunders, Virginia
 William R. 'Bob' Wallace, Washington
 William W. Kile, West Virginia
 Steve Krueger, Wisconsin
 William R. Wright, III, Wyoming

Alternate National Executive Committeemen

Hardwick Olin Hall, Alabama
 Harold Pawson, Alaska
 Judith S. Beischel, Arizona
 Mary V. Erdman, Arkansas
 Gary B. Leach, California
 Carol S. Kennedy, Colorado
 Wayne A. Morgan, Connecticut
 John A. Endres, Delaware
 Bron R. Mogenis, D.C.
 Arthur J. Schwabe, Florida
 Liam Kane, France
 Charles E. French, Georgia

Charles A. Patterson, Hawaii
 Arthur L. Gimpel, Idaho
 Wayne Wagner, Illinois
 Jerry L. Jordon, Indiana
 Jerry D. Sebben, Iowa
 Elgin Wahlborg, Kansas
 David L. King, Kentucky
 Harold D. Burson, Louisiana
 Brenda D. Dearborn, Maine
 Michael L. Mooney, Jr., Maryland
 Francis J. MacDonald, Massachusetts
 Jerry A. King, Mexico

Roger H. Webster, Michigan
 Marland A. Ronning, Minnesota
 Steve Sweet, Mississippi
 Kenneth J. Goth, Missouri
 David A. Driver, Montana
 William D. Crosier, Jr., Nebraska
 John F. Warden, Jr., Nevada
 William R. Roy, Jr., New Hampshire
 Charles K. Robbins, New Jersey
 Virgil A. Brown, New Mexico
 William H. Burnett, New York
 Jeff W. Joyner, North Carolina
 David G. Rice, North Dakota
 Dennis E. Clausing, Ohio
 William M. Teel, Oklahoma
 Robert D. Liebenow, Oregon

Wendall J. Sandell, Pennsylvania
 John M. Hunt, Philippines
 Edwin Vargas, Puerto Rico
 Robert D. Winston, Rhode Island
 Cecil F. Hennis, South Carolina
 James Huls, South Dakota
 Gary R. Drennon, Tennessee
 C. W. Sparks, Jr., Texas
 Allan C. Setterberg, Utah
 Edward J. Brown, Vermont
 Michael F. Mitrone, Virginia
 Roy L. Layton, Washington
 William E. Burkett, West Virginia
 Kenneth J. Rynes, Jr., Wisconsin
 Terry E. Miller, Wyoming

EXCERPTS FROM BY-LAWS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION ARTICLE I

National Executive Committee Commission, Committee, and Employees

Section 6. There shall be the following standing commissions: Americanism Commission, Convention Commission, Finance Commission, Internal Affairs Commission, Legislative Commission, Media & Communications Commission, National Security Commission, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission, Veterans Employment & Education Commission.

The commissions shall consist of such number of members of The American Legion as the National Executive Committee may from time to time determine. Appointments to such commissions shall be made by the National Executive Committee upon nomination by the National Commander. The National Executive Committee is empowered to assign duties and responsibilities to all standing commissions and committees and to group standing committees with commissions for the purpose of efficient supervision and coordination of activities.

Section 7. The National Executive Committee shall provide for the appointment and employment of such subordinate officers and employees as may be needed for the administration of the affairs of The American Legion, and prescribe their duties and emoluments.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER Douglas C. Haggan, France

I was honored to be selected as the nominee from The Dept of France to be a candidate for Northeast Region, National Vice Commander. I was elected at the 2014 National Convention in Charlotte, NC.

September 2-6 2014 — Attended Orientation in Indianapolis Indiana. The 5 National Vice Commanders were briefed on current issues concerning the American Legion.

September 7-9 2014 — Attended Orientation in Washington DC, here too the information that was provided to us was invaluable.

Department of Delaware Revitalization and DEC

September 17 2014 — I departed Indianapolis heading to The Dept of Delaware. Was meet by Dept Adjutant Ric Santos. We went directly to Oak Orchard – Riverdale Post 28, where a revitalization campaign was being conducted. The efforts of the people working

on the program were met with very good results. Around 1500hrs departed Post 28 to check into the Hampton Inn, in Rehoboth Beach. After check in Cmdr Bob and Adjutant Rick took me to Post 5 and a great group of people met with me.

September 18 2014 — After breakfast with Cmdr Bob Michael, we went back to Post 28 to continue the Post Revitalization program, then we went out to do the door knocking part of the program. After dinner we went to Cmdr Bob's home Post, Post 6 in Seaford DE. We had a great time.

September 19 2014 — Day 3 of membership revitalization, going out door knocking again with Jim Gallagher. Very successful day.

September 20 2014 — Attended the Dept DEC at Oak Orchard Post 28 where I gave a talk on the importance of a good membership program. After the DEC we proceeded to Dover, DE to Walter L. Fox Post 2 for a Dept Fund raiser.

American Legion Fall Meetings -- October 11-16 2014 — Attended The American Legion Fall Meetings. The following is my report to the National Executive Committee.

Department of New Jersey Revitalization -- October 22 2014

October 23 2014 — After Breakfast we left for Post 154 Butler NJ for membership revitalization program. Long day but worth it.

October 24 2014 — Back to Post 154 Butler NJ. Bob Briant and I did door knocking.

October 25 2014 — Last day of revitalization, went door knocking with Bob and Tom, had a good day. Dinner at Legion Post 170 tonight which was hosted by Post 170 Legion Riders to raise money for the Legacy Fund.

Veterans Day Ceremonies New York City — November 10 2014 — Heading to New York for Veterans Day Ceremonies. Arrived Newark Airport, was met by Anthony "Tony" DeNatale. checked into the hotel. After checking in we went to Chinatown to meet up with PNC Fang Wong at Lt. B.R. Kimlau Post 1291.

November 11 2014 — Went with PNC Fang Wong to the Mayor's breakfast. Afterwards we proceeded to the opening ceremony at Madison Square Park for the parade. PNC Fang Wong and myself also marched with The American Legion, Department of New York. After the parade we loaded into police for the ride to the USS Intrepid Ceremony.

November 12 2014 — Attended a NYC Vietnam Memorial fund raiser luncheon.

November 12 2014 — Arrived at the Hampton Inn and met up National Membership Director Billy Johnson and NY 7th District Commander. Went to the Queens County Revitalization site with PNC Fang Wong to setup.

November 13 2014 — Revitalization at Ft Totten great turn out of Legionnaires to help with the program.

Department of Rhode Island Commanders Testimonial — November 14 2014 — Left Penn Station for my train trip to Providence RI, was met by David and Dick Cartwright checked into the Hilton Garden Inn in Warwick RI. We visited Post 53 in Warwick and Post 15 in East Greenwich.

November 15 2014 — David and Dick picked me up to visit Rhode Island Veterans Cemetery. Toured Newport RI to include Ft Adams. Attended Department Commander's Bob Schierschmidt Testimonial.

November 16 2014 — Attended General Membership Meeting at Post 79 Central Falls Rhode Island.

November 17 2014 — Rhode Island Dept Adjutant Gene Pitka picked me up and drove me to Marlboro MA where we met up with Mike Cassidy.

Department of Massachusetts Revitalization and Commanders Testimonial

November 18 2014 — Mike Cassidy and I visited Posts 132 and 79. After lunch we went to the VA hospital and spent time on the assisted living ward. Afterwards we went back Post 79 and did Revite work for Post 74 in Framingham MA.

November 19 2014 — Worked membership Revite with Lou Brault and Bob Baranowski at Post 132. We had 21 revites.

November 20 2014 — Toured Ft Devens with District 6 Commander. It is a shame how our storied bases are being abandoned.

November 21 2014 — Dept Adjutant Whitey McKittrick picked me up to go to Taunton MA, where we met Florence DeNicola and PNC Jake Comer for lunch.

November 22 2014 — Had breakfast with Florence, Jake, and Whitey. Attended the Dept Membership Meeting and the Massachusetts DEC. In the evening I attended the Dept of Massachusetts Cmdr Charlie Towers Testimonial.

Department of Maine Mid-winter Conference

January 16 2015 — Arrived at Portland International Airport and was met by NECman John Hargreaves and his wife. We visited a couple of Post in the Portland area and visited with the membership.

January 17 2015 — Attended the Department of Maine DEC at Gary Post 86, Gary ME. Attended the Past Commanders Club meeting. In evening I attended the banquet to honor the Department Officers.

January 18 2015 — Gave my presentation during the last session of the Department DEC at Post 86 Gray, ME. Afterwards I attended the 11th District membership meeting

Department of Connecticut Revitalization and Mid-winter Conference

January 19 2015 — Arrived Hartford Bradley Airport and was met by Department Vice Commanders Paul Spedaliere and Robert DeCarlo. Checked into Nathan Hale Inn, and met up with Sean Sparks from National Headquarters membership division.

January 21 2015 — Day one of revitalization at Post 52 Coventry CT.

January 22 2015 — Day two of the revite was a very good day and we are up 61.

January 23 2015 — Day three, the last day of the revite. We ended up with 106 revites. Left for Trumbull, CT, attend the Past Department Commanders dinner, and Dept DEC.

January 24 2015 — Attend Dept of CT Mid-Winter Conference.

January 25 2015 — Attended the Memorial Service and Roundtable Meeting, and do to weather I departed early for NH.

Department of New Hampshire Revitalization and Mid-winter Conference

January 26 2015 — Picked up by Department Commander Bob Dionne, we went directly to the New Hampshire Veterans Home for a VSO Quarterly meeting and tour.

January 28 2015 — Still snowing, was picked by Alt NECman Bill Roy and Dept Cmdr Bob Dionne. We visited 4 Posts in Central New Hampshire to work on renewing members, but the weather is hurting our efforts.

January 29 & 30 2015 — Because of the weather we worked out of Sweeney Post 2, on revites and this proved to be the right move.

January 31 2015 — Attended the New Hampshire Mid-Winter Conference at Rolande Patnode Post 7

The American Legion Washington DC Conference

February 20 – 25 2015 — Attended the Washington Conference and Testimonial to the Joint Session of the Senate and Congress.

Department of New York Revitalization

March 17 2015 — Picked up at EWR by Tony DeNatale, visited two memorials, visited Ft Wadsworth, and a memorial honoring those victims of 9/11 from Staten Island.

March 18 2015 — Heading to ground Zero and the 9/11 memorial. Where my wife and I hooked up with Sean Powers, and Ed Mallicoat. Sean took us to St Patrick's Cathedral, which was very impressive.

March 19 2015 — Great revite today at Ft Hamilton, we setup shop at the base church. 80 plus renewals and 6 new members

March 20 2015 — Day two of the revite was as productive as day one. After our day's work we visited Post 1367.

March 21 2015 — Finishing up on the Membership revitalization, we ended the three day revite with 395 renewals and 12 new members.

Department of Delaware Revitalization and DEC

March 24 2015 — Michele Steinmetz picked Elke and myself up at Philadelphia Airport and we departed for Stahl Post 30 New Castle DE.

March 25 2015 — Day one of the revite, Elke and I manned the phones, we had 67 renewals, 2 new members.

March 26 2015 — Day two is door knocking day. Went out with Dept Commander Michaels and Post 30 Commander Vic Callahan. The rest of the day was also productive at the Post 30 with 31 more renewals.

March 27 2015 — Last day of the revite. After 3 days of the revite we renewed 120 members, signed up 6 new members.

March 28 2015 — Attended the Dept of Delaware's DEC at Post 2 in Dover Delaware. Department of Pennsylvania Commanders Testimonial and DEC

April 10 2015 — Visited all the committee meetings that were being held in different parts of the hotel.

April 11 2015 — After a breakfast meeting with NECman Bob Miller, it was off to the Dept Membership Meeting. After lunch it was time to start the Dept DEC. Commander Haas runs a very good meeting. The Commanders dinner started 1900hrs.

April 12 2015 — At 0800hrs the final session of the Department DEC was held, than I heading to Harrisburg Airport to start my trip home to Indianapolis

Department of New Jersey Commander Testimonial and Post Visit

April 24 2015 — NECman Dan McCole picked me up at the airport and after checked into the hotel we lunch. In the afternoon we visited 2 Posts in the area, and met with the membership.

April 25 2015 — NECman McCole picked me up to go to the Commanders Testimonial Dinner.

April 26 2015 — NECman McCole met me for breakfast before we set out for Toms River. On the way we stopped at the New Jersey Vietnam Memorial/Education Center. Heading to Toms River Post 129 for a Memorial/Fund raiser, then to Brick Post 348.

The American Legion Spring Meeting

May 2 – 7 2015 — Attend The American Legion Spring Meeting in Indianapolis.

US Air Force Academy Visit

May 25 2015 — Arrived at the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, CO, toured around the base, than headed to the hotel.

May 26 2015 — Arrived at the Field House for the ceremony. I would be giving out the Top Cadet Award to Cadet Rebecca Esselstein. After the ceremony I was invited over to Doolittle Hall to visit the Fallen Hero's Memorial.

Department of Massachusetts Convention

June 2 2015 — PNC Jake Comer greeted Elke and I at Logan Airport and we headed to the Radisson hotel in Plymouth MA. In the evening we went to PFC Edward A. Ribeiro Post 40, only 2 years old because their old Post home was taken out by a flood in 2011.

June 3 2015 — Elke and I toured all around Plymouth.

June 4 2015 — Meeting started today. Attended the DEC. Elke and I attended the convention banquet.

June 5 2015 — First session of the 97th Dept of Massachusetts Convention, the afternoon free to socialize.

June 6 2015 — Attended the Annual Dept Memorial Service, than the second session of the 97th Dept of Massachusetts Convention.

June 7 2015 — Attended Old Friends breakfast, then the New District Commander briefing. Afterwards the final session of the 97th Dept of Massachusetts Convention, which closed at 1200hrs.

Department of France Convention

June 20 2015 — Attended the Department of France Convention in Ludwigshafen Germany, with meetings starting at 0900hrs. Attended the third session of the convention and installed the newly elected officers of The Department of France. Attended the 1st DEC in the late afternoon, and in the evening attended the Department Commanders Banquet.

June 21 2015 — Heading to Walldorf Germany to get ready to head back to the USA. Department of Vermont visiting the Police Academy and Boys State

June 23 2015 — Arrived a Rutland VT and meet VT NECMAN Royal at Denny's. After breakfast Royal and I drove to the Police Academy to visit with the junior police cadets, than we met with the Dept Commander, the Alt NECman, and the camp director. In the afternoon the Commander, Alt NECman, and myself visited a couple of Posts, Vermont Military Cemetery. Than went to the Dept Headquarters in Montpelier VT and visited with the office director. Visited Post 10 in Barre VT, than headed to St Johnsbury and checked into the hotel, dinner was downtown after dinner to Post 59.

June 24 2015 — Norwich University to present four scholarship checks to the vice president of the university. After the visit we went to the Vermont Veterans Assistance home, toured the facilities, talk with the staff and some of the residents. In the evening we went to the Vermont Boy State for dinner and a show.

Department of New Hampshire Convention

June 25 2015 — 0845hrs departed Vermont heading for Manchester, NH to attend their Dept Convention. to drop off the rental car, and was picked up by the NECman Earlon Beale, and taken to the hotel. I then attended the Dept Commanders reception and dinner at Post 43.

June 26 2015 — Attended the Memorial Service and opening session of The American Legion Dept of New Hampshire Convention. The afternoon was committee meeting. In the late afternoon I attended the Department caucus.

At 1800hrs Department Commander Bob and myself left for the New Hampshire Boys State graduation.

June 27 2015 — Start of the second session of the American Legion 97th Department of New Hampshire Convention and Elections, also attended the 1st DEC.

June 28 2015 — Due to severe weather the Memorial Service at the New Hampshire Veterans Park and the Parade were cancelled. I spent the day with newly elected NECman Bill Roy visiting the 4 Posts in the Manchester area.

Department of Delaware Convention

July 6 2015 — Heading to The Dept of Delaware Convention. Meeting my wife at Philadelphia Airport and headed to Dover Downs. Help Dept Adjutant Ric Santos at Dover Post 2 get things ready for the convention.

July 7 2015 — Went to Dover AFB and toured the AMC museum at Dover AFB. Met up with Ric Santos, Bob Michaels, Jeff Crouser, John Enders, and Jim Gallagher at Dover Post 2.

July 9 2015 — Attending the 97th Dept of Delaware Convention. Presented my report to the Department to the Legion, SAL, and ALA.

July 10 2015 — Election day for the Dept of Delaware.

Department of Pennsylvania Convention

July 10 2015 — Left The Department of Delaware, for The Dept of Pennsylvania Convention in Harrisburg and checked into the hotel.

July 11 2015 — Attended the Past Department Commanders Breakfast, than the second session of the Dept Convention. In the evening Elke and I went out to dinner with PNC Dominic DeFrancesco.

July 12 2015 — Attend the 1st DEC

Department of New York Convention

July 13 2015 — Met up with Dept Commander Frank Peters and his wife Mary and went to Niagara Falls. In the evening we went to the Department Convention Committee dinner.

July 14 2015 — Went to Naval & Military Park for a Memorial service. The Navy patrol boat ride planned after the ceremony was postponed until Wed morning due to heavy rain.

July 15 2015 — Went to the Buffalo Coast Guard Station patrol boat ride. Attended Committee Meets in the afternoon, and in the evening went to the Department Commanders Banquet.

July 16 2015 — Attended the opening session of the 97th Dept of New York Convention, where I gave my report. In the afternoon I attended the 3rd District meeting, and the Centennial Task Force Committee meeting.

July 17 2015 — Attending the second session of the Convention. The day ended with the Convention Parade.

July 18 2015 — Final session of the Convention. In the late afternoon went to Post 1041 for MASS and a victory party. Elke and I went out to dinner with Past Department Commander Peters and his wife Mary.

The American Legion National Convention

August 27 – September 4 2015 — Attended the American Legion, National Convention, in Baltimore, Maryland.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER

Paul O. Sanford, Kansas

I was selected by the Department of Kansas to be endorsed for National Vice Commander at the Mid Winter Forum held in Hutchinson, Kansas on January 31, 2014 during the Department Executive Committee meeting.

On August 28, 2014 at the National Convention held in Charlotte, North Carolina I was elected to the high office of National Vice Commander serving the Midwest Region, (North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Iowa & Minnesota).

September 3rd through September 9th I attended training in Indianapolis and Washington DC.

On September 17th I attended a reception for Commander Helm at Post 173 as he toured Kansas.

On September 20th I attended Kansas District 1 Commanders Homecoming in Seneca, Kansas.

On September 25th through September 28th I attended the Cotton Festival in Sikeston, Missouri. This was a great time as I was one of the Grand Marshalls in the parade. All the activities took place at the fair grounds and the post.

On October 2nd through the 4th I helped with the revitalization for Kansas in Harper, Kansas. On Saturday the 4th we had a 4.2 earth quake that shook the entire building. There were 5 aftershocks.

On October 11 through the 16th I attended the Fall Meetings in Indianapolis.

On October 19th & 20th was in Missouri for their membership tour. We covered from Warsaw & Springfield to Independence, Missouri.

On October 21st and 22nd I attended the first two games of the World Series at Kaufman Stadium in Kansas City. I was representing Commander Helm as the National American Legion Championship team was recognized on the field before the second game. It was quite an honor being on the field in front of a packed house.

On October 23rd to the 25th I assisted with revitalization in Kansas District 5 held in Wichita, Kansas Post 401. On October 25th I stayed and attended District 5 Commanders homecoming held at Post 401.

On November 6th to the 8th I helped with District 3 revitalization held in Independence, Kansas Post 139. On November 8th stayed and attended District 3 Commanders homecoming held at Post 139.

On November 14th I attended a reception for National President Janet Jeffers held at Post 173 in Wichita, Kansas.

On November 16 through the 22nd I attended the membership caravan in the Department of Iowa. This was a great time as we not only visited many posts but also had tours through several major companies that employed many veterans. Each company visited we talked with all veterans they employed and presented them a flag to hang outside showing they employed veterans. We visited a John Deere plant that was making a 72 row planter on 8" rows. When they finished this series they were going to start a 126 row planter on 8" rows. I can't imagine even getting this in the building or getting it out when finished. We also visited a tank manufacturing company, Jet aircraft engine parts, and a fire truck manufacture. This was a great experience and I learned a lot.

On December 1st I assisted Newton, Kansas Post 2 doing a Flag etiquette program for a Webelos Cub Pack at the Trinity Methodist Church in Newton, Kansas.

On December 3rd through the 7th I attended the membership tour for the Department of Nebraska. We covered the entire Northwest corner of the state. We visited the VA hospital and home in South Dakota that covers several states on Saturday and had gifts and lots of food for all the veterans. This was a great experience.

On Saturday December 27 through the 31 I traveled to the Department of Oklahoma with National Commander Helm. We visited several posts and during this visit Commander Helm presented Oklahoma Commander Tim Smith with their Charter bringing Oklahoma back into the mix and reinstating them as a Department again. Thank you Commander Helm for this experience.

On January 15th to the 18th I attended Nebraska Mid-Winter Conference in Norfolk, Nebraska.

On February 2nd through the 5th attended the membership tour for the Department of Kansas. We visited 18 posts in 3 ½ days.

On February 6th through the 8th I attended Mid-Winter in South Dakota held in Watertown, South Dakota.

On February 11th & 12th I attended revitalization in Fargo, North Dakota assisted by Rolanda Florence from National. Rolanda does not like snow and cold weather. There was snow and the temp was -19 with a wind chill of -39. They got pictures of Rolanda and me shoveling snow.

On February 13th through the 15th I attended Mid-Winter for the Department of Iowa held in Des Moines, Iowa.

On February 22nd through the 25th I attended the Washington Conference. During this time we had an ANAVICUS breakfast, Commanders reception, Foreign Relations reception, visited the Senate and House and attended Commander Helm's testimony in Congress.

On March 11th through the 15th attended revitalization in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. There was a good turnout of Department, district and posts to work. Rolanda Florence from National was present also. This was very successful for many posts. We did travel and visit a couple of posts in the evening. I was honored by the Department of Oklahoma and received a Quilt of Valor.

On March 25th through the 29th attended revitalization in Minnesota. Rolanda Florence from National was there to help too. This was similar to what we did in the two Kansas City's. We had competition between District 4 in Minneapolis and District 5 in Saint Paul. Rolanda took District 5 and I took District 4. District 4 did come out on top with the most members transferred and new members. The great thing about this one is that a month after we were done I received a call from Commander Peggy Moon requesting me to call Dan Williams, District 4 Commander, and tell him what a great job he is doing. Through this conversation Peggy stated that Dan and his officers had continued to work long after we left and had moved his district from last place to first in the state. Peggy said that district 4 had not been in first place in over 4 decades. What a great testimonial when everyone works together to get the job done.

On April 17th through the 19th attended my District 8 Convention held in Dodge City, Kansas.

On Saturday May 2 I attended an annual dinner in Sterling, Kansas honoring Iwa Jima survivors and WW II heroes. This event has gone on for 25 years.

On May 4th to the 6th attended spring meetings in Indianapolis.

On May 7th & 8th attended Truman Pilgrimage in Independence, Missouri. Post 21 from Independence host this every year to honor the late President Harry S. Truman. I was honored to be able to lay the National Wreath.

On May 15th through the 17th attended the Department of Kansas State Convention held in Topeka, Kansas.

On May 21st to the 23rd attended the awards ceremony at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York. I was able to present an award from the American Legion to the outstanding cadet in the Engineering Department. What an experience and we were given a tour of the campus.

On May 25th I conducted the Memorial ceremony at the Hillcrest Cemetery in Derby, Kansas.

One June 5th through the 7th attended Leadership College in the Department of Kansas in Concordia, Kansas.

On Saturday June 6th left Concordia to go to Kansas City to attend the Royals game. I was honored to be asked to present Alex Gordon the American Legion Graduate of the Year award. This was done at home plate just before the game with a packed house. What an experience and honor.

On June 8th I was scheduled for surgery to remove colon cancer. At this time I didn't know how long I would be off. On June 23rd I got my stitches out.

On June 25th the Doctor okayed me to travel to North Dakota for their Department Convention held in Grand Forks, North Dakota the 25th through the 28th. I was supposed to play in their golf tournament but was unable to due to the surgery. I did ride a golf cart around the course and visit.

On July 4th took part in the celebration and parade in Derby, Kansas. Following that we went to the Bob Dole VA Hospital in Wichita, Kansas and feed all the wounded warriors. Post 173 has leaded this for quite a few years. This is a fun time to visit with these entire hero's

July 17th & 18th attend Erie, Kansas bean feed. This celebration is called the Old Soldiers and Sailors Reunion. This is the oldest running continuous celebration in the country. This was the 142nd continuous year. People come from all over to get beans to take home and feed family members. They cook 1400# of beans in 52 large kettles over open fires in the park. The State Commander always dips out the first bucket of beans. I got my turn too. They go through all the beans in about 45 minutes. After that the locals go to the post and eat. Yes they have beans too. On Saturday they have a large parade which we all took part in. This was my 5th year there and I will keep going back.

On July 23rd through 26th attended the Department of Oklahoma State Convention held in Shawnee, Oklahoma. There was a great turnout. I was told last year there were about 75 in attendance. This year they had just fewer than 250 registered delegates. This was a great turnout and Oklahoma is back.

The last venture this year will be attending National Convention in Baltimore, Maryland from August 28 to September 3, 2015. There will be a full agenda including a tour of Annapolis Naval Academy on Friday August 29, 2015. There are many meals to attend and receptions through the week. Our official convention meeting is September 1 through 3, 2015. At noon or as soon as election is held on September 3 my term as National Vice Commander will be over.

I want to thank those that elected me this year as this has been the best and most fun year I have had and I want to thank Commander Mike Helm for his leadership and all the National staff for their support.

**REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Richard W. Neville, North Carolina**

August 28, 2014 elected as National Vice Commander in Charlotte, North Carolina. Attended the N.E.C meeting at the close of the Convention. Then proceeded to Lexington, North Carolina to attend the funeral of N.E. C. Jerry Hendrick. On Friday August 29, 2014 went to Salisbury, North Carolina to attend the graveside interment of North Carolina N.E.C. Jerry Hendrick. Then home to Clayton, North Carolina where I was interviewed by The Raleigh News and Observer about being elected National Vice Commander.

September 7-16, 2014, went to Indianapolis, IN to meet the National Staff at headquarters. Had a tour of Emblem Sales. Called each Southeast Department Commander and Department N.E.C.'s to introduce myself. Called each Southeast Region District Commander, starting with Department of Texas. Went to Washington, DC and met with The American Legion Staff. Back in North Carolina called each District Commander in the Southeast Region.

September 25-28, 2014 went to Austin Texas, to attend their Fall Conference. Spoke to several different committees including The American Legion members, American Legion Auxiliary, and Sons of The American Legion.

October 2-4, 2014 went to The Department of Georgia to help with two District Revitalizations.

October 9-11, 2014 attended the Fall Conference of the Department of North Carolina. Spoke to the different committees. Spoke at the meeting of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary.

October 13-16, 2014 attended the National Fall Conference in Indianapolis, IN. On October 13 attended the N.E.C. meeting at National Headquarters. On October 14 had a breakfast meeting with the Southeast Department Commanders. Attended many meetings. October 16, N.E.C meeting at National Headquarters. Had discussion with the Southeast Commanders asking them how to improve membership and participation in all programs of The American Legion (1:30-4pm). Met with National Commander.

November 11, 2014 attended Veterans Day ceremonies at Post 71 Clayton, NC and South Campus Community School, Smithfield, NC.

Attended Christmas Post gatherings December 8, 2014 at Post 08 Lexington, NC, December 11 at Post 71 Clayton, NC, and December 18 at Post 109 Benson, NC.

January 15-18 2015 attended the Mid – Winter Conference in Alexander, LA. Attended many of the Committees meetings and addressed The American Legion members and the American Legion Auxiliary. Attended their Department Executive Meeting.

January 23-25, 2015 attended the Mid-Winter Conference Department of Tennessee. Spoke at many Committee meetings and spoke to The American Legion, American Auxiliary and The Sons of The American Legion.

January 28 -31, 2015 went to Houston, Texas to help work two Districts Revitalizations. Met Department Commander Lynn Sparks and several Department, District and Post Officers.

February 3-8, 2015 went to Key West, Florida. Met with Department Commander Jay Coti and other officers and visited several American Legion Posts each day. Spoke at several of the Posts in Florida on membership and Commander Helms 4x4 programs.

February 19-26, 2015 attended The Washington Conference. Met with North Carolina Congressman to express the desires of The American Legion. Met with Southeast Department Commanders to work on ideas for memberships goals for this year. Was with National Commander Helm when he testified before Congress. February 24 attended a reception at The State Department.

March, attended Division and District meetings In North Carolina. Went to several Posts in North Carolina and attended several functions for The American Legion's Birthday.

April 4, 2015 attended North Carolina Department Commanders Homecoming. Co-chairman for the North Carolina Pony Express membership ride on morning of April 4. On April 15 attended Veteran Legislation Day in Raleigh, NC, presented our concerns to our legislators about the veteran's in North Carolina. April 23-26 went to Fort Benning, Georgia for Mass of Colors with Georgia Department Commander. Visited several posts and talked about membership and programs of The American Legion.

May 6-8, 2015 attended National May Meeting in Indianapolis, IN. Met with Southeast Department Commanders to talk about membership. Attended the N.E.C meetings. May 17-19 went to The U.S Coast Guard Academy New London, CT to present The American Legion's Award for Excellence in Athletics to Ensign Christian Brindamour. May 28-31 attended the South Carolina annual Convention. Spoke at the Delegate's Convention of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and The Sons of The American Legion. Went with Department Commander and spoke at several committees meetings. Installed the newly elected officers of the Department of South Carolina.

June 11-14, 2015 attended the annual Convention of The Department of North Carolina. Spoke at the executive meeting of The American Legion also to the American Legion Auxiliary. Went to several committee meetings and spoke at each. June 14-19 North Carolina Student Trooper Program as the Director. June 25-28, 2015 attended the Department of Florida annual Convention. Spoke at the meeting of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and The Sons of The American Legion. Went with Department Commander to several committee meetings and spoke. Installed newly elected officers at several posts in North Carolina.

July 10, 2015 attended North Carolina Legion College as an instructor.

July 17, 2015 spoke at the annual Convention of The Department of Minnesota.

August 9, 2015 attended the Southeast Region American Legion Baseball playoffs in Asheboro, NC, presented trophies to Second Place North Carolina and First Place South Carolina.

August 11-14 2015 went to Shelby, North Carolina for The American Legion Baseball World Series. I was privileged to throw out the first pitch at game number 04. Southeast Region team South Carolina won The American Legion World Series.

Southeast Region is leading in membership.

August 27,-September 4, 2015 at The American Legion National Convention in Baltimore, Maryland.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER William R. Bryant, Virginia

I was elected National Vice Commander for 2014-2015 at The American Legion's 96th Annual Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina on August 28, 2014. It has been an honor for me to serve as National Vice Commander with National Commander Mike Helm and represent our National Organization. I want to thank the great Department of Virginia and several Past National Commanders, for their endorsement and support of me, for this opportunity. I also want to thank my wife who traveled with me on virtually all of my visits and supported me with her prayers and best wishes.

Immediately after the convention adjourned, I attended the NEC meeting and another meeting where I was introduced to the National Headquarters Directors and received contact information and direction for the year.

September 2-7, I traveled to National Headquarters in Indianapolis for orientation and training. While there, I received detailed briefings from all Program Directors, toured all of the facilities and offices and was trained in media relations and how to prepare for and conduct myself in interviews with the media. We were furnished contact information for our assigned Departments and on Saturday we attempted to contact all of our Department

and District Commanders to introduce ourselves and offer our assistance with their programs.

September 7-9, I attended additional training and orientation at the National Headquarters Washington, D.C. office. While there, we were informed of the Legion's Legislative priorities and goals for the year.

September 26-28, I was privileged to be one of the guest speakers and represent the National Commander at "A Salute to Military Veterans & Families" program hosted by American Legion Post 2001 and the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors in Ashburn, Virginia. It was a "first of its kind event and holds much potential for the future in meeting the needs of our veteran population.

October 11-16, I attended and participated in the Fall Meetings of the American Legion in Indianapolis, Indiana and the National Commander's Homecoming. I also hosted a breakfast on October 14th and met with all 9 of my Department Commanders and discussed our strategy for the year.

October 24-26, I traveled to Louisville, Kentucky and participated in their Fall Conference. I was guest speaker at the general membership meeting on the 25th and also addressed the Auxiliary, the SAL and the Legion Riders.

October 30-November 2, I traveled to Carbondale, Illinois for the 78th Annual Haven Jamboree sponsored by the Egyptian Past Commanders Club. We toured the Marion Veterans Administration Medical Center and were greeted by the Administrator and several staff members and toured the Haven which is owned and operated by the Past Commanders Club to benefit the veteran population and provide meals, social life, etc for their benefit.

November 10-12, 2014, I was honored to represent the National Commander in Washington, D.C. for the Veterans Day Activities, which included breakfast at the White House, VIP Status at Arlington National Cemetery for the wreath laying and speeches and along with Verna Jones, laid the wreath at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

January 9-11, 2015, I traveled to Indianapolis, Indiana and participated in the Department Mid-Winter Conference. I spoke briefly at several Committee meetings and addressed both the SAL and the Riders. February 6-8, I traveled to Martinsburg, West Virginia to attend and participate in the Department of West Virginia's 34th Annual Mid-Winter Conference. I attended and spoke at several committee meetings and addressed the SAL and Riders. The Honor Guard put on the best presentation for the POW/MIA Ceremony I have every witnessed.

February 13-15, I traveled to Flint, Michigan to participate in the Department's Winter Conference. I spoke at several committee meetings and was honored that I could be there to participate in the retirement party for a long-time friend and comrade, Adjutant Patrick Lafferty. The conference was extremely well planned and attended.

February 22-25, I attended and participated in the 2015 Washington Conference in Washington, D.C.. On Monday I attended the National Commander's meeting with all Department Commanders to discuss our position and determine what actions to take to improve our membership standing. I made all of my Congressional visits and attended the Commander's testimony before the joint Congressional Committee. I also attended the Reception for the future candidates for National Commander.

March 3-5, I participated in a District Revitalization event in the 17th District for the Department of Virginia, held at Post 180 in Vienna, Virginia. We had moderate returns on our calls and investment.

March 6-9, I attended and participated in the Past Department Commander's Membership Roundup in Ohio. On March 6, we visited Post 164 in Grove City; on March 7, we visited Post 707 in Englewood and Post 450 in Milford, Post 471 and 23 in Portsmouth; on March 8, we returned to Post 471 for a ALA meeting; however, the time was not right and we left and went to Post 62 in Chillicothe to pick up membership and then returned to Post 532 in Columbus for the culmination of the roundup and review of

successes and had dinner. It was a rewarding trip and Ohio did well on the membership pickups.

March 13-15, I attended and participated in the Department of Virginia's Spring Conference at Virginia Beach, Virginia.

May 3-7, I attended and participated in the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis, Indiana and met with all of my assigned Department Commanders and NECman to discuss anything we could do to improve our performance in membership and retention.

May 20-22, I traveled to the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, representing the National Commander to make a presentation on his and the National American Legion's behalf to Andrea R. Howard, Midshipman 1st Class. We were escorted by Jason Chiodi, one of her instructors, who indicated she was a wonderful and bright individual that excelled in everything she did. It was a beautiful and moving ceremony, even in the rain.

May 23-25, I traveled to Fairfax, Virginia, Post 177 to represent the National Commander Helm in the Rolling Thunder event.

May 25, I traveled to Sandston, Virginia to participate as Grand Marshall for the Memorial Day Parade hosted by American Legion Post 242 and to participate in the wreath laying ceremony at the National Cemetery.

June 8-10, I traveled to Washington, D.C. to represent National Commander Mike Helm at the Samsung American Legion Scholar Luncheon and other festivities and events. The luncheon was held in the Cannon House Office Building, Room 340 and all the scholars were present on June 10, 2015.

June 13-16, I traveled to Bowling Green, Ohio to participate in the Buckeye Boys State program; reputed to be #1 in the Nation. It truly was a "week that could change a lifetime." It is a tremendous program and if you have the opportunity, you should go check out how they "do what they do."

June 16-19, I attended and participated in Virginia's Department Convention in Roanoke, Virginia. I thanked all those in attendance for giving me the opportunity to serve this year as National Vice Commander and was honored to nominate Thomas Saunders for another term as Virginia's NECman.

Although membership is not where we wanted it to be in the Central Region, everyone gave it their best shot in my opinion. I thank all of them for their efforts and encourage them to keep working on their 5 year plan, but most of all I encourage them to "Have Fun" while doing it.

It has been a privilege and an honor to serve as National Vice Commander for the Central Region in 2014-2015. I send a heart-felt thank you to all those that extended their hospitality and friendship to me and my wife during my term in office.

May God Bless America.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER Gerald L. Jacobs, Wyoming

With great honor, I was selected to represent the Department of Wyoming as a candidate for National Vice Commander for the Western Region. The Western Region includes the Departments of Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Mexico, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Philippines, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. At the meeting of the Western Region at the National Convention in Charlotte North Carolina I was confirmed as the candidate for the Region. I was elected during the American Legion Convention in Charlotte North Carolina on August 28, 2014.

We returned to Indianapolis on September 2, 2014 for orientation and meetings with the National Headquarters Staff. We had training sessions on protocol, media, and talking points of the organization. We then traveled to Washington D.C. to meet with the Washington Staff and cover the Legislative points, Veterans Employment and Education,

National Security, Administration, Media and Communications and Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation. Training and orientation was completed on September 9, 2014.

Then I attended the National Commanders Reception and Fall Meeting in Indianapolis October 11 through October 16, 2014. The Fall Meeting of the National Executive Committee.

October 24 through October 26, 2014 I attended the Department of Montana Fall Conferences in Helena Montana as the Key note speaker.

October 30, 2014 I attended the Department of Oregon for a Post and District Revitalization effort. Many phone calls were made to members that were transferred to local Posts to take advantage of the opportunities to serve and volunteer in their Communities. Also while there I visited a home for Veterans who had, or were waiting to have transplant operations in Vancouver Washington, which is partially sponsored by a nearby Oregon Post that provides food for the home.

November 7 through November 9, 2014 I attended the Department of Arizona for their Fall Conference at Tucson, as the key note speaker.

From Tucson I went to Albuquerque New Mexico to represent the National Commander at the Albuquerque Veterans Day Services. While there we visited 17 area Post Homes, the Veterans Hospital, and then I was a speaker at the Veterans Day Ceremonies at the Veterans Memorial Park.

January 9 through the 11th, 2015, I again visited The Department of Oregon for their Department Executive Meeting in Milwaukee.

In February the 6th through the 11th, 2015, I attended the Department of Nevada for their Department Oratorical Contest held in Carson City.

I returned to Washington D.C. February 22 through the 25th for the Washington Conference, and the National Commanders Congressional Testimony. Also while in Washington we attended meetings with our Wyoming Senators, Enzi, Barrasso, and Representative Lummis and or their Veterans Representatives. On February 25, I attended the National Commander and staff at the Commanders testimony.

March 14 through 15, 2015 I visited the Department of California at Santa Maria for their Department Executive Committee.

April 10 through 12 visited Wendover Nevada for the Department of Utah Spring Conference.

Indianapolis Indiana May 2 through 7, 2015 for the National Spring Meetings of the National Executive Committee.

May 24 through May 26, 2015 I represented the National Organization and National Commander in Washington D.C. for the annual Memorial Day Services. Attended breakfast at the White House, was a guest at the laying of the wreath at Arlington Cemetery, and presented the American Legion wreath at the Vietnam Memorial ceremony.

June 24 through 25, 2015 attended the Colorado Department Convention in Colorado Springs. I was a speaker at the opening ceremonies. Then I traveled to Rock Springs Wyoming for the Department of Wyoming Department Convention.

My last official visit was July 17 through July 18 2015. I attended the Department of Washington at Spokane for their annual Department Convention. I spoke at several different venues for the Convention.

Western Region did fairly well at membership for the 2014-2015 year. Not all Departments made their goals but at year end many did meet or exceed the goals. Nine (9) of the Departments were in the top 20, and all but one made at least the goal.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN Rev. Dr. Tierian Cash, North Carolina

Rev. Dr. Tierian (Randy) Cash assumed the position of National Chaplain of the American Legion at the post-convention NEC meeting after the conclusion of the 96th

American Legion National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina 28 August 2014. The following is a recap of his year as National Chaplain.

- Chaplain Cash hosted the Annual Chaplains Conference during the National Americanism Conference held in Indianapolis 26-28 September 2014. Past National Chaplain, Dr. Daniel McClure presented his PNC report on the state of the Service to God and Country program. Chaplain Cash presented an overview and history of chaplaincy within the AL and society. During breakout sessions Department Chaplains discussed the current role and issues facing chaplains. Plans were developed for a new Back to God emphasis. The chaplains developed three areas of emphasis, Public Relations, education, and chaplain recognition.
- At the Fall Meetings in Indianapolis 12-17 October 2014, Chaplain Cash fulfilled all the duties of National Chaplain during the NEC meetings and various other responsibilities. In addition, he gave a report to the Americanism Commission on Service to God and Country and chaplain activities.
- On 11 November 2014 he was the guest speaker at the North Carolina Veteran's Day Ceremony in Raleigh. North Carolina Governor, Pat McCrory, and numerous national, state, and local leaders attended the ceremony on the steps of the old Capitol Building.
- He attended the DSO/Washington Conference in Washington D.C. 22-25 March 2014, serving as guest chaplain in both the Senate and the House of Representatives opening the assemblies in prayer. For many years the United States Senate and House of Representatives has invited the National Chaplain of The American Legion to open a session in their respective chambers in prayer. Senator Richard Burr and Representative Patrick McHenry sponsored the prayers. Chaplain Cash delivered the following prayer in the Senate on Tuesday, 24 February 2015 and the following day in the House of Representatives:

Almighty and Everlasting God, in whose name we trust and pray, it is fitting to pause, if but momentarily, to recognize you, the One in whom does finally reside all authority and power; and by whose grace we are allowed to exercise that which you have committed to us. Accept our homage, O Lord, and hear us when we pray for wisdom to lead with integrity, compassion, and conviction.

We are mindful that around the world today, our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coastguardsmen are standing watch to safeguard peace and liberty. Grant to all who serve, and their families your blessings of mercy and grace.

Accept O Lord these prayers and may we perceive and know what things to do –and receive grace and power to fulfill what is expected of us. We commit our best efforts and our nation to your keeping. Amen

Both Senator Burr and Representative McHenry posted the prayer on Facebook. The number of responses struck Chaplain Cash—the vast majority being very positive—and a few, well let's say not as positive. The few ran the gamut from "he didn't end the prayer in Jesus name" to "keep your religion out of my government." Chaplain Cash concluded: "For the record, clergypersons (including military chaplains) have been praying in Congress and serving in the military (both government sponsored) since the founding of our Republic. The Supreme Court has upheld these practices throughout our journey as a nation. Neither practice, the court has ruled, violates the establishment or free exercise clause of the first amendment. By respecting the conscience of others I'm helping secure the right of those within my faith-group to pray according to their tradition. I don't want anyone to tell me or force another how they should pray. To quote Thomas Jefferson ...that truth is great and will prevail if left to herself, that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error and has nothing to fear from the conflict, unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate, errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted to freely contradict them." In other words Jefferson is saying that God doesn't coerce and neither should we. Let truth and error battle and truth will win.

- Served as Guest Chaplain and conference speaker at the Department of Tennessee Winter Conference in Murfreesboro, TN January 2015.
- Attended and served as guest chaplain at the Department Oratorical Contest finals held in Wilmington, NC aboard Battleship North Carolina (BB 55) on 25 March 2015.
- Chaplain Cash attended the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis 4-8 May 2015 where he opened the sessions with prayer and closed the meetings in the same manner.
- On May 26, 2015 Chaplain Cash traveled to Franklin, North Carolina where he was the speaker for Memorial Day Remembrance Ceremonies.
- Chaplain Cash attended Boy's Nation in Washington DC 19-22 July 2015 where he spoke at the Memorial Service Sunday July 20 2015 and assisted National Commander Mike Helm in laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns on Monday 20 July 2015. During the Memorial Service he shared memories of comrades lost during the attack on Pearl Harbor, Cash shared personal stories of how his friends made the ultimate sacrifice in efforts to look out for their fellow sailors. Cash urged the young men to not let this incident in history "drive a wedge of distress" between the citizens of our nation. The chaplain said he hoped the stories he shared of his fellow sailors helping others get to safety would inspire the boys to continue to be the best Americans they can be. This is a striking example of how faith in our nation is so important," Cash said. "Faith continues to be the cornerstone of our national existence." Along with the Senators and staff he attended a dinner at Greenbelt Post 136 in Maryland offering the invocation and benediction. In addition to his ceremonial duties he interacted with the young men in attendance regarding faith and military experiences.
- Chaplain Cash has served as the American Legion World Series Chaplain in Shelby, North Carolina since 2012. He continued his duties in this capacity while serving as National Chaplain. In addition to offering prayers before the games, he conducts the POW/MIA remembrance, the Veteran's Recognition ceremonies, and is a member of the Scholarship Selection Committee.
- National Convention, Baltimore, Maryland, 28 Aug-3 Sep 2015. The theme of the Patriotic Memorial Service held 30 Aug at 1100 was "The American Spirit." His Memorial Service message follows:

We have assembled today to pay tribute, honor, and remember the sacrifices of the men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States of America, Past and Present, the greatest military force in the history of mankind. And to celebrate and honor our great American Legion, who since 1919 has held high the banner of the American Spirit.

While the organization has evolved and changed over the years, the basic foundational principles are the same, "For God and Country, we associate ourselves together..." There was little debate, if any regarding whether or not to include "For God" in the preamble to the American Legion's constitution adopted at the St. Louis Caucus in May 1919. To the founders of The American Legion service to Country was service to God and service to God was service to Country, the two being mutually inclusive. One cannot stand without the other.

When the organizers sought spiritual leadership for the newly formed veteran's group, it is not surprising they turned to military chaplains for guidance in religious matters. Chaplains had shared the hardships and suffering of the Soldiers, Sailors, and the Marines in the trench warfare of World War I. Four chaplains, one Episcopalian, a Roman Catholic, and two Baptists were instrumental in the founding of The American Legion and provided the spiritual underpinning for the new organization. These four (the first four National Chaplains), Charles H. Brent, Francis A. Kelly, Thomas H. Wiles, and John Washington Inzer, helped charter a course of service to God and Country. Representing many of the

great faith traditions of our nation, these men unselfishly and in a non-sectarian manner skillfully guided the religious and patriotic principles of individual obligation to the community, state, nation, and God. American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) commander, John J. "Black Jack" Pershing's chaplain, Episcopal Bishop Charles H. Brent, very successful in his work as Senior Chaplain of the AEF, speaking to the Paris Caucus, Brent said:

"It was a great soldier who said that the army has not merely a body but a soul and a conscience as well," he began. "I believe the conscience of the army is speaking in this committee's report. I believe the army's soul is speaking in it. I was present on Saturday, at the beginning of this caucus and I will tell you frankly that I was fearful at that moment lest you should create a great mechanism without adequate purposes. My fears have been wholly allayed and I see in the report of your committee the ideals not only of the army but of the nation adequately expressed and I wish to tell you gentlemen that so far as I have any ability to promote this great movement I give you my most hearty support. I believe that the army of to-day, when it goes back to citizen thinking and citizen acting, will be capable of contributing to the commonwealth of the United States, so as to change the character of the whole country and lift it up to a higher plane of political, industrial, and religious life."

Two months after the Paris Caucus those stateside met in St. Louis to finalize the creation of the American Legion. They did not seem to catch on first-hand the spirit of the AEF caucus which positively refused to take action on broad questions of policy until those at home were consulted. The inability to come to consensus on critical issues threatened the very existence of the new organization. Rev. John Washington Inzer, a Baptist revival preacher and U.S. Army chaplain originally from Texas and member of the executive committee stepped up to the podium and delivered an impassioned message that saved the day. The Texas preacher said in part: "Now the keyword that I want to say in the beginning is, at all costs we want to save this organization. We do not want anything to arise to-day that will in any way mar the spirit of this great assembly and the work that it is going to do in the future. While you were deliberating here these past two days some of you thought only of this hour and this moment, but, gentlemen, I had an eye cast into the future and I was dreaming dreams and seeing visions of the years that are to come and the wonderful work, the wonderful influence, and the mighty power that this organization is going to have and exert upon this nation and upon the whole world, and I want you to think of it in these terms...Gentlemen, I want to say just here, if you can only think about this Legion—the chairman spoke of it last night to me—as the jewel of the ages. I believe that is the best interpretation I know. I cannot say anything greater than this: I believe God raised up America for this great hour; I can say that the strong young man of the time is to be the American Legion in this country and in the world."

Some might say the Legion's founding principle of Service to God and Country is a dialectical ambiguity or a conflict of interests, supporting principles of both peace and war. After all, isn't faith and religion in the end about peace and studying war no more? "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you," "If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also..." Not exactly the words of a fighter.

But, of course, we all know there is a little more to it than that. As one chaplain friend of mine once said, "we are all peacemakers, we just have different roles." We human beings were created for lives of peace, but find ourselves living in a dangerous and often destructive world, and so we depend on the strength of the military to resist evil and create the conditions where justice and peace can thrive. It's like the one Marine who once said to me, Chaplain, if you were doing your job better, I wouldn't have to be doing mine.

Another Chaplain put it this way. The world only needs two kinds of people to keep it safe and at peace, Warriors and Chaplains. The Chaplain calls the world to the way of non-violence as the only way to heal a terrifying and violent world. The other is the Warrior who is doing God's work by defending civilized society and those who are vulnerable. Our world needs both prophets of peace and responsible Warriors. As my friend said, "the

chaplain is needed to keep the Warrior honest, and the Marine is needed to keep the Chaplain alive.”

It is not trite to say that we live in a very challenging time. Our nation faces many critical issues. Yet, I remain thoroughly convinced that America is a miraculous gift of God. It is not the new Israel, or the Kingdom of God on earth. But, at the same time, it is too unlikely to be an accident, and too wonderful to be our own doing.

Surely no nation in history has provided such opportunity for both individual freedom and quality of life to all its citizens. And just as surely, no nation in history has given so much and been of such positive benefit to the other nations of the world. America’s very existence proclaims the vision of, and protects the possibility that freedom and peace may be experienced throughout the world.

Those who would subject the people of the world to their inhumane control must first block the light of freedom and hope that shines so brightly in us and from us to those sorely oppressed. The determination of our enemies to attack us, to knock down our towers (and by doing so to cripple our inspiring American influence), is actually their twisted acknowledgement of America’s great and enduring value to the world.

That we live in America is, in itself, an act of grace. We came to it naturally; we were born into it. Or, we were welcomed as immigrants; we were naturalized. By either route, America has been for every one of us a gift, and what a stupendous gift -- a country that was built collectively but cherishes us individually; a country built of the effort of servicemen and women, statesmen, farmers and factory workers, those who toiled on the railroad and those who bankrolled it. Our philosophers, our politicians, our preachers, all together, created something bigger than any of us; and then, they gave it to us.

Any true gift is infused with opportunity and responsibility that arises from that opportunity. An inherent talent, a good education, money in the bank—they all cry to the recipient, what will we make of this? What will we do individually? What will we do collectively in light of how many have done so much for us?

The founders of the American Legion, Warriors and Preachers alike have given us a great gift. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coastguardsmen have helped secure that gift. In every gift there is a responsibility.

I leave with you the motto of my Navy Chaplain Corps “Vocati Ad Servitium” – Called to Serve. In the same manner The American Legion is Called to Serve.

We must never forget the sacrifice...We must continue to grow and build our great American Legion...We must stand like a bulwark never failing...America is our home, America is our calling, America is our Spirit!

The Rev. Dr. H.C. Ted Kelley (Pennsylvania) relieved Chaplain Cash at the conclusion of the National Convention in Baltimore.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIAN

Susan B. Mason, Florida

It has been a great honor to serve as National Historian for the 2014-2015 Legion year. I would like to thank National Commander Michael D. Helm for this great privilege.

My first responsibility as National Historian was to oversee the judging of the Post and Department history books at National Headquarters in Indianapolis. I would like to acknowledge the diligent work of these historians who spent countless hours chronicling the activities of their Post or Department. I would also like to thank the current and past Department historians who came to Indianapolis to judge the books.

After the judging, I wrote a letter to the Department historians reminding them of the standards for history books as outlined in the “Officer’s Guide.” I wrote individual letters to eighteen Post historians to offer suggestions on how their books could be improved. We had some truly outstanding books this year but one cannot expect to improve without knowing that the standards in the “Officers Guide” must be followed. With the rapidly approaching 100th Anniversary of The American Legion, I encouraged all historians to

participate in our Centennial by submitting photos of their Post buildings and a short history. This information will be included in a national data base for all to enjoy.

The results of the one-Year Department Narrative History Contest are

First Award, Plaque, Department of North Carolina

Second Award, Plaque, Department of Indiana

Third Award, Plaque, Department of Georgia

There were no further entries.

The results of the One-Year Department Yearbook History Contest are

First Award, Plaque, Department of Florida

Second Place, Plaque, Department of Ohio

Third Award, Plaque, Department of North Carolina

Honorable Mention, Department of Missouri

Honorable Mention, Department of North Dakota

The Results of the One-Year Post Narrative History Contest are

First Award, Plaque, Pony Express Post 359, St. Joseph, MO

Second Award, Plaque, The Woodlands Post 305, The Woodlands, TX

Third Award, Plaque, John O. Combo Post 120, Disputanta, VA

Honorable Mention, Berkeley Post 14, Martinsburg, WV

The results of the One-Year Post Yearbook History Contest are

First Award, Plaque, Alois-Dreikosen Post 469, Marathon, WI

Second Award, Plaque, Julius L. Shryer Post 430, Durant, IA

Third Award, Plaque, TIE: Veterans Memorial Post 347, Lady Lake, FL

and Adams Township Post 553, Toledo, OH

Honorable Mention, Charles S. Hatch Post 79, Berwick, ME

Honorable Mention, Earl Graham Post 159, Bryan, TX

I would like to thank Past National Historians Charemon Dunham (SD) and N. Larry Rozier (NC), who conducted the new Department Historian training and Past National Historian W. Frazier Brinley (CT) who served as the senior judge. A debt of gratitude also goes to Lynda Lydick the historian's liaison in the National Library in Indianapolis as well as Howard Trace, Director of the Library and Museum. Without them, the year would have been very trying.

This spring, I accompanied Commander Helm on his 750-mile tour of the Department of Florida. During his visit, he met Legionnaires at 14 Posts including new Posts in a state correctional institution and a university. He also toured a veteran's homeless center, a national cemetery, a veterans home and a VA health care center. During each of these stops, Commander Helm spoke with Legionnaires and veterans.

As an ex officio member of the 100th Anniversary Observance Committee, I attended the session held during the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis. Great progress is being made to celebrate our Centennial in 2018.

Before the National Convention in Baltimore, I will host the annual National Historian's luncheon. Our guest speaker will be Ranger Vince Vaise, the Head of Guest Services at historic Fort McHenry.

It has been a great honor to serve as a member of Commander Michael D. Helm's team.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE

P. B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

CONTRACTS

The following one hundred and eight (108) contracts have been reviewed or prepared:

(1) Articles of Agreement by and between The American Legion and The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Minnesota, Inc., covering the convocation of

the 2018 Convention of The American Legion in the City of Minneapolis, State of Minneapolis, have been executed.

(2) A Memorandum of Agreement by and between The American Legion and National Veterans Legal Services Program, whereby National Veterans Legal Services will provide consultations, informal training of Department Service Officers, BVA staff and claims/representatives, case work review, briefings on proposed changes in law and regulations and assistance in methods for prompt adjudication of veterans' appeal cases.

(3) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Enterprise Holdings (EAN Services, LLC), to cover vehicle rentals to Legion employees.

(4) A Service agreement by and between The American Legion and Communications Products, Inc. (CPI), for a maintenance agreement for one year for our phone systems.

(5) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and MediaRadar, Inc., a database tool for the magazine advertising to increase new advertisers and keep current advertisers.

(6) An Agreement by and between The American Legion (Emblem Sales) and Wilson Sporting Goods. This agreement replaces the previous agreement for customized baseballs and baseball uniforms bearing The American Legion emblem.

(7) A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Fuller Engineering Service Corporation, whereby Fuller Engineering will provide maintenance on the Liebert Equipment in the computer room.

(8) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Dell Marketing L.P., whereby The American Legion will market the Dell Federal Member Computer Discount Purchase Program to its various associations, employees, members and affiliates.

(9) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and KBM (KnowledgeBase Marketing-Mutual of Omaha) for marketing of insurance products for Legion members.

(10) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Norlight Telecommunications, Inc., whereby Norlight Telecommunications, Inc. will provide a dedicated internet port and service of same for The American Legion's computer system.

(11) Housing contract between The American Legion and Marymount University to provide for lodging and food service for American Legion Boys Nation held in July 2015.

(12) A Memorandum of Understanding by and between The American Legion and The United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), whereby The American Legion will assist the United States Army Recruiting Command to improve the recruiting environment for Army recruiters and USAREC will provide information regarding American Legion activities and special community events to local units, bulletins and newsletters.

(13) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and the James G. Elliott Co., Inc. for integration into the JGECO M-PANEL Services software.

(14) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and ProSidian Consulting, LLC, for research services to assess perceptions of and satisfaction with Women Veterans health care.

(15) A contract by and between The American Legion and Edge Direct, LLC for direct marketing and direct response fundraising.

(16-19) Four (4) Non Disclosure Agreements by and between The American Legion and the Moore Group have been executed to cover the protection of magnetic tapes used for mass-mailings to the general membership of The American Legion:

CDR, Resource One, Inc., Edge Direct, LCC and First Degree, LCC

(20) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and the Hyatt Regency Washington, DC for guest rooms for the 50th Anniversary of Vietnam War Ceremony.

(21) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Samsung Electronics America, Inc. to establish a Samsung American Legion Alumni Association.

(22) Maintenance Agreement by and between The American Legion and Comtech Group for the IBM Software subscription for the AS400 and RS6000 computer software.

(23) A Memorandum of Understanding by and between The American Legion and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation for web-based information portals on TAL website.

(24) A Contract by and between The American Legion and Defense Mobile Corporation which offers wireless and mobile application products and services to its members, specifically designed and solely offered to veterans and military service members and their families.

(25) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and We Are the Mighty for a series of videos containing interviews of members across the nation for a one year term.

(26) Maintenance and Sales Agreement by and between The American Legion and US Automatic Fire and Security for fire protection for the Geiger facility.

(27) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Dydacomp Development Corporation for an updated version of mail order manager software used by Emblem Sales.

(28) Annual Maintenance agreement by and between The American Legion and Eaton Power Quality Corporation to provide maintenance and perform preventative maintenance checks on the Uninterruptible Power System (UPS) which regulates the power spikes to the AS400 and is the battery backup in case of a power outage.

(29) A License Agreement, by and between The American Legion and Dr. Pepper/Seven UP, Inc. for donations to Operation Comfort Warriors from July 27, 2015 through August 11, 2015 in selected states for selected products.

(30) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Caremark Pharmacy Discount Prescription for discount prescription program.

(31) A Purchase Agreement by and between The American Legion and Managing Editor, Inc. (MEI) for K4 Publishing System software to be used by the Magazine Division.

(32) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and the US Small Business Administration Office of Veterans Business Development to develop veteran-owned small business in the local area.

(33) A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Koorsen Fire & Security for fire alarm and detection systems.

(34) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Hotel Elegante, Colorado Springs, Colorado, housing for 2015-2017 Junior Shooting Sports National Championships.

(35) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Pitney Bowes Software, Inc. for software products.

(36) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Southwest Airlines for airline discounts for DSO School, Children & Youth Conference, Americanism Conference, Fall Meetings and Legion College for 2015.

(37) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Wyndham Indianapolis West, housing for 2018-2022 Oratorical National Finals.

(38) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Lindenmeyr Central for the purchase of paper for national headquarters.

(39) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Time Warner telephone and data lines services which includes firewall management, internet "pipe," main voice lines, data line to DC office and data line to the Geiger facility.

(40) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Civilian Marksmanship Program for staff and set-up and maintenance for a portable electronic target scoring system for the American Legion Junior Air Rifle National Championships.

(41) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Days Inn for favorable room rates during the 2015 Legacy Run in Kent, Ohio.

(42) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and the Hampton Inn for favorable room rates during the 2015 Legacy Run in Somerset, Pennsylvania.

(43) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Holiday Inn Express for 2015 World Series staff and team housing

(44) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and USA Shooting for use of their range and meal tickets for participants of the 2015 Junior Air Rifle National Championship.

(45) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and NBC Universal for cross-promotional sponsorship in connection with www.NextStepsforVets.com.

(46) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Honeywell Building Solutions for integrator and/or digital video manager software products.

(47) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and USAA to provide financial products and services to members of the U.S. military and their families.

(48) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and White & Company to produce two publications for the Legion.

(49) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Mercier Creative, LLC for production management during the 2015 national convention.

(50) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Hedges & Associates for proposed grant-related services for TAL.

(51) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Sheraton Indianapolis City Centre Catering for catering the 500 Festival Lanai Deck event.

(52) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and HearPO Corp. to provide discounted hearing care products and or services to Legion members.

(53) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company for printing and distributing the American Legion Magazine.

(54) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Mid-America Elevator Co., Inc. for maintenance of the elevators at 700 N. Pennsylvania Street building.

(55) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Diamond Sports Co., Inc. for academic scholarships to American Legion baseball players.

(56) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and JT Packard for maintenance and break fix for the uninterrupted power supply that handles the servers in the computer room at national.

(57) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Xerox for CF 495 Printer and maintenance services and deliverables of their products.

(58) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and AT&T for mobile device and service plan discounts.

(59) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Manpower for a temporary employee.

(60) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and VisitBaltimore for temporary staff used by Emblem Sales at the 2015 national convention.

(61) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Honeywell International for electrical work done in connection with the Endowment Room remodel.

(62) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Motel 6 LLC to promote a member discount program on the Legion website.

(63) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Military Advantage, Inc. (Military.com) for exchanging editorial content for mutual postings on respective websites.

(64) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Old Jim Customs, LLC, for permission to use The American Legion name and emblem on their merchandise.

(65) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and DoubleTree by Hilton for meeting rooms and housing during the American Legion Baseball 2015 Northeast Regional Tournament.

(66) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and AnswerNet for call center services.

(67) A Rental Agreement by and between The American Legion and Reliable Water Services for the rental of a water heater for the national headquarters building.

(68) A Licensing Agreement by and between The American Legion and Vermont Teddy Bear for use of the name and emblem as a national corporate sponsor.

(69) A Member Agreement by and between The American Legion and Gigya, Inc. for website software.

(70-75) Agreements by and between The American Legion and the following American Legion posts for the 2015-2016 American Legion Baseball Regional Tournament Agreement: ND Post 1, WY Post 6, VA Post 34, IL Post 126, AR Post 16 and NC Post 45.

Thirty-three (33) Subcontractor Standard List Protection Agreements by and between The American Legion and the following companies have been executed to cover the protection of magnetic tapes used for mass mailings to the general membership of The American Legion:

- Aberdeen American News
- Alliance for Audited Media
- American Litho, Inc.
- CES Mail Communications, Inc.
- Crell Direct Mail
- Daily Freeman Journal
- Data-Mail, Inc.
- DMRA
- Edge Direct
- Fair Isaac Corporation
- Fiserv Solutions, Inc.
- Forum Communications Printing
- Golden Rule Publishing
- HearPO Corp
- JH Marketing Services
- Kramers Mailing Service
- Leader Printing
- LifeStation, Inc.
- Mainstreet Media
- Moore Wallace Response Marketing
- Response Solutions, LLC
- River's Edge Printing
- R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company
- SeQuel Response, LLC
- Signature Offset
- Specialty Print Communications
- Stephens Direct
- The Heritage Company
- TN Marketing
- Torrington Telegram
- TransAmerica Life Ins Co-Affinity Markets Group
- VP Database Systems and Services

Litigation**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTY OF SCHUYLKILL**

Daniel Jeffrey Steich
Plaintiff

S-2371-2005

v.

THE AMERICAN LEGION
POST NO. 575, ET AL

Defendants

The case was filed in Pennsylvania by filing a Praecipe for Summons.

Under Pennsylvania law, a complaint need not be filed for several years unless the defendant insists. We see no reason to start spending the money. Accordingly, we are keeping an eye on the case. It cannot go forward until the plaintiff does file his complaint. The court has sent notice it intends to terminate this case unless a party fills out a Statement of Intention to Proceed before October 1, 2008. Despite this, the case is still pending.

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA AND FOR THE
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO**

Philip K. Paulson,

Petitioner

Case No. GC 849667

v.

Charles Abdelnour, in his
Official capacity as the City
Clerk of the City of San Diego;
Mikal Haas, In his Official
Capacity as Registrar
of Voters for the County
of San Diego;
And Does 1 to 10, Inclusive,

Respondents

This case involves the Mount Soledad War Memorial which contains a cross. Plaintiffs have sued in an attempt to have the cross removed and destroyed. A judge ordered the cross removed or the city would pay penalties of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per day. The matter is currently both in the Federal courts and in the California Supreme Court. American Legion was instrumental in obtaining a stay of the penalty order in the US Supreme Court. American Legion has filed its amicus brief in conjunction with the Department of California in the California Supreme Court. The United States Congress has enacted and the president signed a statute which would turn the memorial over to the federal government. Hopefully, this will put an end to the state litigation. Nonetheless, we will proceed until we know the veteran's memorial is secure. A Federal Judge ruled the cross did not violate the constitution. The plaintiffs have appealed. We are assisting in opposing the appeal as an amicus. The Supreme Court ruled the case was not yet ripe and remanded. We are continuing to support the memorial. The trial court has ruled the parties must consult about a settlement. Department of Defense now wants to sell the monument to the highest bidder. An emergency appeal to the Supreme Court was filed to prevent

destruction until the final decision. The matter has been referred back to the Ninth Circuit for action. The Supreme Court will review after the circuit court decision. The government sold the monument to a private entity. The case is over.

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS
WESTERN SECTION**

Kevin Lucey, et at

Civil No.

v.

10-30163-Map

Prudential Insurance Co.

The American Legion is an amicus on the side of the plaintiffs against Prudential Insurance, which has the contract to underwrite the SGLI. When a service member dies on active duty, Prudential does not give a check to the beneficiary, usually the wife, as required by the law establishing the program. Prudential gives the beneficiary a checkbook with no guidance. Hence, the insurance company gets to keep all or part of the money (\$400,000.00) for many months. It adds approximately ½ of 1 % interest per year to the account, but earns considerably more than 5% on the money. Plaintiffs want Prudential to follow the law, as we do. The VA objected to our joining the case. As a result, we discovered the VA had authorized the deviation from the requirements of the law.

Prudential has essentially admitted all the relevant facts. Hence, we expected a settlement. It did not happen. The judge, without briefing, totally reversed his position, so the case continues. We, like the plaintiffs and the other amici are filing further briefs. We have petitioned the judge to unseal the file and are negotiating with Prudential on this.

The judge ruled in our favor on preliminary motion. The case will proceed.

Prudential settled with all the families, leaving only our motion. Prudential has approached us to try to settle. Their offer was actually not an offer as we found out. Except for premium determinations the file was unsealed.

**IN THE
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES**

Lionel Guerra,

Petitioner,

v.

No. 11-773

Eric K. Shinseki,

Secretary of Veterans Affairs,

Respondent.

This case involves The American Legion proceeding as an amicus curiae with pro bono counsel on behalf of a veteran. The veteran has a number of disabilities from his combat injuries. These are: A 70% rating for an upper-extremity gunshot wound; a 70% rating for post-traumatic stress disorder; a 40% rating for injuries to his left leg and thigh; a 40% rating for injuries to his right leg and thigh; and a 30% rating for neuropathy. While none of his disabilities was individually rated at 100%, the total of the individual disabilities is 100%.

The VA would not give Mr. Guerra 100%. The Federal Circuit determined that he was not entitled to 100% disability because it was giving deference to the administrative decision of the VA.

This decision violates the pro-veteran canon of the U.S. law and the veterans' law. The Federal Circuit relied upon the *Chevron* case, which under the administrative procedure law would give deference to the administrative agency where the matter was ambiguous.

In this case, the Supreme Court has already ruled in the number of cases that in an ambiguous situation involving a veteran that the court should rule in favor of the veteran. This is based upon, inter alia, *Henderson v. Shinseki*, another case in which The American Legion appeared as an amicus.

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA
INDIANAPOLIS DIVISION**

THE AMERICAN LEGION,

Plaintiff,

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

vs.

CURTIS HAMM and CAROLYN HAMM,

Defendants.

We have not yet joined this case. It grows out of a situation at Post No. 117 in Pendleton, Indiana. The Riders of the post sponsored a motorcycle run to raise funds for those motorcycle riders killed and injured in an auto accident by an intoxicated police officer. A series of pictures were taken of the ride and they were put together in one poster with a picture of the American Legion Riders Emblem in the center. This poster was hung in Post No. 117. At a later time, Curtis Hamm, an SAL member of the post, and his wife got into a dispute with the post and the post commander and Mr. Hamm was expelled.

The Hamm's then filed suit in Hamilton County, Indiana, claiming the poster was theirs because they claimed they paid to have it made. There is evidence he donated the poster to the post.

The post and post commander defaulted in the case because they did not believe the Hamm's were serious. The court ordered the poster turned over to the Hamm's.

At this point the National Headquarters learned of the situation and referred the matter to outside counsel for trademark action, because the Hamm's have no right to the American Legion Riders emblem. This is not a "first sale" situation because the picture of the Riders emblem was not purchased from the Legion; a picture was made and copied without permission.

The post and post commander obtained counsel and opposed the default which was lifted by the Hamilton County Court. The court further ordered for the parties to resolve the situation by April 30, 2013. All counsel had been furnished with the draft of our complaint. At this point, the court ordered the case transferred to Madison County, Indiana, where the post is located and venue is proper.

The hearing was scheduled for August 20, 2013, but was postponed. If necessary, we will file to protect the emblems of The American Legion and the American Legion Riders. It still has not been held.

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA**

STEVEN HEWETT,

Plaintiff,

v.

CITY OF KING, NORTH CAROLINA,

Defendant.

THE AMERICAN LEGION AND
AMERICAN LEGION POST 290
OF KING, NORTH CAROLINA,

Intervenors.

This is another veteran's memorial case. The City of King, NC, built a flag plaza and flew the Christian flag. The plaintiff wants this stopped and to destroy the statue of the veteran kneeling next to a cross.

The American Legion is an amicus on behalf of the kneeling veteran statue only. Discovery is proceeding.

The court allowed The American Legion to intervene to protect the statue. The city gave up and took the statue down. Post No. 290 now has the statue. The case is over.

**No. 2013-5042
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FEDERAL CIRCUIT**

Kingdomware Technologies, Inc.,

Plaintiff-Appellant

v.

Case No. 12-CV-0173

United States,

Defendant-Appellee

The American Legion has filed an amicus brief supporting Kingdomware's claim that the Veteran's Administration violated the law when it denied the company the Veteran Owned Small Business status which would have caused a procurement contract to be awarded to it. VA claims it has met the 3% threshold and therefore the veteran's preference does not apply. VA wishes to use a non veteran owned company.

The case will be scheduled for reargument. We have filed a brief. The case has now been appealed to the United States Supreme Court, which should hear it in the fall. We are filing a brief.

**IN THE
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FOR THE FEDERAL CIRCUIT**

BIRDEYE L. MIDDLETON,

Claimant-Appellant,

v. No. 2013-07014
ERIC K. SHINSEKI, Secretary

Of Veterans Affairs,

Respondent-Appelle.

Appeal from the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims
In Case No. 10-4222, Judge Alan G. Lance, Sr.

In this case, The American Legion is an amicus because the Veterans Administration has not been properly applying the proper rating. The veteran does not clearly meet the higher rating, but is significantly more disabled than the lower rating he was given. Since the veteran more nearly approximates the higher rating, the law says that is the one that should be awarded.

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE
DISTRICT OF MARYLAND**

American Humanist Association,
Steven Lowe, Fred Edwards,
and Bishop McNeill

Case No. cv-14-550

Plaintiffs,

v.

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning
Commission,

Defendant.

The American Humanist Association sued to compel destruction of the “Bladensburg Cross” which is on state land. It was erected on private property that was taken to enlarge a road intersection. It was erected by The American Legion in 1925 as a veteran’s memorial. One of the plaintiffs is “upset” to see it. National, the Department of Maryland and the Bladensburg post are amici and will file to protect the cross.

On September 18, 2014, the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland, allowed The American Legion, the Department of Maryland and Colmar Manor Post No. 131 to be admitted as intervening defendants.

I was deposed March 4, 2015.

Our brief has been filed to seek Summary Judgement.

Plaintiff(s),

SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY
LAW DIVISION: BERGEN COUNTY

ROBERTA O'DOWD,
vs. *CIVIL ACTION*

Defendant(s)

DOCKET NO.: BER-L4339-14

AMERICAN LEGION POST 170 a/k/a
AMERICAN LEGION ROCHELLE PARK
POST 170, THE AMERICAN LEGION
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS (sic),
JOHN DOE I-X (said names being fictitious and
unknown), JANE DOE I-X (said
names being fictitious and unknown), ABC
COMPANY (said names being fictitious and
unknown) and XYZ CORP. (said names being
fictitious and unknown),

This is a slip and fall case from a post kitchen at Post 170 Rochelle Park, New Jersey. The plaintiff named us as The American Legion National Headquarters. This is being corrected and more time was given to answer, which was accomplished. The matter was referred to our insurance company. A Motion to dismiss has been filed, but the court does not seem to favor it.

As soon as the plaintiff is deposed we will file for Summary Judgement.
She was; we did; the motion was granted; the case is closed.

No. 13-35770

**IN THE
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT**

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION
FOUNDATION, INC.,
Plaintiff-Appellant,
V.
CHIP WEBER

and
UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE,
Defendants-Appellees,

And

WILLIAM GLIDDEN, RAYMOND
LEOPOLD, NORMAN DEFOREST,
EUGENE THOMAS, and the
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS
(Kalispeill Council No. 1328),
Intervenors-Appellees.

**Appeal from the United States
District Court For the District of
Montana**

Veterans of the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division established a veteran's memorial at the Whitefish Mountain Ski Resort. The memorial consists of a statue similar to memorials in the mountains of Europe where they fought. The plaintiff seeks to have the memorial destroyed. The American Legion has joined as an amicus to assist in the defense of the memorial. The statue will stay because it reflects a secular purpose said the Ninth Circuit on August 31, 2015. We will keep our eyes open for any appeal.

**UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FEDERAL CIRCUIT**

Michael L. McKinney, et al.

Petitioners,

v.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs,

Respondent.

The American Legion has joined the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP), the Military Order of the Purple Heart and the Vietnam Veterans of America to petition for a review of the Korean DMZ Agent Orange Regulation to correct an erroneous effective date that serves to bar benefits. It should be moved back from February 24, 2011, to November 1, 2004. The Veterans Administration has refused to allow benefits prior to February 24, 2011, as that was the date of the liberalized regulation even though the spraying was done in 1968 and 1969. An earlier regulation allowed a presumptive period of July 31, 1969 to August 31, 1971. We also desire a stay as to all claims filed before February 24, 2011, pending the appeal. The federal circuit ruled for the VA. We have filed for a rehearing or en banc review.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF LEE, FLORIDA

DANIEL A. BERNATH,

No.14-CA-001838

Judge: Winesett, Sherra

Plaintiff,

vs.

SUMMONS

TERENCE B. HOEY, individually,
DAN R. HYATT, individually,
THE AMERICAN LEGION, business
form unknown,
MARK C. SEAVEY, individually,

Defendants.

This individual has not served the national organization, but claims he served an employee which is good enough. We are watching both cases and have local counsel. We will move to dismiss the Oregon case at the proper time and do the same to the Florida case if it is ever served. Bernath has repeatedly libeled The American Legion on his website and in court filings. We will sue for an injunction and damages at the appropriate time.

The Oregon case was essentially dismissed and fees were awarded to a number of defendants including The American Legion.

On September 18, 2014, The American Legion was served with the nonsensical 165 page purported complaint with no summons, but a one page demand to appear in 30 days by a private investigator.

We sued. Bernath's liability insurer settled with us and Mark Seavey. Mark paid half the attorney fees. Bernath still keeps posting on the internet. He has announced he is the "reform" candidate for national commander. We have sued him again using his money to pay our trial lawyer.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
FORT MYERS DIVISION

DANIEL BERNATH,

Plaintiff,

vs.

CIVIL ACTION NO. 2:15-cv-358-UA-CM

MARK CAMERON SEAVEY

Defendant

DEFENDANT'S ANSWER TO THE FIRST
AMENDED COMPLAINT AND FIRST
AMENDED COUNTERCLAIMS FOR
FOR LIBEL AND DEFAMATION PER SE
AND DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

MARK CAMERON SEAVEY,

Counter-Plaintiff

INJUNCTIVE RELIEF SOUGHT

vs.

DANIEL BERNATH

Counter-Defendant.

Bernath sued Mark Seavey, an employee, in Florida alleging many false claims. He seems to think suing an employee is actually suing The American Legion. He has also continued to misuse the emblem and make false accusations about The American Legion.

Hence, we have joined this suit.

LYNN FLEMING

Plaintiff(s),

SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY

LAW DIVISION: OCEAN COUNTY

DOCKET NO.: OCN-L-1705-15

vs.

CIVIL ACTION

THE AMERICAN LEGION;
AMERICAN LEGION POST 129
RICHARD MICHAEL GATTO;
JOHN DOES 1-5 (fictitious individuals)
and ABC CORPORATIONS 1-5
(fictitious corporations),

SUMMONS

This case was filed in June 2015. Plaintiff claims she was sexually harassed by the post commander while a waitress at New Jersey Post No. 129 while she worked for the catering company hired by the post. She further claims a hostile work environment and retaliation and reprisal along with negligence and vicarious liability.

We filed a motion to dismiss The American Legion because we do not control the post per our corporate charter. Plaintiff's attorney has alleged our charter does not mean what it says. We have provided the legislative history to prove it does. The court has not ruled yet.

We have also filed a motion for sanctions because plaintiff's lawyer keeps trying to insist on dropping the case "without prejudice."

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FEDERAL CIRCUIT

THE AMERICAN LEGION, AMVETS, MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE
HEART, VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, AND NATIONAL VETERANS
LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM,

Petitioners,

v.

ROBERT A. MCDONALD, IN HIS OFFICIAL CAPACITY AS SECRETARY OF
VETERAN AFFAIRS,

Respondent.

The VA has changed its methodology for receiving claims. Instead of accepting written notes, it now is requiring a formal form. Instead of the claim being dated upon receipt of the note, the VA now dates the claim on receipt of a properly completed form. This means the date of claim is now often much later and the veteran, if and when the claim is approved, receives much less.

The American Legion has joined the lawsuit to correct the situation. The Federal Circuit denied the appeal on August 11, 2015. The Petitioners are appealing.

Antonio Silva and Kimberlie Silva, H/W
354 Beverly Drive
Cliffwood Beach, NJ 07735

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
LAW DIVISION

Plaintiffs

AUGUST TERM, 2015

v.

NO.

American Legion, District 15 Post 311 d/b/a
Wilson-Kelch Post 311
521 Church Street
Hawley, PA 18428

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

And

The American Legion
700 N. Pennsylvania St.
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

And

Estate of Manuel Mirailh, Deceased
2056 Easton Turnpike
Lake Ariel, PA 18436

Defendants

This is a dram shop case involving a car accident in Wayne County, Pennsylvania. The case was brought in Philadelphia because the plaintiffs' belief the judges are more plaintiff prone and Philadelphia juries award larger judgments.

The plaintiffs have named as defendants “American Legion, District 15 Post 311” and The American Legion. They clearly do not understand the structure of The American Legion. We have filed a motion to send the case back to Wayne County and to correct a number of other defects in the complaint.

For example, the accident occurred a full 45 minutes after the defendant left the post on his 10-12 minute drive home. We do not know why the delay occurred.

The American Legion will be filing for dismissal and/or summary judgment once the procedural defects are corrected.

CASES CLOSED IN 2015

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA TERRE HAUTE DIVISION

LISA GARCIA,

Plaintiff,

vs.

Case No.:2:14-cv-00262-WTL-MJD

TERRY HUCKLEBERRY, JAMES ROBERTS
MICHAEL DAVIS, DAVE EVANS
DONALD JENKINS, THE AMERICAN LEGION,
POST #104, AND THE AMERICAN LEGION,

Defendants.

Plaintiff Lisa Garcia was employed by the American Legion Post #104 in Vigo County, Indiana. She got into a dispute with the post and eventually her employment was terminated.

After receiving a letter from her lawyer, the provisions of 36 USC §21704 (5) were forwarded to him. He ignored the letter and sued national alleging a duty to see that posts obey the law.

We filed for Dismissal and Summary Judgment which was granted. The case is closed.

RICHARD RODKEY

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

v.

SEPTEMBER TERM, 2013

AMERICAN LEGION d/b/a THE AMERICAN NO.: 004046
LEGION AUXILLARY UNIT 372and SONS
OF AMERICAN LEGION SQUADRON 372
And AMERICAN LEGION, INC. PAUL
REVERE LEBER POST 372

And

AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT
OF PENNSYLVANIA, INC.

And

AMVETS 153 HOME ASSOCIATES

And

PAUL REVERE LEBER POST NUMBER
THREE HUNDRED SEVENTY TWO OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION

And

LEBER, PAUL REVERE POST NO 372 OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION OF COLUMBIA
PENNSYLVANIA

This is a slip and fall case in Columbia, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The case was brought in Philadelphia because of apparently higher awards. Plaintiff did this by alleging The American Legion did business in Philadelphia. The court refused our motion and preliminary objections without an opinion despite the wording in the charter. We have to wait for Summary Judgment.

The post settled. We did not contribute, but were dismissed by the plaintiff and court.

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT
FOR THE COUNTY OF SPOKANE

DAN PURCELL & IRITA WILLIAMS

Plaintiffs,

NO. 13202356-8

vs.

THE AMERICAN LEGION, a non-profit
Corporation doing business in Washington,
and WILLIAM POWELL, et UX, a
marital community in Washington State.

Defendants

This case is a suit by former employees against the Department of Washington. Nevertheless, they named the national organization. This has been cancelled and the case is now named:

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

DAN PURCELL AND IRITA WILLIAMS,

Plaintiffs,

NO. CV-13-0285-JLQ

v.

THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF WASHINGTON,
a non-profit Corporation doing
business in Washington State, AND
WILLIAM POWELL, et UX, a marital
community in Washington state,

Defendants

Supreme Judicial Court
FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
NO. SJC-11317

JANE DOE AND JOHN DOE,
INDIVIDUALLY AND AS PARENTS
AND NEXT FRIENDS OF DOECHILD-1,

DOECHILD-2, AND DOECHILD-3,
AND THE AMERICAN HUMANIST
ASSOCIATION,

Plaintiffs-Appellants,

No. SJC-11317

v.

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT, THE TOWN
OF ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
AND DR. STEPHEN E. MILLS,
AS SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS,
Defendants-Appellees,

AND

DANIEL JOYCE AND INGRID
JOYCE, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS
PARENTS AND NEXT FRIENDS OF
D. JOYCE AND C. JOYCE, AND THE
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS, A
CONNECTICUT TAX-EXEMPT
CORPORATION,

Defendants/Interveners-

Appellees.

Plaintiffs have sued to remove the words “under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance, despite the fact that the language has been upheld consistently. The lower court correctly rejected plaintiff’s claim. The American Legion filed its brief at the appellate level. The plaintiffs lost.

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

ANGELA CAPIZZI-MULLAN, Administratrix of
the Estate of POLINA KADIYSKA, deceased
Plaintiffs

v.

DEANDRE BARNES

and

AMERICAN LEGION POST 153 HOME
ASSOCIATION a.k.a. or d/b/a American Legion
Post 153 and/or Frantic Nightclub

and

THE AMERICAN LEGION

and

KELBAR, Inc. a.k.a. or d/b/a T-Barr’s Bar

And/or T-Barr
Defendants

In this case, Plaintiff has sued the Post and National, bypassing the Department of Pennsylvania.

On March 18, 2012, Polina Kadiyska, a ballet student, was injured by a car driven by Deandre Barnes, an eighteen year old at the time. It is alleged that he had been drinking at the American Legion Post No. 153 Frantic Nightclub after hours. He was allegedly driving on S. Broad after the accident which allegedly involved hitting a number of cars; the driver fled on foot. He is now in the state correctional institution at Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. He may face additional charges.

The injured student was placed on life support which was discontinued March 19, 2012, when she died.

Counsel has been retained by our insurance company and preliminary objections filed under Pennsylvania law, because national has no control over departments and posts (36 USC §21704 (5)). Plaintiff’s attorney didn’t bother to check the law.

The driver testified at his deposition that he had never been to any Post of The American Legion and his insurance offered the policy limits which were accepted by the family which dropped the case. It is closed.

DEIDRA M. WILLIAMS	:PHILADELPHIA COUNTY
	:COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
and	:
	:OCTOBER TERM, 2013
CURTIS R. BROWN	:
	:NO.: 01398
v.	:
	:
AMOY ARCHER	:
	:
and	:
	:
AMERICAN LEGION	:
	:
and	:
	:
VETERANS HOME ASSOCIATION OF	:
PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD POST	:
NO. 204	:
	:
and	:
	:
VETERANS HOME ASSOCIATION OF	:
PENN CENTRAL POST 204	:
	:
and	:
	:
HENRY MCILHENNY	:

This is a claim for damages because the defendant, Amoy Archer, allegedly drank in a Legion post and then was involved in a car crash. The court granted our Motion to Dismiss based on our corporate charter’s provision that we do not control departments and posts.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLORADO

Civil Action No. 1:13-cv-01606-WYD-KLM
THE AMERICAN LEGION and
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY,

Plaintiffs,

v.

COLORADO COLUMBINE GIRLS STATE, INC.,
Defendant.

The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary have sued Columbine Girls State Corporation in Colorado for misuse of the name and emblem of the American Legion Auxiliary and Girls State. The defendant is supposed to be a subsidiary of the department, but was trying to become a rival corporation and acting independently in violation of trademark law. The complaint has been served. The Girls State Corporation is defending on the basis that they have the “right” to use the emblems. At the most recent meeting of counsel, it appeared that the Girls State Corporation’s position was weakening.

The case was settled by the defendant giving the plaintiffs everything they sked for. The Department of the Auxiliary is now trying to get its money, back from the independent, renamed corporation.

OTHER LEGAL MATTERS

There are a number of other legal proceedings in which The American Legion has been contacted for discovery purposes, which are not part of or named in the particular cause and a number of cases are in the beginning stages but not yet filed.

The National Judge Advocate has rendered 497 written opinions on questions which have been submitted by the several Departments and/or Posts of The American Legion, National Officers, staff members and individual members of our organization. These opinions involved matters legal, such as contracts, probate matters, federal tax questions, torts, insurance matters, Articles of Incorporation, civil rights statutes, retirement benefits under the law and other matters of a legal nature; problems concerning the interpretation and construction of the National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion, policy matters, many of which matters required a great deal of legal research.

In each instance, when appropriate, a copy of the opinion rendered was furnished to each of the following so that they would be acquainted with the decision affecting their Department; National Executive Committeeman, Department Commander, Department Adjutant, and the Department Judge Advocate of the Department involved.

Many oral opinions were also rendered to the National Officers, National Commission Chairmen, to Department Officers, and to staff Directors of the national organization upon subjects involving matters legal, financial, administrative and policy.

There were 10 written opinions rendered during the year to the National Secretary of the American Legion Auxiliary, in response to queries submitted to her for determination by me.

The National Judge Advocate has also rendered oral advice on matters legal and administrative to the National Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary on many occasions during the past year.

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE

The National Judge Advocate in accordance with established policy, has reviewed manuscripts of articles destined for future publication in *The American Legion Magazine* and *The Dispatch*, for the purpose of expunging statements or materials questionable in

character, contained therein which might subject The American Legion to a suit in libel. To date 168 manuscripts have been reviewed and appropriate comments in connection therewith were transmitted, when necessary, to the Publisher or Editor of The American Legion Magazine.

THE AMERICAN LEGION RETIREMENT PLAN FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND SUBORDINATE GROUPS THEREOF

In accordance with the requirements of law, The American Legion has filed all necessary returns, reports and allied documents for the calendar year 2014 with the Internal Revenue Service in connection with The American Legion Retirement Plan. The office of the National Judge Advocate also reviewed the Summary Annual Report for The American Legion Retirement Plan and arranged for the distribution thereof as required by law.

EMPLOYEES' SALARY SAVINGS (401(K)) PLAN

In accordance with the provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) The American Legion has filed all of the necessary Annual Return Reports and allied documents for the calendar year 2014 with the Internal Revenue Service in connection with the American Legion Employees' Salary Savings 401(k) Plan. The office of the National Judge Advocate also reviewed the Summary Annual Report for the Employees' Salary Savings Plan and arranged for the distribution thereof as required by law.

PARLIAMENTARY DUTIES

The National Judge Advocate attended the past National Convention of The American Legion and meetings of the National Executive Committee and has served both bodies in the capacity of National Parliamentarian.

OTHER DUTIES

The National Judge Advocate also functions as counsel on matters involving labor issues, real estate law, postal regulations, corporate organizations and insurance.

In addition, the National Judge Advocate functions as counsel for and a director of The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. and American Legion Charities. In these capacities, the National Judge Advocate attends board meetings.

MEETINGS OF THE NATIONAL RETIREMENT COMMITTEE AND SALARY SAVINGS COMMITTEE

The National Judge Advocate is a member of The National Retirement Committee of National Headquarters.

I have also, in response to requests, drafted legal and other documents for the use of National Officers of the American Legion and Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary.

In conclusion, the National Judge Advocate wishes to thank all National Officers, Department Officials, and members of the National Executive Committee for the valuable assistance and cooperation extended to him during the past year.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Jeffery O. Brown, Indiana, Executive Director

The major responsibilities assigned to the executive director of The American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis are:

- Acting for the national adjutant during his absence from the National Headquarters. Performing duties assigned by the national adjutant.
- Overseeing Administrative Services, which includes the following divisions: Finance; Maintenance, The American Legion Library, and the E. A. Blackmore Museum.

- Serving on the Personnel Committee and various other committees as assigned.

The Administrative Services Division provides all secretarial assistance to the executive offices of The American Legion. Division directors resident at the Indianapolis National Headquarters report to the executive director, except for Human Resources and Marketing, Media & Communications, who both report to the National Adjutant.

JOHN H. GEIGER OPERATIONS CENTER (G.O.C.)

Areas of responsibility located at the Geiger Operations Center are Emblem Sales and Information Technology.

- Emblem Sales is responsible for providing logo merchandise to The American Legion Family in support of the organizations' programs and activities, and is responsible for protecting The American Legion's federal trademark. Emblem Sales has total annual sales in excess of \$12 million.
- Information Technology (IT) is responsible for the selection and procurement of the software and hardware used by National Headquarters staff. IT maintains the telecommunications infrastructure that connects the two Indianapolis, IN offices with our facility in Washington, D.C. IT is responsible for the computer system which houses the national membership database as well as keeping this database updated with changes to the membership.

MAIL

June 1, 2014 through May 31, 2015

Incoming Letters and parcels (distributed to Divisions for processing).....	1,206,408
Incoming Parcels	2,988
Outgoing Letters/Parcels (Exclusive of National Emblem Sales).....	12,770,486

FREIGHT AND EXPRESS

June 1, 2014 through May 31, 2015

Out - Cartons	2,868
Out - Pounds.....	141,595
UPS – In	1,720
UPS – Out.....	5,818

LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Howard Trace, Director

The mission of The American Legion Library is to provide an information storage and retrieval system for The American Legion. Indexing of documents continues, and internal and external materials are added to the collection regularly.

The Digital Archive continues to grow at a rapid pace, with 1,197 items added this year. Usage of the Digital Archive has increased by 20 percent over the previous year. The national archives were transitioned from storage in file cabinets to boxed storage with the addition of shelving to accommodate this change. This better protects the material, and expands the amount of storage space by nearly 50 percent. A collection of approximately 400 at-risk audio materials were digitized to prevent further degradation and ensure their availability for the foreseeable future.

Conservation work was done on the painting "Peace through Preparedness" by Howard Chandler Christy which is on display in the Emil A. Blackmore Museum. Work included removing the dirty and yellowed varnish from the painting, and then varnishing and inpainting, along with touch ups to the frame. Similar conservation work was done on "Spirit of '76" by Walter Parke, which is also on display in the museum.

A number of researchers made extensive visits to the Library. Areas of research involved American Legion Baseball, The American Legion School Award, immigration, Agent Orange, World War I, employment of veterans, and the G.I. Bill of Rights.

Books, Pamphlets and <i>The American Legion Magazine</i> cataloged.....	1,728
Museum Collection Items Added or Assessed	460
Items Prepared for Microfilming	1,595
Correspondence Written by National Historian	485
Correspondence Written by Staff	1,114
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Sent.....	1,134
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Received	456

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Library

Donated by Dr. Clare A. Gunn: Memoir of the Life of Past National Commander John Garfield Emery

Donated by Robert W. Doubek: *Creating the Vietnam Veterans Memorial – The Inside Story*

Donated by Reby Cary: *Nautical Milestones, African Americans in the United States Coast Guard*

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Museum

Donated by Robert K. Caudell: 1992 Olympics baseball cap autographed by Launi Meili

Donated by Laura Edwards: V-Mail sheets and envelopes

Donated by Peter Fair: 1974 World Series Bat; 1974 CA Baseball Championship Program; 1973 Post 158 Baseball Team Program; 1974 Region 8 Baseball Tournament Program; Memories of Campbell's Journey to World Series 1974

Donated by David J. Frederick: Postcard – Funkhouser Post No. 8 Evansville, IN

Donated by Kenneth J. Goth: 1935 Boys State (Quincy, IL) cap

Donated by Patty Harrison: Second A.E.F. Passport from the 1927 American Legion Pilgrimage to France

Donated by Cathy Hoelter: National Convention pass and postcards from the 1941 National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Donated by Jack W. Kelly: 1950 Red, White and Blue Musical Extravaganza program

Donated by Keith Leblanc: The American Legion medal

Donated by Gerald Losser: Photograph of General George Patton; two photographs of troops patrolling streets in Germany

Donated by Thomas Marciciak: The Loyal Legionnaire song card – 1951

Donated by Robert L. Morrill: Panorama photograph of Department of New York first annual convention, 1919

Donated by William E. Peet: Three Circuit photographs – World War I and National Guard; 38th Annual Convention of Military Surgeons, Arlington Cemetery, 1930; and 1st Annual Dance of the Army and Navy Club, 1922

Donated by: John C. Pellegrini: 1939 Membership Enrollment recognition coin

Donated by Beverly Pritchard: 1939 Convention badge

Donated by Brett P. Reistad: 1921 National Convention Poster, and cap, Kansas City, Missouri

Donated by Dr. Robert Thune: Celebrate the Century – 1910s stamp sheet; 1948 Will Rogers stamp sheet; Commemorative coin set; First Day of Issue stamp, May 23, 1913 – Vicksburg, April 16 – July 4, 1863; Postcard, Father Time bronze at the Library of Congress; Commemorative stamp featuring the 1918 24-cent Inverted Jenny; Duke Kahanamoku 20 stamp sheet; 1944 Iwo Jima 50 stamp sheet; Washington/Jackson 4 stamp

sheet; Lyndon B. Johnson 32 stamp sheet; 1948 Moina Michael 50 stamp sheet; 1970 Dwight D. Eisenhower stamp sheet, 1959 Bunker Hill stamp sheet; 1993 WWII Turning the Tide block of 10 stamps; 1998 Celebrate the Century 1910s – 15 stamp sheet; 1950 Indiana Territory – 50 stamp sheet; World War II Valor in the Pacific – GPO publication; Kalaupapa – GPO publication; 1997 Air Force 50th Anniversary – 20 stamp sheet; and U.S. Veterans Commemorative Silver Dollar Proof Set

Donated by James E. Lind: Photograph of First Lieutenant Richard W. Lind in black frame

Donated by Ted Arens: USS Liberty Plaque and 2 postcards on USS Liberty

AMERICANISM COMMISSION

Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut, Chairman

Jill Druskis, Nebraska, Director

The Americanism Commission of The American Legion was created by a recommendation adopted by the National Convention of The American Legion held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1919. It read: “We recommend the establishment of a National Americanism Commission of The American Legion whose duty it shall be to endeavor to realize in the United States the basic ideal of this Legion of 100 percent Americanism through the planning, establishment and conduct of a continuous, constructive educational system.”

It is the objective of the Americanism Commission to translate Americanism precepts, principles and ideals in a clear and practical manner to Legion posts and other groups and individuals, including young Americans.

While the Americanism program consists of a broad, objective, general plan that features wide-range community service, better citizenship and youth development, the efforts of the Americanism Commission are educational in nature and embrace these specific objectives:

- Promote understanding of the principles of democratic governmental problems, and bringing more citizens to think seriously of the duties of citizenship;
- Give sound, practical service in our communities, working to make these communities better and safer places in which to live;
- Emphasize religion, encouraging its continuation in the life of every citizen;
- Encourage education in every possible manner, presenting school awards, sponsoring and conducting oratorical contests, cooperating with education and citizenship groups, promoting proper flag etiquette and display, and sponsoring objective youth development programs;
- Do important work for the youth of America, sponsoring American Legion Baseball, American Legion High School Oratorical Contest, American Legion Boys State, American Legion Boys Nation, American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program, American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement, Boy Scouts of America activities, and many other citizenship and objective training activities;
- Work for the assimilation of immigrants through schools of citizenship and other agencies and stand for the restriction of immigration so that this assimilation may approach perfection.

Additionally, the Americanism Commission has continued to be actively involved in legislative matters affecting our way of life. Among our legislative priorities are voluntary prayer in public buildings, bilingual education alternatives and English as the official language of the United States. Two current legislative initiatives of The American Legion are: (1) the continuing efforts to effect a constitutional amendment that would give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws, and (2) coordinating a nationwide

effort to combat the secular cleansing of our American heritage through Establishment Clause lawsuits.

This commission has the responsibility for supervision and coordination of two standing committees: the Committee on Children & Youth and the Committee on Youth Education.

The following is a summary of several programs, which are the responsibility of the Americanism Commission and have been conducted during the 2014-2015 American Legion year.

American Legion Boys State/Boys Nation

The American Legion believes that if the United States is to maintain its form of government, it must have a citizenry that has a fundamental understanding and interest in its operation. This is what The American Legion Boys State program does for the young men of our nation. It teaches the fundamentals of American government through the state level.

It was 80 years ago that Legionnaires in the state of Illinois first recognized the need for a program that would help high school boys understand and appreciate the government they were learning about in the classroom. It was a time in the history of this nation when un-American ideas seriously threatened its future. Established in 1935, the whole idea of American Legion Boys State, then and now, is to show young people that beyond a doubt, our form of government is good; however, its preservation depends upon intelligent, informed and loyal citizens, in combination with an honest and impartial administration of government activities.

Ten years after the inception of Boys State as a program of The American Legion, the National Organization recognized the need for a similar program at the national level and in 1946, established American Legion Boys Nation. This year, it celebrated its 69th anniversary session.

Both Boys State and Boys Nation are unique programs of The American Legion that emphasize participation and personal experience in a respective model "state" and "nation" that is complete with its governing bodies and elected officials.

Each year nearly 20,000 young Americans take part in American Legion Boys State, and throughout its 80-year history, the program has graduated well over 1,860,000 young men.

Every year, each Boys State selects two outstanding graduates to represent them at American Legion Boys Nation. In 2015 the program was, again, held in Washington, D.C., July 17-25, and it introduced delegates to the structure and function of the federal government first-hand.

The week of government training in the nation's capital combines lectures and forums with visitations to federal agencies and institutions, shrines and historical points in and about Washington, D.C. Actual participation in the political process is highlighted through the week to include the organization of party conventions and the nomination and election of an American Legion Boys Nation president and vice president. In addition to federal legislators and representatives of federal agencies, American Legion officials and other leaders of national distinction participate in American Legion Boys Nation. Aravind Byju of Sarasota, Florida was elected President and Peter Spectre of Belfast, Maine, was elected Vice President of the 2015 session of American Legion Boys Nation.

High School Oratorical Contest

The American Legion has awarded over three million dollars in college scholarships since 1938 to high school students participating in its annual High School Oratorical Contest.

Each contestant must give a prepared oration on some phase of the United States Constitution, giving emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government. The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant, taking not less than

eight nor more than ten minutes for delivery. Each contestant must also give an assigned topic presentation on a constitutional topic (randomly selected during the contest from the four topics for the contest year) taking not less than three or more than five minutes for delivery.

Funds totaling \$138,000 in college scholarships are available to the 52 national level contestants, with the winner receiving an \$18,000 scholarship. Funds for these awards are provided by The American Legion. In addition to the scholarships awarded by the National Organization, there are scholarships awarded by intermediate organizations of The American Legion to participants in local levels of competition.

The 78th Annual National Oratorical Finals Contest was held at Indianapolis, Indiana, in April 2015. The three finalists were: First place – Geeta Minocha, Florida; second place – Rowan Macwan, Illinois; third place – Emma Skahill, Iowa.

The American Legion continues to enjoy a mutually-beneficial relationship with the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA). The American Legion exhibited during the NSDA National Tournament in Dallas, Texas, in June 2015. Nearly 200 elite speech and debate students and coaches provided contact information to The American Legion seeking information on the 2015-2016 Oratorical Contest. In addition, American Legion Oratorical program staff also served as a judge in the Original Oratory category at the National Contest Finals in Dallas, Texas.

Boy Scouts of America

The American Legion charters more than 2,400 Scout units in communities across the country involving over 62,000 young people. Its commitment to the principles of Scouting dates back to the Legion's first National Convention in 1919.

The American Legion continues to support the Boy Scouts of America because of its unique ability to provide opportunities to young people for leadership training, peer fellowship, life skills development, and community service.

The American Legion selected Ethan Copple of Elkhorn, Nebraska, as its 2015 Eagle Scout of the Year. Selection was based on his outstanding religious, school, community and scouting achievements. He will receive a \$10,000 scholarship from The American Legion.

The three runners-up are Michael James Parker of New York, Jacob Kelley of Wisconsin, and Braeden Benedict of California. Each will receive a \$2,500 scholarship.

In addition, an estimated 8,000 certificates honoring new Eagle Scout recipients are distributed annually.

Since its inception in 2003, over 560 American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion members have received The American Legion and Scouting Square Knot award to recognize their dedication and work to assist in furthering the Scouting programs of The American Legion.

Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program

There are currently seventeen departments that offer a Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program: Arizona; Connecticut; Delaware; Illinois; Kansas; Massachusetts; Michigan; Minnesota; Missouri; Nebraska; North Carolina; Ohio; Pennsylvania; South Carolina; South Dakota; Vermont; and Virginia.

Promotional materials and a website have been made available at www.legion.org/youthlaw, providing information for departments to adopt and publicize the program. Departments are encouraged to work with their state police or other law enforcement agency to develop a program.

Junior Shooting Sports Program

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program is a national Americanism program administered through post-sponsored Junior Shooting Clubs. The purpose of the program is to provide gun safety and marksmanship training for young people and to offer

a wholesome recreational activity through organized competition. The Junior Shooting Sports Program has 1,632 active clubs with almost 15,000 young people participating annually.

The 25th Annual Junior Air Rifle National Championship was conducted July 21 – July 25, 2015, at the USA Shooting range facility on the campus of the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The tournament climaxed two rounds of postal matches which began shortly after the first of the year and involved 1,502 entrants.

The competition was divided into two categories: precision air rifle and sporter air rifle. Medals and plaques were awarded in both categories, as well as in each of the prone, kneeling and standing positions.

The 2015 winners were Rhiann Travis of Weatherford, Texas (Precision) and Adam McClintock from Tucson, Arizona (Sporter). Each received scholarships totaling \$5,000 from The American Legion and The Sons of the American Legion.

Eight and Forty National Lung and Respiratory Disease Nursing Scholarship Fund

The American Legion administers the Eight and Forty National Lung and Respiratory Disease Nursing Scholarship for the Eight and Forty organization. This scholarship was created to assist registered nurses in securing advanced preparation for those positions in supervision, administration or teaching. These prospective positions must have a direct relationship in the areas of care and prevention as it relates to lung and respiratory diseases. The Eight and Forty, for 2015-2016, awarded nine \$3,000 scholarships to recipients in 10 states to assist in furthering their education. This brings their cumulative total for the past 55 years to 911 scholarships, totaling nearly \$2 million to help eliminate personnel shortages in this important area of nursing. This scholarship program will again be offered for the 2016-2017 school year.

Flag Education

The American Legion is a nationally recognized authority on the proper display of the United States Flag. Each year, thousands of letters, phone calls, and electronic mail messages are routinely answered giving factual information on the display, use of and respect for the American Flag.

The American Legion continues distribution and sale of “For Which It Stands”, a multimedia instructional resource about the history of the flag of the United States, the significance and meaning of our flag, and respecting and caring for our flag. It is intended primarily for use with students in the upper elementary and middle/junior high school grades. Over 20,000 copies of the DVD have been sold since its debut in early 2005.

Additionally, over 65,000 copies of the publication *Let's Be Right on Flag Etiquette* and more than 100,000 copies of the pamphlet, *Flag of the United States -- How to Display It, How to Respect It* are distributed annually to schools, organizations and individuals. This information is sent at little or no cost to all who request it.

The American Legion continues publication of *Our Country's Flag*, an educational comic book for use in elementary schools. Well over one million copies have been distributed since the booklet was introduced in 1988. The educational booklet, *I Pledge Allegiance*, published in May 1995, is also for use in elementary schools. *Our Country's Veterans* was added to The American Legion's list of educational publications in 2005.

Almost 32,000 subscribe to The American Legion Flag Alert, which provides an e-mail notification when the flag of the United States is to be displayed throughout the entire country at half-staff.

The American Legion continues its campaign to protect the United States Flag from physical desecration. All 50 state legislatures have passed memorializing resolutions in support of a constitutional amendment to give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws. Working with other organizations of the American Legion-founded Citizens Flag Alliance, The American Legion shepherded a flag protection Constitutional amendment through the House of Representatives six times in the past seven Congresses.

In June of 2006, The American Legion spearheaded the drive for the amendment in the U.S. Senate, coming within one vote of passage there. The legislation was introduced, again, in the 114th Congress.

Service to God and Country

A program of fundamental Americanism, “Service to God and Country,” seeks to prevent the spiritual decay of America by charging the electorate with a spirit of unquestionable Americanism, respect for law, reverence for authority and awareness of our human rights and freedoms.

“Service to God” emphasizes regular public worship, daily family prayer and the religious education of children, while “Service to Country” attempts to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation. These objectives are aimed at preparing young Americans to take up tomorrow’s responsibilities by teaching them moral and spiritual values, renewed interest in our Country’s history, self-discipline, self-reliance, ideals of loyalty and honesty.

Each year, a conference for the department chaplains of The American Legion is held under the direction of its National Chaplain. Program information is provided for further dissemination to district and post chaplains who coordinate the program at the local level.

Troop and Family Support

Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW): The American Legion Operation Comfort Warriors program supports wounded, injured, and ill service members and their families during times of recovery or transition. The program fills in the voids of providing comfort and recreational items that do not show up as a line item on any military or hospital budget spreadsheet. While the care in our military hospitals and transitional units is excellent, the little things can make a big difference. OCW provides things such as loose fitting clothing to ease the pressure on a wound, or pool tables and electronic dart boards to help range of motion and offer camaraderie building.

Much of the equipment donated is to empower service members to engage in positive activities that will enhance and expedite their recovery, and help return them to their original duty stations or to transition home better prepared. Some of the equipment donated has included canoes and kayaks, fishing gear, paddle boards, baseball and softball equipment, weights and resistance bands, as well as art supplies and pottery equipment. OCW has also help establish photography and musical therapy programs in different facilities. Our goal is to support wounded, injured or ill service members in any manner possible during their recovery process to increase their likelihood of better outcomes.

Operation Comfort Warriors staff has provided support to service members at several military and veterans medical facilities during the 2014-2015 program year, including: Bethesda Naval Hospital (MD), Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (Germany), Quantico (VA), Camp Lejeune (NC), Fort Bliss (TX), Camp Pendleton (CA), Fort Campbell (KY), Brooke Army Medical Center (TX), Navy Medical Center San Diego (CA), Wichita (KS), Carney, (MI), Sedona (AZ), Minneapolis (MN), VAMC Tomah, (WI) VAMC Tampa Bay (FL) and VAMC New Orleans (LA). This is not an all-inclusive list, rather a sampling to demonstrate the outreach efforts of the program.

Family is an enormous part of the recovery process for wounded, injured, and ill service members. OCW provides outings to amusement parks such as Six Flags Fiesta Texas where the service member is encouraged to bring their spouse and children or significant other to the outing and enjoy the day away from the hospital and recharge themselves with some fresh air and fun activities. OCW also hosts quarterly dinners in Washington D.C. in which approximately 15 patients and their families enjoy a steak dinner held at the National Press Club. Along with the steak dinner there are door prizes for the patients to show appreciation for their service and sacrifices.

The most important detail about Operation Comfort Warriors is that 100% of all donations go to support the wounded, injured, and ill service members. All administrative,

marketing, and travel expenses are paid for by The American Legion, not donations. The program has received well over \$2.8 million in donations and has donated well over \$1.4 million so far. Items are purchased and outings planned based upon information from the facility or unit; we do not simply show up with random items. OCW staff completes extensive outreach efforts to the facilities and installations to find how we can specifically help them in their missions and support their particular programs. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions for wounded, injured, and ill service members, so there should not be a one-size-fits-all approach in our support of their service and sacrifices.

Family support network (FSN): Since September 11, 2001, the nation has been on high alert and National Guard and Reserve units have been activated in record numbers. As a result, the families of these men and women often find themselves unable to meet normal monthly household obligations. Assistance is needed for a variety of everyday tasks and expenses. These needs range from routine household chores, grocery shopping, and childcare, to ensuring that the grass is mowed for the expecting mother whose husband is serving abroad.

To actively address these issues, The American Legion created the Family Support Network. Military families can request assistance by calling a nationwide toll-free telephone number, 1-800-504-4098, for service personnel and their families to call for assistance. Families can also request assistance electronically through the Legion's web site at www.legion.org/familysupport. All requests are referred to The American Legion department, or state, in which the call originated. Departments relay the collected information to a local American Legion post. The post then contacts the service member or family to see how assistance can be provided locally. Since the creation of the Family Support Network in 1990, thousands of posts have responded to meet these families' needs.

As our forces pursue the enemies of freedom around the globe, The American Legion supports our men and women in uniform and their families with the Family Support Network. Those of us in The American Legion, who served our nation in times of adversity, remember how it felt to be separated from those we love. The Family Support Network is successful as a direct result of Legionnaires, at the post level in communities, responding to the needs of our comrades and their families. As the nation's largest veteran's organization, our commitment to the men and women of our armed forces and their families is absolute and as a grateful nation, we must ensure that no family endures hardships caused by military service that protects American ideals and freedom.

American Legion Baseball

American Legion Baseball marks its 90th season in 2015. Almost 70,000 players on 3,700 teams participated in this American Legion Americanism youth activity during the past year. The 2014 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year is Sean Breen, from Brooklawn, New Jersey.

The American Legion Baseball World Series was held August 13-18, 2015, in Shelby, North Carolina, on Veterans Field at Keeter Stadium and was hosted by American Legion Post 82. The semifinal and championship games were telecast live on ESPNU with the other games webcast live on ESPN3.com.

More than \$7 million in sponsorship fees are spent on American Legion Baseball teams by the local posts. One million dollars is appropriated by The American Legion National Organization to conduct eight regional tournaments and the World Series of American Legion Baseball.

Many American Legion players have gone on to distinguish themselves in Major League Baseball and have been honored with election to the Hall of Fame. Sixty-three Hall of Fame members played American Legion Baseball, including the 2014 Inductee Class of Greg Maddux, Tony La Russa, and Bobby Cox. Other American Legion Alumni inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame include Tony Gwynn, Tom Seaver, Johnny Bench, Carl Yastrzemski, Brooks Robinson, Frank Robinson, and Paul Molitor.

Over 50 percent of the Major League ballplayers and nearly 76 percent of college players competed in American Legion Baseball as teenagers. The lessons learned on the baseball diamond, such as leadership, teamwork and respect for the rules are lessons that are learned for a lifetime.

Citizenship and Naturalization

Citizenship & Naturalization efforts of Americanism include: developing new ideas and initiatives aimed at promoting grassroots involvement at the post level in understanding, appreciating and actively participating in the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship and American government; (2) developing new ideas and initiatives aimed at promoting grassroots involvement at the post level in assimilating prospective citizens/legal immigrants into local communities and American society; and (3) monitoring and maintaining a portfolio of resolutions specific to the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship and the assimilation and naturalization of prospective citizens/legal immigrants.

The Americanism Commission strongly urges Legion posts, districts and departments to vigorously undertake activities and collaborate with the U.S. Office of Citizenship and Immigration Services to help newly arriving immigrants and legal residents become assimilated and seek citizenship. To assist with this effort, The American Legion has produced a booklet entitled Citizenship Outreach Guide that is available online at www.legion.org/publications.

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & YOUTH

Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Louisiana, Chairman

Kim Mezger, Indiana, Assistant Director

The American Legion has been a staunch supporter of America's children and youth since the organization's founding in 1919. The young people of our nation continue to be of paramount concern to the Committee on Children & Youth, as its commitment strengthens and it seeks ways to improve the well-being of all children.

Through the decades that followed our founding, The American Legion became a strong advocate for children's rights and has remained at the forefront of the child welfare movement. The early years were devoted to progressive childcare and protection programs. Through the efforts of The American Legion and its affiliated organizations – the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion, as well as supporting independent organizations such as the Eight & Forty – many states and communities improved their own child welfare provisions.

The development of new and expanded public programs designed to provide economic security for children made it possible for our organization to turn its attention to other problems affecting young people. To date there is no area of child welfare that has gone untouched by the collective hand of The American Legion. The very program of Children & Youth itself is unique from any agency – private or governmental – in its ability to expand into every area of concern for child welfare and child health.

As stated in a 1924 resolution adopted by the National Executive Committee, The American Legion "has and will do everything possible to perpetuate 'A SQUARE DEAL FOR EVERY CHILD'." This remains our ultimate goal and the definitive challenge for the years ahead.

To attain this goal, The American Legion, in 1925, adopted the "Whole Child" plan, which states: "every child should have a home, health, education, character and opportunity." Its foundation is based on three guiding principles:

1. To strengthen the family unit against the forces of today's complex society, recognizing that the most normal environment for children is a home with their own parents;

2. To commend sound organizations and facilities that provide services for children and youth;
3. To maintain a well-rounded program that meets the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs of today's young people. Stated certainly for future endeavors, this third principle has provided the flexibility to address all matters of child health and child welfare.

While these principles represent the heart of the "Whole Child" plan, the muscle depends on our four Guidelines for Action, working together:

1. PREVENTION – Finding solutions to obstacles before they become long-lasting problems;
2. EDUCATION – Providing information to our members and the general public on timely issues involving children and youth;
3. LEGISLATION – Maintaining knowledge of new and existing laws, needed amendments, and the administration of laws that affect young people at the national, state and local levels;
4. MATERIAL AID – Providing direct assistance in the form of cash, clothing, food and time.

During the past 97 years, The American Legion's Children & Youth Programs have contributed to significant advancements in the area of child welfare. While our list of achievements is extensive, it is by no means complete. The American Legion has and will maintain a deep, community-centered interest in children in order to find new, and perhaps presently unknown, approaches to child welfare problems. There is no way of knowing what issues will face our youth tomorrow. Our survival may well depend upon the quality of care, education and training that we, as parents and citizens, provide for all children today.

The American Legion is proud of its Legionnaires, and the members of its affiliated and supporting organizations, as well as their achievements on behalf of our nation's youth. Their efforts in the area of child welfare are a living testament to the ability of an organization of free men and women to adapt itself to evolving needs, while maintaining high principles and taking on increased responsibilities under those principles.

2014-2015 Programs

The American Legion has demonstrated a strong concern for the safety of this nation's young people since the early 1920s. In 1992, the Committee on Children & Youth designated the Child Safety program as one of its annual programs. Legion volunteers regularly disseminate information to parents, children and community leaders regarding the issue of safety. Making children safety conscious, in the home and outside, is necessary to assure that they have an opportunity to play and grow into useful adults and citizens.

As long as Halloween activities are sponsored and promoted in our various communities by duly appointed and elected officials, the Committee on Children & Youth of The American Legion believes that children and parents should know how to make this observance as safe as possible. To assist in this effort, the Committee on Children & Youth produces and distributes a brochure, "Make Halloween a Fun and Safe Night," to educate children and parents about trick-or-treat safety.

Accidents are the leading cause of death and disability among our nation's youth. Annually, nearly 16,000 children under the age of 21 die in automobile crashes, fires, through the improper use of firearms and drowning. In homes, playgrounds and parks, the potential for serious injury is always present. To help educate the public, the Committee on Children & Youth produces and distributes "Play it Safe," a brochure to inform parents about the six most common causes of death among children and prevention strategies.

As a major threat to the welfare of our nation's youth, The American Legion is very concerned about youth suicide. It continues to be the third largest cause of death among 15-24-year-olds. The suicide rate among adolescents has grown steadily over the last four decades, quadrupling since 1960, and over 4,000 young people take their own lives every

year. Suicide is a senseless tragedy but may be preventable. The Committee on Children & Youth produces and distributes a brochure entitled "Know the Warning Signs of Youth Suicide," designed to assist youth and adults in understanding some of the warning signs and facts about suicide.

The American Legion is also mindful of the pressures facing young people today, as well as the destructive consequences of drug use. Alcohol, tobacco, inhalants and marijuana are often readily available and considered to be the entryway to a life of drug dependency and delinquency. Gateway drugs are so-called because the use of these drugs often leads to drug abuse, addiction and to the use of other drugs such as heroin, cocaine and LSD. The teenage years are challenging and pressure from peers to use drugs can be extremely intense; however, individuals are ultimately responsible for their own behavior. Decisions made today can have far-reaching effects on one's life for years to come. To help combat this problem and educate our nation's youth about the dangers of gateway drugs, the Committee produces and distributes a brochure titled "Gateway Drugs...Choose not to Use." This tool can equip parents and children with the facts of gateway drugs and help children lead a healthy lifestyle.

As sure as The American Legion is the largest veterans' organization in the world, there are veterans' families who require assistance. Possibly the rent is overdue or the children are hungry because a parent is sick, disabled, deceased or has deserted the family. Whatever the reason, these children become the concern of The American Legion, and the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program is the vital tool our organization uses to help meet the maintenance and health needs of veterans' children.

Begun in 1925 as a form of direct aid to veteran's children, TFA remains unique in the social-work field even today and is still a very active program. During the 2014-2015 program year, in fact, the program aided 1,561 children with over \$670,583 in grants. From its beginning to present, this fund has assisted veterans' families with more than \$14 million in non-repayable grants.

Made possible by the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation, the TFA program is used to assist families in meeting the costs of shelter, food, utilities and medical needs when the parents are unable to do so, thereby helping to keep the child(ren) in a more stable home environment. Through TFA, a post may call upon the Committee on Children & Youth of The American Legion for cash assistance to help meet the basic needs of veterans' children. Funds can be granted over a temporary period to eligible children when it has been determined by investigation that the child is in need and that no other sources are available, or those that are available are inadequate. It is important to note that while the veteran must have served honorably on active duty during a designated war period, the veteran does not have to be a member of The American Legion in order to receive assistance.

Legislative Efforts

The initiation and support of worthwhile Children & Youth legislation is one means by which the Committee on Children & Youth has attempted to accomplish its goals during the 2014-2015 program year. The following summarized resolutions are a sampling of the children & youth legislative resolutions approved at National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26-28, 2014.

Financially Assist Families Faced By Catastrophic Illness Of Their Children: Res. 5-2014. It has long been our position that all children should have adequate health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well-being. Unfortunately, many of our nation's children are not receiving the necessary medical care due to the extreme requirements placed on the financial abilities of the average family. Consequently, children with severe catastrophic illnesses are not receiving the needed medical care. The rising cost of medical care in such cases is not covered by even the best medical policies. The American Legion believes that the state and federal governments should enact legislation

to financially assist those families faced by catastrophic illness to the end that the family will not be financially devastated.

Support Funding Comprehensive Health Care for Children & Youth Programs: Res. 6-2014. Many of our nation's children continue to face health needs that are not properly addressed due to the high cost of our health care delivery system. The American Legion continues to support and endorse the programs as outlined by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau as authorized under Title V of the Social Security Act and urges the Congress of the United States to continue its support by adequately funding these programs, including the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant, the Healthy Start Initiative, Emergency Medical Services for Children Program and the Abstinence Education Program.

Support Funding For All Drug Trafficking Prevention Programs: Res. 7-2014. We realize that one of the best methods to attack the drug problem is from the demand side, but this resolution urges funding for all necessary areas and agencies that can help reduce the quantity of the substances that are being made available in this country. By working at both ends of the problem, we can make a difference in the number of users and decrease demand.

Oppose Any Attempt to Weaken Present Laws Governing Penalties for the Production, Sale and Distribution of Pornographic or Obscene Materials to Minors: Res. 9-2014. As there have been attempts to eliminate protective laws from the criminal code regarding the production, distribution and sale of pornographic and obscene literature, The American Legion is strongly opposed to any attempt to weaken existing laws.

Support Efforts to Immunize All Children: Res. 10-2014. The American Legion realizes that in today's society there is no place for communicable disease for which there is a vaccine. Despite available vaccination programs, several childhood diseases break out annually. We believe that the state and federal governments should provide sufficient funding so that indigent families with children can receive the necessary immunizations against all communicable diseases.

Protect Children from the Unrestricted Media: Res. 11-2014. The producers of movies, television shows and news and the Internet have become very explicit in describing and depicting various types of violence. Organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union, defend such actions as the author's constitutional right of free speech without regard for the potential consequences to minor children. The American Legion supports appropriate state and federal legislation to restrict the excessive use of violence, vulgarity, and other forms of moral depravation in movies, TV programs, and TV news and on the Internet. In addition, we encourage departments and posts to conduct awareness campaigns to educate their members, their families and the general public about the potential dangers the Internet and other forms of electronic media pose to children and teenagers.

Urge The President and Congress To Establish "National Family Week": Res. 214-2014. One of the basic principles of the children and youth program is to maintain the integrity of the family home. In today's fast-paced society, it is critical that we seek to recognize the importance of strengthening the basic unit of our country: the family. No institution can take the place of the family in giving meaning to human life and stability to our society. We urge the President and the Congress to establish National Family Week on a permanent basis during the Thanksgiving holiday week.

Urge Congress To Appropriate Sufficient Funds For School Nutrition Program: Res. 222-2014. The American Legion again reaffirms its position that the Congress of the United States and the various state legislatures be urged to appropriate sufficient funds for school nutrition programs. This is necessary to reflect the increased cost of food and to provide for needed facilities and trained personnel for the purpose of conducting an adequate school lunch program.

These are the highlights of our 2014-2015 Children & Youth legislative program. The American Legion's Committee on Children & Youth continually urges departments to

support Children & Youth legislation as it relates to our national objectives. Local posts are also encouraged to support city ordinances that deal with the community's efforts to improve conditions for children and youth. The Children & Youth legislative program is a never-ending struggle, which we eagerly accept for the sake of all children.

Children & Youth Expenditures

Annually, as it has for the past 92 years, the Committee on Children & Youth records activities from The American Legion Family – nearly 14,000 posts of The American Legion, over 6,000 squadrons of The Sons of The American Legion, over 4,000 units of the American Legion Auxiliary, and hundreds of salons of the Eight and Forty. In addition, the expenditures of departments and of the National Organization are obtained for the 12-month period of June 1, 2014 through May 31, 2015, and combined with these reports (see Table No. 1).

During the reporting period, the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation recorded \$618,897 in donations from members of The American Legion Family and individuals across the country. During the same period, our Temporary Financial Assistance program expended over \$670,000 in grants (see Table No. 2) to 1561 children of veterans (see Table No. 3). For the 2014-2015 Children & Youth programs year, including contributions to the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, posts, squadrons, units and departments of The American Legion and its affiliated and supporting organizations reported a grand total of \$17,855,873 in expenditures and contributions to benefit the children of America.

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH EDUCATION

Mike Bredeck, Minnesota, Chairman

Timothy Lankford, Indiana, Assistant Director

The Committee on Youth Education (formerly known as the National Committee on Education), was established in 1976, and is comprised of members from both The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary.

The purposes of the Committee are: (1) to inform itself and The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary of developments, problems and potentials in the field of education; (2) to recommend appropriate policies and programs for The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary; (3) to maintain contact with the educational community so that there may be an interchange of thinking between The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary and educators, students, and other organizations concerned with the well-being of education throughout the nation; and (4) such other purposes as may be assigned to it by the National Executive Committee.

Education was one of the first major concerns of The American Legion. In 1921, the organization committed itself to a constructive support of education. During the years that followed, The American Legion developed a formal Policy on Education.

The American Legion has always supported the principle that education is a necessary requirement to the successful functioning of a republic. While recognizing the right of private and religious groups to maintain schools, The American Legion vigorously subscribes to the necessity for a publicly supported education system to ensure that every American child has the opportunity for an adequate education. The American Legion believes that popular self-government, as set forth in the Constitution of the United States, cannot continue to exist without a continuing system of free public education. Not only does proper national defense require trained personnel, but every phase of life today demands that we have competent citizens who are qualified, willing and able to discharge their responsibilities.

The availability of educational opportunity for individuals to pursue their own development is a prerequisite to the achievement of all other social goals. Our education system must be designed to provide every person with the means to reach their potential which will provide our Country with the high level of responsible citizens and specialized

workers that it requires. In turn, we will have greater assurance of economic growth, of sound decision-making, and the knowledge necessary to promote our national security.

The American education system should produce citizens who understand and are dedicated to principles of free enterprise; to democratic principles and processes; and whose devotion to freedom and human dignity goes beyond mere lip service.

The Education Program of The American Legion consists of four basic elements: (1) recognition of local systems through observance of American Education Week; (2) American Legion departments and posts effort to enhance classroom learning by offering schools a registry of veterans willing and able to assist in the classroom as stated in the Veterans in the Classroom program (3) participation by American Legion posts and American Legion Auxiliary units in a community-wide effort to enhance the programs and policies of the local schools through the guidelines provided in the new American Legion Education Development Guide.

American Education Week is an annual event co-sponsored nationally by The American Legion. The observance was originally established by The American Legion with the help of the National Education Association in 1921. The major objective of the program is to focus public attention on the needs and achievements of the nation's schools. This year's theme is "Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility." The observance will be November 16-20, 2015.

Following the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, The American Legion established the September 11th Memorial Scholarship Fund to provide educational opportunities for the children of American service men and women who died while on active duty on or after September 11, 2001. The fund provides "American Legion Legacy Scholarships" to the children in addition to their governmental entitlements for education. Fund raising activities are ongoing with an initial goal of 20 million dollars established to fund this scholarship. Other scholarship programs include the American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program; Eagle Scout of the Year; American Legion Baseball Leadership Scholarship; and the Samsung American Legion Scholarship. Through these scholarship programs, The American Legion National Headquarters issues, on average, \$583,000 annually to eligible students to further their education.

Recently approved, The American Legion Education Development Guide combines the best elements of the former PACT and Education Chairman's handbook in a more readily accessible and up-to-date format. The guide is available for download as an electronic book from iBooks or as a PDF file. It contains critical information for every Legion Family member interested in forming or maintaining a viable education program in the 21st century, American education environment. Throughout the e-book, helpful hyperlinks abound to take the reader to more in-depth information.

During the past year, more than 25,100 students were awarded The American Legion School Award Medal. This award is designed to recognize a student for the qualities of courage, honor, leadership, patriotism, scholarship and service. The award is presented to a boy and a girl upon graduation from elementary school, junior high/middle school or high school.

Nesse Godin, a Lithuanian-born and Holocaust survivor from Silver Spring, MD, and proud United States citizen, received the 2015 American Legion National Education Award in recognition and appreciation for her life-long dedication in continuing to pass on the vital, first-hand lessons of the Holocaust, its impact on history, and its continued relevance to our nation today.

The American Legion believes that the citizens of this country should be dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in the entire realm of intellectual endeavor; that our people should recognize those persons who have developed their intellectual abilities to the fullest extent; that teachers should enrich their knowledge, particularly in the field in which they teach and that scholarship assistance to deserving students should be expanded.

Such an educational program will fulfill the dreams of the past, the aspirations of the present and the needs of the future. The American Legion supports such a system of

education and believes that the vitality of our democratic way of life is dependent upon such schools.

AMERICANISM COMMISSION EXECUTIVE SECTION

Richard Anderson, Cromwell, Connecticut – Chairman
 Joseph E. Caouette, Rollinsford, New Hampshire – Chairman Emeritus
 Larry L. Price, Redfield, South Dakota – Vice-Chairman
 Robert B. Craig, Lincoln, Nebraska – Commander's Representative
 Eugene Thompson, Marseilles, Illinois – Consultant
 Steve M. Tatrow, Dunkirk, Maryland – Consultant
 Herbert J. Petit, Kenner, Louisiana – Chairman, Committee on Children & Youth
 Mike Bredeck, Madison, Minnesota – Chairman, Committee on Youth Education

AMERICAN LEGION CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION, INC.

Dennis R. Boland, Florida, President
Jason R. Kees, Illinois, Executive Secretary

In 1954 The American Legion endorsed the separate incorporation of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Since then, the foundation has granted over \$13.7 million dollars to other non-profit youth-serving organizations. The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation provides grants to contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth and to add to progress in the child welfare field through research, studies, surveys, projects or in other ways, including but not limited to all youth activities now or hereafter sponsored by The American Legion.

At its annual meeting in October 2014, the board of directors approved \$566,691 in grants to 18 nonprofit organizations for projects to be completed in calendar year 2015. These grants were awarded to support worthwhile projects and disseminate information about them to the general public and specific target groups. The following is a brief summary of the grants awarded this year:

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Grants

Angel Flight West of Santa Monica, California, was awarded \$10,000 for their project, "Promoting Fly-Anthropy – the charitable use of aviation to help children in need." This grant will provide outreach and marketing efforts to reach families in need of medical transportation and to potential volunteer pilots.

Beads of Courage, Inc. of Tucson, Arizona, was awarded \$40,000 for their project, "Beads of Courage." This grant will fund the purchase of beads to encourage ill children as part of the Beads of Courage program.

Birth Defect Research for Children (dba Association of Birth Defect Children) of Orlando, Florida, was awarded \$22,650 for their project, "National Outreach for Birth Defect Prevention." This grant will help redesign the organizational website and advertise available resources to families and medical professionals.

Children's Cardiomyopathy Foundation of Tenafly, New Jersey, was awarded \$25,400 for their project, "7 minute video to answer genetic testing questions as it relates to Pediatric Cardiomyopathy." This grant will fund the production of a video to be distributed via electronic newsletter and online to reach interested families and physicians.

Children's Craniofacial Association of Dallas, Texas, was awarded \$10,000 for their project, "Wonder-Choose Kind." This grant will provide educators with resources to teach children anti-bullying and kind behavior towards those afflicted with craniofacial issues.

Children's Institute, Inc. of Rochester, New York, was awarded \$7,580 for their project, "Strengthening Military Family Relationships Through Play." This grant will underwrite the production and dissemination of instructional DVDs to educate Boys and Girls Club staff on the needs of military children.

Children's Organ Transplant Association (COTA) of Bloomington, Indiana, was awarded \$43,595 for their project, "The American Hometown Heroes for COTA Campaign." This grant will fund an informational campaign that will connect Reserve and National Guard COTA families to Legion posts that support COTA.

CureSearch for Children's Cancer of Bethesda, Maryland, was awarded \$31,500 for their project entitled, "Curesearch 2014 Educational Video Series." This grant will produce and distribute videos on staying healthy while on chemotherapy, eating healthy and information on clinical procedures such as biopsy and ultrasound.

Diabetes Education & Camping Association of Florence, Alabama, was awarded \$39,640 for their project, "Optimizing Outcomes at Diabetes Camp – Integrated HER System." This grant will fund a mobile application and software for health data management.

JAYC Foundation, Inc. of Santa Rosa, California, was awarded \$50,540 for their project, "Creating Protected Spaces." This grant will provide comprehensive education between families, mental health professionals and law enforcement agencies through booklets and videos.

Marfan Foundation of Port Washington, New York, was awarded \$30,000 for their project "Parent's Toolkit: Your Child and Marfan Syndrome." This grant will provide informational toolkits for parents of children with Marfan Syndrome.

Mercy Flight Southeast of Leesburg, Florida, was awarded \$21,761 for their project, "Project Outreach SE USA 2014." This grant will fund a marketing campaign to advertise medical transportation services offered by the organization for public awareness and pilot recruitment.

Mercy Medical Angels of Virginia Beach, Virginia, was awarded \$44,000 for their project, "Child Health Program – Info Dissemination Upgrade." This grant will update and disseminate information on the organization's child health program.

National Autism Association of Attleboro Falls, Massachusetts, was awarded \$58,075 for their project, "Big Red Safety Box Program." This grant will enable the continuation of the Big Red Safety Box program that addresses dangerous wandering incidents.

Our Military Kids of McLean, Virginia, was awarded \$31,350 for their project, "Our Mission Continues: Moving into the Next Decade of Supporting Our Kids." This grant will enhance outreach and marketing efforts of the organization.

Spina Bifida Association of Arlington, Virginia, was awarded \$25,000 for their project, "Educating Children with Spina Bifida on Staying Healthy." This grant will underwrite the printing of "Another Way to Go," a publication that teaches children about catheter care.

The American Legion of Indianapolis, Indiana, was awarded \$55,500 for their project, "2015 American Legion National Youth Programs Scholarships." This grant will provide academic scholarships to the top youth participants of the organization's national youth programs.

United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) of Colorado Springs, Colorado, was awarded \$20,000 for their project, "USABA Mobile Coach." This grant will expand the number of sports offered on Mobile Coach to assist blind youth athletes compete.

During the 2014-2015 contribution year, donations exceeded \$618,896 with over \$360,510 of that amount coming to the foundation from the Sons of The American Legion. We receive most of our support from the members of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and the Sons of The American Legion. Their posts,

units, salons, and squadrons are the primary contributors to the success and growth of our foundation.

We encourage each member and each local organization to make an annual contribution in support of their foundation so it can continue to fund projects that will enhance the lives of children. It is important to remember that every dollar given to the foundation is put directly into the trust fund to be used for grants that assist our young people.

At a board of directors meeting in Indianapolis on May 3, 2015, the following officers were elected: Dennis R. Boland of Florida, president; Peggy Moon of Minnesota, vice president; Joseph J. Frank of Missouri, secretary; and Robert S. Turner of Georgia, treasurer. Administrative personnel appointed by the board were George A. Buskirk Jr., assistant treasurer, and Jason R. Kees, executive secretary.

Under the 1969 Tax Reform Act, the Child Welfare Foundation retains its tax-exempt status. Gifts, therefore, are deductible for federal income tax purposes to the extent permitted by law, and bequests are deductible for federal inheritance tax purposes to the extent permitted by the Federal Tax Act.

Table No. 1 Children & Youth Expenditures and Number of Children Served

Region and Department	Reporting Region	Contributions to Child Welfare Foundation by Posts and Units	Direct Aid from Posts, Units and Departments	Contributions to Other Child Serving Agencies by Legion and Auxiliary	Other Expenditures for Children by Legion and Auxiliary	Department Administrative Expense by Legion	Total Number of Children Served	Total Aid Legion Lines 3 thru 8
1	2	3	4	5	6	8	9	10
REGION 1								
Connecticut	49%	\$1,478.80	\$4,025.28	\$16,811.00	\$7,195.00	\$36,008.00	\$5,704.00	\$71,222
Maine	53%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$117,685.00	\$12,619.00	\$165,256.00	\$9,830.00	\$305,390
Massachusetts	40%	\$1,683.02	\$1,132.50	\$19,063.00	\$25,770.00	\$43,229.00	\$950.00	\$91,828
New Hampshire	70%	\$0.00	\$3,024.53	\$57,608.00	\$32,411.00	\$105,448.00	\$3,160.00	\$201,653
Rhode Island	32%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$15,490.00	\$800.00	\$15,993.00	\$200.00	\$30,463
Vermont	81%	\$0.00	\$275.00	\$29,457.00	\$54,032.00	\$84,714.00	\$5,038.00	\$153,516
TOTAL:	51%	\$3,161.82	\$8,457.31	\$254,114.00	\$132,827.00	\$430,649.00	\$24,882.00	\$854,091
REGION 2								
Delaware	59%	\$0.00	\$2,240.00	\$16,210.00	\$3,350.00	\$19,589.00	\$3,133.00	\$44,522
D.C.	9%	\$1,125.57	\$915.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$1.00	\$2,142
Maryland	87%	\$2,306.31	\$2,445.25	\$131,292.00	\$191,297.00	\$222,805.00	\$21,470.00	\$571,416
New Jersey	33%	\$4,210.86	\$3,683.18	\$71,409.00	\$82,459.00	\$129,974.00	\$11,860.00	\$303,596
New York	86%	\$4,838.69	\$7,318.94	\$734,484.00	\$308,473.00	\$969,001.00	\$122,535.00	\$2,146,652
Pennsylvania	50%	\$27,000.54	\$3,860.33	\$108,242.00	\$140,176.00	\$239,366.00	\$50,812.00	\$628,877
Virginia	100%	\$40,729.47	\$1,879.84	\$498,884.00	\$307,226.00	\$721,788.00	\$68,848.00	\$1,189,355
West Virginia	86%	\$21,897.06	\$408.07	\$60,536.00	\$13,790.00	\$93,835.00	\$19,015.00	\$209,481
TOTAL:	69%	\$102,108.50	\$22,550.61	\$1,621,057.00	\$1,055,871.00	\$1,996,778.00	\$297,675.00	\$5,096,400
REGION 3								
Alabama	29%	\$2,980.00	\$5,127.35	\$15,492.00	\$10,187.00	\$46,881.00	\$3,691.00	\$84,358
Florida	99%	\$65,700.66	\$43,934.00	\$255,701.00	\$210,223.00	\$519,007.00	\$35,212.00	\$1,125,778
Georgia	97%	\$7,730.55	\$75.00	\$71,406.00	\$83,294.00	\$161,082.00	\$13,090.00	\$354,678
Kentucky	69%	\$7,596.66	\$1,265.50	\$50,461.00	\$73,681.00	\$97,220.00	\$7,320.00	\$191,524
North Carolina	37%	\$23,716.02	\$363.00	\$24,086.00	\$64,020.00	\$83,762.00	\$17,764.00	\$193,731
South Carolina	45%	\$6,149.30	\$2,050.45	\$8,894.00	\$8,400.00	\$29,292.00	\$2,939.00	\$57,725
Tennessee	69%	\$5,516.34	\$1,661.26	\$29,030.00	\$15,055.00	\$86,928.00	\$10,990.00	\$149,181
TOTAL:	65%	\$119,389.53	\$54,476.56	\$455,070.00	\$428,840.00	\$994,192.00	\$109,006.00	\$2,160,974
REGION 4								
Arkansas	28%	\$1,297.14	\$3,300.85	\$178,199.00	\$3,213.00	\$123,809.00	\$295.00	\$311,114
Louisiana	41%	\$2,755.20	\$1,322.61	\$19,175.00	\$35,961.00	\$55,512.00	\$6,625.00	\$123,357
Mississippi	25%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$8,170.00	\$3,275.00	\$18,108.00	\$40,125.00	\$69,678
Oklahoma	31%	\$178,607.38	\$0.00	\$15,774.00	\$13,132.00	\$47,819.00	\$12,960.00	\$268,292
Texas	66%	\$20,304.97	\$1,520.97	\$187,026.00	\$97,709.00	\$294,932.00	\$29,107.00	\$630,600
TOTAL:	43%	\$202,964.69	\$6,144.43	\$409,344.00	\$153,190.00	\$540,280.00	\$91,112.00	\$1,403,035
REGION 5								
Illinois	42%	\$47,599.83	\$4,560.50	\$46,928.00	\$30,228.00	\$173,098.00	\$16,020.00	\$318,400
Indiana	59%	\$100,115.70	\$4,654.71	\$70,539.00	\$107,473.00	\$147,963.00	\$35,870.00	\$466,615
Michigan	60%	\$9,101.82	\$1,926.33	\$158,847.00	\$71,903.00	\$253,217.00	\$50,859.00	\$645,454
Missouri	101%	\$10,705.77	\$2,792.12	\$40,498.00	\$39,970.00	\$113,952.00	\$18,085.00	\$225,003
Ohio	90%	\$21,771.37	\$31,590.05	\$237,230.00	\$145,737.00	\$517,968.00	\$51,389.00	\$1,005,585
Wisconsin	100%	\$8,418.32	\$5,412.87	\$88,177.00	\$27,755.00	\$219,507.00	\$26,751.00	\$376,021
TOTAL:	70%	\$197,712.81	\$50,836.58	\$642,019.00	\$421,964.00	\$1,425,573.00	\$196,974.00	\$2,937,079
REGION 6								
Iowa	47%	\$5,663.63	\$2,573.00	\$49,396.00	\$11,695.00	\$90,270.00	\$8,839.00	\$168,437
Kansas	66%	\$11,939.10	\$8,679.85	\$72,050.00	\$20,995.00	\$194,880.00	\$7,987.00	\$270,631
Minnesota	62%	\$650.00	\$3,834.52	\$209,381.00	\$251,221.00	\$295,899.00	\$30,528.00	\$55,386
Nebraska	100%	\$2,029.37	\$2,309.20	\$46,248.00	\$14,160.00	\$74,295.00	\$15,598.00	\$156,639
North Dakota	77%	\$1,408.50	\$2,240.45	\$50,811.00	\$32,579.00	\$98,305.00	\$5,428.00	\$190,772
South Dakota	64%	\$0.00	\$1,611.26	\$19,293.00	\$6,888.00	\$33,669.00	\$2,612.00	\$64,073
TOTAL:	67%	\$21,690.60	\$21,247.29	\$449,179.00	\$336,638.00	\$712,318.00	\$70,990.00	\$1,612,063
REGION 7								
Arizona	77%	\$57,774.24	\$1,357.00	\$152,589.00	\$108,375.00	\$296,762.00	\$14,548.00	\$631,405
California	71%	\$6,072.85	\$8,912.49	\$241,061.00	\$73,578.00	\$353,195.00	\$31,081.00	\$713,877
Colorado	61%	\$15,899.75	\$969.00	\$21,495.00	\$23,808.00	\$52,447.00	\$6,450.00	\$120,869
Hawaii	43%	\$0.00	\$39.70	\$50.00	\$225.00	\$430.00	\$200.00	\$945
Nevada	44%	\$20,086.42	\$205.00	\$12,270.00	\$5,512.00	\$37,355.00	\$800.00	\$76,228
New Mexico	8%	\$13,515.01	\$2,418.28	\$70,284.00	\$52,999.00	\$162,948.00	\$46,430.00	\$348,594
Utah	35%	\$2,035.00	\$70.00	\$3,425.00	\$2,025.00	\$8,085.00	\$700.00	\$16,350
TOTAL:	59%	\$117,383.37	\$11,971.47	\$501,174.00	\$266,319.00	\$911,232.00	\$100,189.00	\$1,908,269
REGION 8								
Alaska	69%	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$72,371.00	\$26,319.00	\$36,069.00	\$19,473.00	\$154,332
Idaho	78%	\$16,112.33	\$1,040.00	\$6,900.00	\$3,375.00	\$17,470.00	\$630.00	\$45,527
Montana	100%	\$9,109.70	\$613.83	\$9,614.00	\$16,962.00	\$57,586.00	\$7,534.00	\$101,420
Oregon	97%	\$51,681.07	\$2,043.00	\$28,390.00	\$10,198.00	\$24,728.00	\$2,455.00	\$119,495
Washington	64%	\$38,394.11	\$2,351.62	\$16,671.00	\$18,828.00	\$46,435.00	\$12,806.00	\$135,486
Wyoming	61%	\$768.62	\$5,615.15	\$650.00	\$3,100.00	\$4,055.00	\$1,863.00	\$15,052
TOTAL:	80%	\$116,065.83	\$11,763.60	\$134,596.00	\$78,782.00	\$186,343.00	\$43,781.00	\$571,311
REGION TOTALS:	64%	\$880,477.25	\$187,447.85	\$4,466,553.00	\$2,874,431.00	\$7,197,365.00	\$938,589.00	\$16,542,863
FOREIGN								
France	25%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,429.00	\$250.00	\$17,650.00	\$100.00	\$22,429
Mexico	25%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$300.00	\$6,231.00	\$50.00	\$7,081
Philippines	10%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$460.00	\$1,275.00	\$7,335.00	\$3,525.00	\$12,595
Puerto Rico	25%	\$1,328.00	\$0.00	\$5,389.00	\$2,295.00	\$31,516.00	\$3,675.00	\$44,203
TOTAL:	23%	\$1,328.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,328
GRAND TOTALS:	64%	\$881,805.25	\$187,447.85	\$4,466,553.00	\$2,874,431.00	\$7,197,365.00	\$938,589.00	\$16,547,974

TABLE #1 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2014 - MAY 31, 2015

Child Welfare Foundation by National Legion

\$10,630

Child Welfare Foundation by Auxiliary

\$0

Child Welfare Foundation by 8/40

\$617

Child Welfare Foundation by Individuals

\$31,725

Bequests to Child Welfare Foundation

\$0

Child Welfare Foundation by Sons of The American Legion

\$360,510

Total

\$403,483

TABLE NO. 2
EXPENDITURES FROM NATIONAL TEMPORARY AID FUNDS TO DEPARTMENTS ACCORDING TO YEARS

	1926-1945	1946-1955	1956-1955	1956-1955	1956-2005	2006-2014	June 2014-May 2015	Grand Total
Alabama	28,181.33	51,167.06	76,790.45	152,617.32	137,824.69	76,524.96	10,045.18	534,150.99
Alaska	0.00	1,627.56	1,550.00	0.00	3,500.00	1,500.00	0.00	8,177.56
Arizona	26,061.70	8,762.00	21,380.31	192,830.21	289,528.72	379,749.11	68,190.86	974,490.91
Arkansas	33,873.20	25,962.22	2,881.07	55,004.58	16,181.81	17,694.93	3,600.14	151,568.01
California	30,108.15	16,026.45	1,550.00	7,559.00	30,034.44	175,383.72	15,679.51	260,669.76
Colorado	41,621.11	22,818.11	1,395.00	12,205.83	17,592.15	128,367.55	18,600.16	223,799.75
Connecticut	1,854.00	440.00	450.00	1,192.00	7,971.66	28,067.23	5,402.04	37,964.79
Delaware	2,035.00	1,000.00	475.00	2,635.00	8,407.64	4,491.00	1,409.25	19,133.64
DC	2,570.00	1,203.50	600.00	26,136.75	2,319.00	3,636.08	2,739.55	38,465.33
Florida	33,341.23	25,520.50	2,530.00	27,060.88	64,468.81	364,736.32	57,613.52	517,659.39
Georgia	68,894.07	86,084.42	4,865.00	8,496.51	12,881.80	50,354.85	8,800.91	232,658.95
Hawaii	870.00	0.00	900.00	0.00	6,168.40	2,767.97	0.00	10,705.37
Idaho	7,593.50	5,771.85	7,366.39	20,228.20	195,465.15	204,815.12	9,884.41	441,280.21
Illinois	30,220.79	4,343.53	10,525.73	92,128.56	276,545.19	187,798.96	40,722.27	601,562.76
Indiana	31,850.08	9,086.40	2,920.00	126,545.18	173,400.96	348,475.97	86,765.26	690,258.29
Iowa	17,493.08	587.00	3,928.45	13,762.47	227,865.82	130,578.28	18,837.98	394,245.10
Kansas	20,766.80	42,064.35	8,923.00	9,241.54	16,291.60	42,570.43	9,715.12	139,657.72
Kentucky	23,843.50	45,527.90	64,854.96	44,238.66	12,445.22	150,217.85	8,842.79	341,128.09
Louisiana	23,400.50	38,454.30	3,395.00	7,340.45	33,897.24	8,318.46	0.00	114,805.05
Maine	3,816.94	1,910.26	2,676.55	15,912.00	22,305.05	15,627.26	0.00	62,050.06
Maryland	9,887.00	3,380.57	3,380.00	4,770.00	31,620.94	21,337.05	6,926.19	70,386.56
Massachusetts	2,754.50	455.00	150.00	4,650.00	18,888.67	18,818.48	0.00	45,715.95
Michigan	23,693.33	33,281.24	15,346.82	14,012.24	52,676.66	61,505.93	5,634.55	200,718.22
Minnesota	8,610.77	23,322.79	11,840.33	137,579.21	89,538.19	36,642.06	3,402.00	307,533.35
Mississippi	40,293.63	63,254.14	117,892.56	51,214.88	84,261.79	53,867.50	4,993.73	410,784.50
Missouri	53,073.08	47,799.64	11,056.00	17,969.51	38,964.13	141,776.94	3,053.52	310,659.20
Montana	5,414.25	1,688.85	1,575.30	38,571.40	67,913.91	78,733.26	5,506.20	183,878.97
Nebraska	18,470.10	17,795.68	17,531.06	3,733.25	759.49	10,097.37	800.00	68,026.95
Nevada	585.00	766.00	7,272.00	995.00	16,818.94	54,302.52	7,179.82	80,739.46
New Hampshire	4,250.50	4,941.50	0.00	53,557.79	12,610.00	16,697.24	1,831.53	94,057.03
New Jersey	8,996.53	1,946.00	4,478.00	55,676.20	63,194.80	44,016.79	2,527.93	168,207.12
New Mexico	20,073.40	53,086.30	58,723.89	111,071.87	49,262.39	35,680.99	4,676.74	327,812.18
New York	7,887.54	4,803.00	1,150.00	33,784.24	83,432.27	43,913.23	3,463.30	174,970.28
North Carolina	46,597.50	81,019.60	9,740.00	20,750.18	68,774.55	205,264.57	29,485.32	432,146.40
North Dakota	26,017.45	11,788.21	5,771.32	6,499.40	11,429.94	11,865.43	2,127.79	73,568.86
Ohio	23,930.43	5,116.25	11,613.89	11,357.65	13,289.44	66,240.69	9,940.77	151,548.35
Oklahoma	40,458.05	65,405.77	83,956.03	156,914.96	205,764.51	426,707.06	16,065.06	994,237.06
Oregon	13,750.50	13,750.15	24,595.95	42,465.83	14,796.00	187,294.40	29,679.33	284,152.83
Panama	676.00	534.00	600.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,809.00
Pennsylvania	22,847.41	651.00	19,204.85	38,183.37	29,380.12	131,388.27	14,176.50	241,655.02
Puerto Rico	17,057.00	57,754.00	55,496.50	43,420.00	11,100.00	13,919.15	1,303.60	198,749.65
Rhode Island	1,562.00	1,641.00	1,060.00	19,499.38	16,182.72	5,049.90	0.00	43,995.00
South Carolina	68,453.05	28,693.34	5,339.00	500.00	13,810.16	71,328.89	5,730.70	185,924.24
South Dakota	42,430.27	16,362.05	725.00	30,686.38	5,588.30	1,000.00	0.00	86,562.00
Tennessee	31,144.77	54,613.20	20,604.30	56,068.79	36,561.35	72,964.23	13,533.15	271,956.64
Texas	35,373.50	47,392.43	29,714.50	7,884.74	31,484.75	197,731.56	15,990.89	346,581.48
Utah	11,125.48	3,246.00	3,396.00	12,014.42	14,034.34	29,679.02	0.00	73,497.26
Vermont	1,854.50	9,251.50	0.00	4,925.00	6,004.26	7,701.44	0.00	29,705.70
Virginia	45,310.31	28,037.78	17,836.00	31,930.40	66,509.94	288,609.32	34,226.25	478,233.75
Washington	3,378.00	427.50	625.00	66,884.89	511,131.69	615,820.51	75,091.31	1,198,267.59
West Virginia	27,828.98	11,389.94	3,460.00	17,750.68	40,628.59	74,822.83	9,112.95	175,888.02
Wisconsin	15,861.98	8,067.25	9,878.00	16,242.78	74,327.21	86,044.13	6,187.39	210,441.35
Wyoming	6,160.00	1,993.00	1,350.00	979.00	15,746.91	26,323.69	3,633.60	52,572.60
Other Depts	560.00	173.50						733.50
Miscellaneous*	19,499.21							19,499.21
TOTAL	1,121,572.95	1,089,878.73	777,325.21	1,926,240.98	3,327,257.51	5,488,740.90	870,583.47	14,401,637.75

*For the year 1926 - Department totals not available

Table 3
Comparison of Number of Children of WW II, Korea, Vietnam, Grenada/Lebanon, Panama, and Gulf War Veterans Receiving Aid from National Children and Youth Division

	World War II	Korea	Vietnam	Grenada/Lebanon	Panama	Gulf War	Totals
June	0	0	1	7	5	148	161
July	0	0	0	1	6	160	167
August	0	0	0	10	1	100	111
September	0	0	3	25	5	130	163
October	0	0	4	16	8	127	155
November	0	0	2	0	0	86	88
December	0	0	6	10	7	156	179
January	0	0	0	2	2	129	133
February	0	0	0	3	0	59	62
March	0	0	2	3	5	69	79
April	0	0	7	12	1	76	96
May	0	0	2	0	0	144	146
Totals	0	0	27	89	40	1384	1540
Percentage	0.00%	0.00%	1.75%	5.78%	2.60%	89.87%	100.00%

TABLE #3 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2014 - MAY 31, 2015

CONVENTION COMMISSION

Michael E. Walton, Illinois, Chairman

Bridget A. Robinson, CMP, Georgia, Director

The 96th annual National Convention of The American Legion convened in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 22 – 28, 2014. National Commander, Daniel M. Dellinger of Virginia called the National Convention to order at 8:30AM on Tuesday, Aug. 26, 2014 welcoming Legionnaires to Charlotte and thanking them for their continuing service to our Country and to our veterans. The 96th annual National Convention began with master of ceremonies, Mr. Montel Williams, who addressed nearly 6,000 American Legion Family members on Tuesday morning. Later in the day, Pat McCrory, Governor, State of North Carolina; The Honorable Richard Burr, United States Senate, The Honorable Kay Hagan, United States Senate, Dumont Clarke, Vice Chair, Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners; 2013–2014 Department Commander of North Carolina, Patricia A. Harris and the late Jerry Hedrick, President of the 2014 National Convention Corporation welcomed Legionnaires to the National Convention. A special guest to the Convention was The President of The United States, Barack Obama. Other guest speakers addressing the 96th National Convention of The American Legion were The Honorable Sloan Gibson, Acting Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs; Maj. Gen. Jason Kamiya, Senior Vice President, USAA; The Honorable Jeff Miller, Chairman U.S. House Committee on Veterans Affairs; The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

There were many highlights during the 2014 National Convention, but four events conducted at the National Convention deserve special mention. On Friday, Aug. 22 the Color Guard Contest took place the first day of convention. There were seven total Color Guard units that participated. The Patriotic Memorial Service, featuring American Military Spouses Choir, and the annual parade, both held on Sunday, Aug. 24, were attended by nearly 2,000 and 4,000 American Legion Family members respectively. On Tuesday, Aug. 26, the National Commander's Banquet for Distinguished Guests was held at the Charlotte Convention Center. The banquet featured the B2B Band as the entertainment and was attended by over 2,300 Legionnaires and guests.

Convention Commission Activities

The National Convention Commission conducted three regular meetings during the year. Revisions of our request for proposal (RFP) continued in 2014. This process is extremely important as it provides an equal opportunity for all cities to be judged the same way during the initial review and site visit process. It is the commission's desire to continue to attract new cities that desire to host an American Legion National Convention, providing "blue cap" Legionnaires and their families with varied and enjoyable conventions on an annual basis.

For the 2020 National Convention, the Convention Commission reviewed bids from the following: Phoenix, Arizona; Tampa, Florida; Reno, Nevada; and San Juan, Puerto Rico. Following site visits and after listening to formal presentations from each of these fine cities, the Convention Commission recommended to the National Executive Committee that Reno, Nevada be awarded the 2020 National Convention for Aug. 28 – Sept. 3. The National Executive Committee later approved the recommendation.

Future conventions and dates:

Cincinnati, Ohio.....	Aug. 26 – Sept. 1, 2016
Louisville, Kentucky.....	Aug. 25 – 31, 2017
Minneapolis, Minnesota	Aug. 24 – 30, 2018
Indianapolis, Indiana.....	Aug. 23 – 29, 2019
Reno, Nevada	Aug. 28 – Sept. 3, 2020

We currently have three cities bidding on the 2021 National Convention. Those cities, supported by the appropriate resolution from their host Department, are the following: Phoenix, Arizona; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Salt Lake City, Utah. A recommendation for the 2021 host city will be forwarded to the National Executive Committee in May of 2016.

FINANCE COMMISSION

Kenneth D. Danilson, Iowa, Chairman
George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana, National Treasurer
Shawn T. Long, CPA, Indiana, Director

The primary obligation of the Finance Commission is to prepare a yearly budget for the National Executive Committee, handle funds under that budget, and exercise reasonable oversight to see that the various divisions and departments of the national organization operate within appropriations. The Finance Commission includes seven members, with the national adjutant as ex-officio secretary and the national commander and national treasurer as ex-officio members. Also attending these meetings are the executive directors of the Washington and Indianapolis offices and the finance director and liaison observers from the National Executive Committee.

The national organization had an operating surplus of \$3,658,478 for 2014. We received \$13.50 dues per member, allocating \$10.50 to the General Fund and \$3 to The American Legion Magazine. Income of the national organization derives from annual membership dues, interest on investments, magazine advertisements, Emblem Sales, contributions and other approved activities.

A full financial statement is incorporated in the auditor's report, found in the 2015 National Convention Program and the 2015 Annual Report.

EMBLEM SALES COMMITTEE

Alvan T. Fuller, Massachusetts, Chairman
Richard B. Keith, Indiana, Director

The American Legion emblem is the exclusive property of the National Headquarters. The sale of the emblem, emblem pins, merchandise carrying the emblem and other items of organizational equipment is the responsibility of the National Headquarters in Indianapolis. The following tables show gross sales, net earnings, etc., for the entire calendar year 2014 and for the first three months of 2015.

January 1 to December 31, 2014 *(12 months)*

<i>Gross Sales</i>	<i>\$12,268,682</i>
<i>Cost of Goods Sold</i>	<i>6,704,121</i>
<i>Overhead</i>	<i>3,766,994</i>
<i>Operating Profit</i>	<i>1,797,567</i>

Total number of 2014 orders processed was *106,340*

January 1 to March 31, 2015 *(3 months)*

<i>Gross Sales</i>	<i>\$2,633,376</i>
<i>Cost of Goods Sold</i>	<i>1,375,386</i>
<i>Overhead</i>	<i>878,748</i>
<i>Operating Profit</i>	<i>379,242</i>

Total orders processed for first 3 months of 2015 was *22,382*

MARKETING COMMITTEE

George Lussier, Jr., Virginia, Chairman

Scott Miller, Indiana, Deputy Director

REVENUE ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

Walter W. Ivie, Texas, Chairman

Scott Miller, Indiana, Deputy Director

Insurance / Affinity Programs

The Committee provides oversight for insurance plans currently, and previously, offered by The American Legion. Funds from the sale of insurance products support national programs in the areas of veterans' affairs and rehabilitation, Americanism and children & youth.

United Services Automobile Association (USAA): In November of 2010, The American Legion launched a partnership with United Services Automobile Association (USAA). USAA provides insurance products to Legion family members to include Home, Auto, Life, Long-Term Care and Medicare Supplement. USAA also provide a complete array of financial products including: Checking, Money Market, Investment and Credit Card Options. For assistance with any of these products contact USAA at 1-877-699-2654.

Now in its fifth year, the USAA-American Legion preferred provider relationship continues to produce strong results. Through the second quarter of 2015, the relationship generated \$983,070 in insurance royalties, \$712,058 in credit card royalties (85,984 active cards), \$1,115,620 in Legion-owned marketing assets and \$175,000 in program sponsorships and National Convention. The relationship also paid through the second quarter \$944,300 to departments through a revenue-sharing program, with 49 departments having signed agreements to participate.

Marsh: Insurance products (with the exception of Mutual of Omaha and Union Fidelity) purchased prior to November 29, 2010 are being administered by Marsh. Any questions regarding these products should be directed to Marsh by calling 1-800-542-5547.

Birthday Life-Whole Life Insurance: The Birthday Life-Whole life plan is unavailable for new coverage. Union Fidelity terminated their agreement with The American Legion as of December 31, 2005. Policyholder requests for Birthday Life information should be directed to the Administrator, Direct Response Insurance Administrative Services, Inc. (DRIASI), 7930 Century Blvd, Chanhassen, MN 55317; 1-800-621-0393.

Mutual of Omaha: Mutual of Omaha became a contracted insurance carrier for The American Legion in May 2010. Mutual of Omaha offers guaranteed-issue life insurance to Legionnaires ages 45-85. Requests for information should be directed to Mutual of Omaha at 1-800-780-0319.

Corporate Development

A National Corporate Alliances structure and web platform were established to recognize and determine criteria for recognition of companies that contribute specified amounts of funds and/or services to The American Legion.

Likewise, The American Legion has called on professional agencies to assist with corporate alliances. These relationships have already generated more than \$500,000 in new revenues and are poised to keep growing, substantially, both in terms of new sponsorships and co-branding opportunities with major companies, all of which spreads our message further.

Home Depot Foundation: The American Legion will be compensated \$50,000, plus \$1 million in annual post-revitalization grants and community projects nationwide was committed.

Vermont Teddy Bear: Campaign started in November 2014 and has raised approximately \$5,000 from sales for The American Legion.

Great Clips. An agreement for an American Legion-Great Clips “buzzcut challenge” during Veterans Week in November 2015 is complete, offering a minimum contribution of \$30,000 and potentially hundreds of thousands more in the nationwide campaign to get a buzz cut and/or donate to the Legion, a la the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge.

AbbVie: The American Legion has been compensated **\$270,000** to assist, promote, co-brand and participate in a nationwide, year-long Hepatitis C screenings and awareness campaign. Funding is divided accordingly:

\$225,000 for the National Corporate Alliance (promotions through owned media, staff support)

\$20,000 for National Convention sponsorship

\$15,000 for Hepatitis C screening event

\$10,000 for DSO sponsorship

Defense Mobile: The American Legion will be compensated with an initial \$100,000 and \$27 per customer, after three months using the communications service, with potential earnings of \$130,000 - \$1.3 million per year. More than 400 Legionnaires have already activated Defense Mobile accounts through The American Legion campaign, resulting in approximately \$10,800 in revenues.

Songs for Sound: The American Legion was compensated \$5,000 for National Convention hearing testing in 2015.

Direct Response Television

To coordinate the DRTV campaign and lay a foundation for success, it has taken American Legion staff working with CDR Fundraising Group, Resource One, Targeted Content Marketing and other agencies playing as a team with a shared goal.

To date:

Six different spots tested on 36 different television channels and more than 85 million households reached after launching in November 2014.

Cost of about \$2 million so far -- \$1.4 million in advertising buys and about \$770,000 in production, customer service and technological development; budgeted \$6 million for campaign

Approximately **\$214,000** in donations received

No fewer than 840 monthly donors and growing

Established the Oak Ridge Boys as “spokes-band” for the Legion and Christmas special is scheduled to air again, updated, in 2015

Free public service announcement campaign based on the DRTV creative development aired 4,807 times for 127.5 million impressions on TV; 74 times for 9.7 million impressions on radio; 62 times for 3.8 million impressions online

New campaign is currently being tested.

DRTV projected to follow similar trajectory as non-member fundraising program, in terms of net revenue

DMS Membership Acquisition

DMS counts finished the 2015 cycle at 121,729 members recruited. Focus was placed on expired members, where we reactivated 64,628 members. We also acquired an additional 57,101 new, never before members.

The first two DMS mailings for the 2016 cycle finished in November. Nearly 4 million pieces of mail were produced across many continuation and test rental lists as well as lists of expired members from 2005 forward. This year's focus will continue with similar acquisition objectives as 2015 but we are looking for significant ways to mitigate the cost to acquire. To date we have acquired about half of the 110,000 goal. The approach will continue to focus on targeted mailings but will also include electronic correspondence where deemed appropriate.

Non-member Fundraising

Now in its sixth year

Projected to finish 2015 budget year with net positive revenue of over \$1.7 million and substantially trending upward; now projected to stand at over \$2.5 million to the net positive for the life of the program to date

Began netting positive in third year

Department Fundraising

The ultimate goal for the Department Fundraising Program is to provide a comprehensive program that mails all member fundraising campaigns for all departments. Departments would receive a negotiated amount of income from these campaigns, to be paid to them in quarterly installments. In addition, they would receive any income generated from their campaigns in excess of the negotiated amount. This program aims to maximize those funds raised for departments while achieving a breakeven for the national organization.

Benefits of this program include:

Guaranteed minimum income for departments

Consistent message to members

Reduced risk of over-mailing

Protection of member lists & data

Efficiencies of scale (as quantities go up, costs go down and net income increases)

Participation in the department fundraising program continues to grow. Twenty-one departments have opted into the guarantee program.

Vehicle Donation Program

Pursuant to Resolution 10 – Authorization for The American Legion to Enter into a Relationship to Promote a Vehicle Donation Program, an agreement was executed on December 2, 2014 between The American Legion and Automotive Recovery Services, Inc. dba Insurance Auto Auctions (IAA). To date we have processed: 91 cars totaling \$40,900. Fourth quarter promotions planned and placed in print and electronic medias greatly improved our year end results of this program.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION

Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman

John W. Querfeld, Illinois, Director

The National Internal Affairs Commission was established by resolution of the National Executive Committee in 1947. The original charge for this constitutional commission still remains: to formulate and recommend policies and to oversee the implementation of adopted policies relating to activities conducted for organizational purposes.

Among those purposes are all those not properly the responsibility of any other national commission, as well as membership strategies, post formation, clerical and records administration for posts and individual members and special projects. The Commission provides guidance and assistance to the National Adjutant on necessary administrative operations. Under the broad interpretation of those purposes not properly the responsibility of other commissions, Internal Affairs oversees awards, constitutional discipline and commemorative activities. The Commission also monitors legislative and other regulatory activities that potentially affect Legion posts and departments, recommending appropriate courses of action.

The Commission has three standing committees assigned to it for supervision and coordination: National Convention Resolutions Assignment Committee, Constitution and By-Laws Committee, and Membership & Post Activities Committee. The latter has

separate reporting responsibilities to the National Convention and the National Executive Committee. In addition, the Commission oversees the American Legion Riders Advisory Committee to Internal Affairs.

The Internal Affairs Commission also provides guidance for the following programs:

Sons of The American Legion — For the 42nd consecutive year, the Sons of The American Legion (SAL) are at an “All Time High” in membership. The SAL closed its membership at the end of 2014 with a record 358,009 members. This number represents .51% increase over the previous year. A total of 34 detachments achieved 100% membership.

Membership in the SAL for 2015 is expected to surpass that of 2014 and give them another “All Time High” for 2015 prior to National Convention in August 2015.

The SAL continues its support of several American Legion programs and is heavily involved with support to our nation’s veterans in the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services (VAVS) program. In 2014, the SAL provided over 472,906 volunteer hours in VA homes and hospitals. Donations in cash and goods to these veterans exceeded \$1,172,358 nationwide. Other projects include Americanism programs of which \$2,033,159 was donated along with 738,304 hours of service. This was remarkable considering only 20% of the Squadrons submitted reports. In 2014, the Sons have raised over \$346,099 for the Child Welfare Foundation and provided numerous grants through The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Since 1987, the SAL has contributed over six million dollars to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.

The Sons continue to support Legion programs with a major emphasis on VAVS, National Emergency Fund and the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund in addition to other vital programs. As a major program and an integral part of The American Legion family, the Sons continue to serve and provide assistance to posts and their communities.

The American Legion Riders — The National Executive Committee established The American Legion Riders (ALR) as a national program in October 2007 to be supported and administered by posts and departments. The National American Legion Riders Committee is appointed each year by the National Commander and makes recommendations to the Internal Affairs Commission concerning all matters of the ALR program.

The ALR committee provides recommendations for ALR program training, provides training instruction when invited by departments and provide significant guidance for the planning and execution of The American Legion Legacy Run each year. Of particular importance to the committee is the establishment of program protocols adhering to federal rules regarding The American Legion’s trademarks and proper supervision provided to the ALR programs by the posts.

Members of the ALR Committee also serve as liaisons within each of six national regions to provide information and support to departments and posts.

The ALR Committee meets when called by the Internal Affairs Commission, either in person or by teleconferencing.

This program is organized by chapters in some 1,500 American Legion posts and has grown to more than 100,000 members with activities in virtually every department. The Riders raise money for many charitable causes, most notably The American Legion Legacy Scholarship. Since 2006, the annual American Legion Legacy Run has conducted nine major cross-country, multi-day motorcycle runs, traveling more than 12,900 miles and collecting over \$5,274,000 for college scholarships for the children of our servicemen and women who have died on active duty. In 2014 The American Legion Legacy Run from Indianapolis, Indiana to the convention city of Charlotte, North Carolina, raised over \$1 million for the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

National Emergency Fund — From January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014, The American Legion provided \$73,275 in grant monies to Legion and SAL members, as

well as American Legion posts. During the same period, the National Emergency Fund received donations totaling \$437,537.

In a normal year, approximately \$300,000 is dispersed as grants to our members and posts. Every dollar contributed to the fund is used for rendering financial assistance to those that qualify who have incurred devastation from a declared natural disaster. The grants are to be used for immediate needs – lodging, food and clothing – and not as a substitute for insurance. In order to qualify, members must have been displaced or evacuated from their primary place of residence and be a member in good standing at the time of loss. Monies to support the administrative costs of maintaining this fund and to conduct fundraising are absorbed through existing budget areas.

The National Emergency Fund is unique and members know they can turn to The American Legion for immediate financial assistance, without payback. Through the generosity of Legion and Sons of The American Legion members, the National Emergency Fund will continue to meet the needs of our Legion family in the aftermath of local, state and national weather related disasters.

Consolidated Post Reports — The Consolidated Post Report was established in 1975 in order to assist departments in the documentation of the various activities a specific post has done during the twelve-month reporting period, June 1st through May 31st. During the 2014-2015 reporting year, sixty-seven percent of posts reported some activity.

Throughout the reporting year American Legion post members volunteered 867,960 hours in assisting veterans at VA Hospitals; donated \$2,923,929 in emergency aid; 48,057 Legionnaires gave over 78,840 pints of blood; events covered through different media outlets totaled 140,451; performed 110,780 funeral honors at a cost of \$2,790,678; sponsored 2,024 American Legion baseball teams at a cost of \$6,111,240; Legion posts sponsored 2,100 Boy Scout packs for a cost of \$1,742,230; through various school assisted programs they spend \$5,498,273; presented 19,488 American flags; performed 3,756,228 community service hours while spending \$4,263,505 in support of those activities; and all other donations to Family Support Network, Cancer Research, United Way, Legion Endowment Fund, Children's Hospitals, National Emergency Fund, Special Olympics, Temporary Financial Assistance and other various activities totaled \$14,326,744.

The National American Legion College — Each November, the National American Legion College (NALC) hosts many talented young Legionnaires at the National Headquarters in Indianapolis for a week of intensive training. These students return to their departments with enhanced knowledge and appreciation for The American Legion. They are taught the core values and contributions of the organization and are challenged to think critically and creatively about issues confronting The American Legion.

Candidates for the NALC must be veterans who served during the Lebanon/Grenada era or later, with demonstrated potential for higher leadership roles. Student candidates are nominated by their respective departments and rank ordered by a selection committee. In 2014 we had 58 students attend the National American Legion College.

Graduates are making a difference in leadership roles and membership teams across the country. Many have already been appointed to department and national level positions while others are used in various leadership and teaching roles within their respective departments.

Since the National American Legion College was reinstated in 1998, we have graduated 730 Legionnaires ready to assume leadership at various levels.

Leadership Education and Development Training — The American Legion's national organization exists to support its individual members, their families, all veterans and service members, and their communities. The functions at the national level – including membership, communications, training, finance, archives and legal support – serve as foundations for the volunteer leadership. Since “membership in The American Legion is membership in the National Organization of The American Legion by affiliation with

posts,” it is essential that members fully understand the programs and practices of The American Legion.

To help educate and provide support for departments, counties, districts and local posts, national headquarters staff has organized and coordinated the Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) program. In 2014, we provided training in 26 departments. The program is a one-day, eight-hour training session designed to provide instruction to departments, county, district and post members. Department leaders are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity.

There are 25 classes available. From those, departments may choose any combination that totals at least eight hours of instruction. National staff experts will cover a wide range of topics relevant to the operations of The American Legion. All training can be conducted in conjunction with current planned department functions such as winter/spring/fall, district, county or department conferences and conventions. A cap/lapel pin is presented to each participant that has completed, at the minimum, eight hours of LEAD training.

NATIONAL CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS ASSIGNMENT COMMITTEE

Michael E. Cassidy, Massachusetts, Chairman

The Resolutions Assignment Committee meets at least three days before the convening of the national convention. This committee has the responsibility to receive, consider and transmit all resolutions – with or without recommendation – to the appropriate convention committee for a report to the convention. During an average year, between 200 and 300 resolutions will be assigned.

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS COMMITTEE

Vincent Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman

The National Constitution and By-laws of The American Legion can only be amended by the duly elected delegates at a national convention.

However, the Constitution & By-Laws Committee, established by the authority of the National Executive Committee in 1939, authorizes this committee to study and make proper recommendations concerning all of the matters that pertain to the constitution and by-laws, as well as matters relating to the Uniform Code of Procedure, which provides rules and regulations for the revocation, cancellation or suspension of department and post charters of The American Legion.

MEMBERSHIP & POST ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Kenneth E. Orrock, South Dakota, Chairman

Billy R. Johnson, Georgia, Membership Director

Membership and programs go hand in hand to making The American Legion an organization able to provide people and resources to serve the needs of veterans and their families. Membership & Post Activities is pleased to report a continuing membership of over 2.2 million members worldwide.

Membership - Final 2013 membership – 2,311,701

Final 2014 membership – 2,208,651

Final 2015 membership – 2,135,651

52nd Annual National Membership Workshop — The 52nd Annual National Membership Workshop convened in Indianapolis on August 7-8, 2015, with more than 300 department and district officers from nearly all 50 departments in attendance.

Many who attended already had a good understanding of The American Legion’s membership program, especially as it pertains to their departments and districts. When the workshop concluded, they are prepared to face day-to-day membership challenges with a better understanding of the Legion as it relates to potential members.

The goal of the workshop is to provide these essential membership workers with the tools, knowledge and desire to serve The American Legion's membership. Whether they are involved in recruitment or program implementation, the workshop teaches veterans to help veterans and provide communities the essential programs to maintain a quality of life for which all veterans fought and served to preserve.

New Post Development/Revitalization — The Membership & Post Activities Committee developed a training program in January 1996 designed to assist posts, districts and departments in developing and revitalizing posts. The program provides training workshops to interested volunteers, along with practical, hands on field application.

The success of the program is evident, based on the revitalization and development of more than 3,700 American Legion posts in the past 19 years. Many departments have succeeded in revitalizing posts without any direct assistance from National Headquarters staff. Whether departments request field assistance or just send members to the training workshop, positive results follow if they adhere to the guidelines established.

LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

Brett Reistad, Virginia, Chairman

Ian DePlanque, District of Columbia, Director

This report covers activities of the Legislative Commission from August 16, 2014 through August 15, 2015. During this period, the Commission met two (2) times to review the legislative program and to make recommendations to the National Executive Committee. Reports of these meetings are contained in the published proceedings of the National Executive Committee.

Purpose, Personnel and Organization

The Legislative Commission represents The American Legion before the Congress of the United States on all legislative matters in which The American Legion is officially interested. The Commission also assists the National Executive Committee in formulating an appropriate legislative program for each session of Congress. The Commission consists of 33 members and 5 National Executive Committee liaisons.

To further assist the Commission in its work, the National Executive Committee created the National Legislative Council in 1975, composed of Legionnaires whose judgment and advice are respected by their Members of Congress. There is one council member for each Member of Congress. A Council Chairman heads the Council, and is assisted by a Vice Chairman in each Department. The Chairman, Vice Chairmen and general membership of the Council are appointed by the National Commander upon recommendation by the Departments.

The professional staff of the Commission (the Legislative Division) concentrates on implementing the legislative mandates of The American Legion; these mandates are expressed in resolutions adopted at the annual National Convention and by the National Executive Committee at each of its regularly scheduled meetings. The Legislative Division is located in Washington, DC and consists of the director, a deputy director, an assistant director, an assistant director/grassroots coordinator, two administrative assistants, and a research analyst. The director, deputy director, and assistant director are registered lobbyists and submit semi-annual lobbying reports to Congress, in addition to quarterly reports on legislation which our organization lobbies Congress. Because The American Legion is a federally chartered organization, an annual report is also prepared and submitted to Congress.

113th Congress, 2nd Session

The FY 2015 appropriations process ground to a halt, when the deadline for passage of the 12 appropriations bills to fund federal programs – October 1, 2014 – passed. The House had passed 7 of the 12 spending bills, while the Senate has passed none.

Since none of the appropriations bills were enacted by the end of September, a continuing resolution was needed to keep the federal government running. A total of three continuing resolutions kept the federal government operating from October 1 through December 17, 2014. Final funding for FY 2015 was approved by Congress in mid-December, with the House approving the measure by a 219-206 vote on December 11, and the Senate passing the bill on December 13 by a 56-40 vote. It was signed into law as Public Law(PL) 113-235 on December 16.

The American Legion participated in 23 congressional hearings during the Second Session.

AMERICANISM

Under the provisions of PL 113-235, the “Omnibus, Consolidated, Further Continuing Appropriations Act for FY 2015” – signed by the President on December 16, 2014 – Department of Justice programs will receive funding for the remainder of the fiscal year (which ends on September 30, 2015). Specific areas of interest to The American Legion include:

- **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI):** The FBI received \$8.4 billion for this year, an increase of \$93 million over FY 2014.
- **U.S. Marshals Service:** This agency received \$1.7 billion for FY 2015.
- **Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA):** \$2.0 billion is tabbed for this agency.
- **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF):** The legislation contains \$1.2 billion for ATF, an increase of \$22 million above FY 2014 enacted levels.
- **Juvenile Justice Grants:** A total of \$2.3 billion was set aside for various state and local grant programs. One program area that has been a primary Legion concern since 1974 is the account for juvenile justice grants, which totals \$251.5 million for FY 2015. These grants address such concerns as child abuse, youth gangs and violence against children, missing / exploited children, and underage drinking.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

President Obama on December 16, 2014 signed into law PL 113-212, the “World War I American Veterans Centennial Commemorative Coin Act.” The law directs the Secretary of the Treasury to: (1) mint and issue \$1 silver coins in commemoration of the centennial of America's involvement in World War I; and (2) hold a juried competition, and compensate its winner, for design of the obverse and reverse of the coins in a way emblematic of the centennial.

NATIONAL SECURITY

On December 19, 2014 the President enacted PL 113-291, the “FY 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).” Budget highlights which interest The American Legion include: \$521.3 billion in base discretionary spending and \$63.7 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). The FY 2015 NDAA is \$48 billion less than the FY 2014 NDAA.

Provisions affecting servicemembers, veterans, and retirees include:

- **Pharmacy co-pays:** \$3 increase in select co-pays. No increase in mail-order generic pharmaceuticals. Consideration of further increases is postponed until after the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) report in February 2015.
- **Troop Pay & Allowances:** Military pay increase is 1 percent; pay freeze for Generals and Admirals and includes a Senate provision that removes a retirement incentive for general officers that was added by Congress in 2006.

- **Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH):** 1 percent decrease. This change will not affect veteran's benefits such as GI Bill stipends, which are based on BAH. Consideration of further changes is postponed until after the MCRMC report.
- **Combating Sexual Assault in the Military:** Eliminates the "good soldier defense" - a consideration of general military character toward the probability of innocence in sexual assault prosecutions. Victims will be consulted as to their preference for prosecuting offenders by court-martial or through civilian channels.
- **Commissaries:** requires DOD to consult with outside experts in retail grocery sales to find efficiencies in the commissary system.
- **Purple Heart:** provides authorization for awarding the Purple Heart to servicemembers killed or wounded in a domestic attack inspired by a foreign terrorist organization, such as the attack at Fort Hood, TX.
- **Military Suicide:** directs DOD to track the issue closely, especially regarding the growth in the suicide rate in the special operations community and authorizes an additional \$18.8 million towards behavioral and psychological health programs and efforts specifically for Special Operations Forces.
- **Military Readiness:** \$212 billion for operation and maintenance such as ship refueling and overhaul, depot maintenance, and facilities sustainment; streamlines readiness reports to the Armed Services committees by adding that new reports be focused on current missions and their impacts on potential future wartime missions, combat support functions like intelligence, logistics, and other vital skill sets in high demand; authorizes a pilot program to increase re-utilization of excess equipment in Afghanistan by transporting the equipment to key partners for use in other missions, such as those against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Other provisions of interest to the Legion include the following:

- **Supplemental Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) Request:** \$3.4 billion for sustaining *Operation Inherent Resolve* and \$1.6 billion to train and equip Iraqi and Peshmerga security forces, including intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms, replenishing munitions expended while conducting airstrikes against ISIL, and financing operations and maintenance costs for air, ground and naval operations to date.
- **Counter Terrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF):** \$1.3 billion for a 2 year program to build partner anti-terrorism capacity in the Middle East and Africa, except Iraq, and to allow US forces to provide support to foreign partners undertaking counterterrorism activities.
- **Special Operations Combating Terrorism Authority:** permits special operations forces to work with indigenous or surrogate forces in support of US operations, extends the authority through 2017, and raises the authorized amount to \$75 million.
- **Afghanistan:** expresses that any drawdown of post-2014 US forces should be considered in relation to the security conditions on the ground at the time of the drawdown and the recommendation of senior US military commanders, requires a plan for monitoring DoD funded construction activities in Afghanistan post-2014, and requires a report on the financial management capacity of the Afghan ministries of Defense and Interior, and requires the Secretary of Defense to submit an Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) sustainment plan through the end of FY 2018.
- **National Guard and Reserve Component Equipment:** \$1.25 billion.

Under the provisions of PL 113-235, the "Omnibus, Consolidated, Further Continuing Appropriations Act for FY 2015" – signed by the President on December 16, 2014 – military construction accounts would receive a total of \$6.6 billion, a reduction of \$3.3

billion from the previous year, due to a reduction in new projects. This amount includes \$1.2 billion for family housing projects, with another \$416 million slated for military medical treatment facilities. It further appropriates \$427 million for the construction or alterations of Guard and Reserve facilities, and \$395 million for essential safety improvements and infrastructure work at seven DOD Education Activities facilities in the U.S. and overseas.

Other provisions in the law address Department of Defense funding for the balance of the fiscal year. DOD appropriations include \$490.2 billion in the base budget and \$64 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations. Defense spending includes:

- **Personnel:** \$128 billion for military personnel and pay accounts, including a 1 percent pay raise for all uniformed personnel. The funding is \$800 million below FY 2014.
- **Operation and Maintenance:** \$161.7 billion (\$1.8 billion above the previous year).
- **Procurement:** \$94 billion, \$1.1 billion over the enacted 2014 level.
- **Research and Development:** \$63.7 billion; \$700 million above FY 2014 spending levels.
- **Health:** \$32.1 billion for DOD health and family programs. Overall, the legislation includes increased funding for cancer research, as well as traumatic brain injury and psychological health research and suicide prevention outreach programs.

According to the House Appropriations Committee, savings were found in a number of ways, including \$2.5 billion in rescissions of unused prior-year funding, \$660 million in excess civilian personnel costs, \$270 million for overestimation of information technology costs, and \$386 million for revised economic assumptions.

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

On September 26, 2014, President Obama enacted PL 113-175, the “Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Extension Act of 2014.” The new law has a number of provisions, including:

- Extends through 2015 VA authority to transport individuals to and from VA facilities in connection with vocational rehabilitation, counseling, examination, treatment, or care;
- Extends through 2015 VA authority to operate a regional office in the Republic of the Philippines;
- Extends through 2015 the VA requirement to provide nursing home care to any veteran with a service-connected disability rated at 70% or more and in need of such care;
- Extends through 2015 VA authority to provide treatment, rehabilitation, and related services for seriously mentally ill veterans;
- Extends through 2015 the temporary authority for the performance of VA medical disability examinations by contract physicians, and,
- Authorization for the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans. This authority extends through FY 2015.

On September 26, 2014 President Obama signed PL 113-181, legislation to provide a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) of 1.7 percent for eligible veterans and dependents. The veterans COLA affects several benefits, including veterans’ service-connected disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children. The COLA is designed to offset inflation and other factors that lead to the rising cost of living over time. It matches the annual increase provided to Social Security recipients and is based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index.

On December 16, 2014 President Obama enacted PL 113-221, the “Honor Flight Act.” This measure will direct the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration

(TSA) to establish a process for providing expedited and dignified passenger screening services for veterans traveling on an Honor Flight Network private charter – or another not-for-profit organization that honors veterans – to visit war memorials built and dedicated to honor their service.

On December 18, 2014, the President signed PL 113-257, the “Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Care Improvement Act.” This new law requires VA to submit detailed quarterly reports to Congress regarding the pilot program for rehabilitative services for veterans with traumatic brain injury.

Under the provisions of PL 113-235, the “Omnibus, Consolidated, Further Continuing Appropriations Act for FY 2015” – signed by the President on December 16, 2014 – accounts for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) would receive a total of \$159.1 billion, with discretionary funding totaling \$65 billion, an increase of \$1.8 billion above the FY 2014 level. Included in the discretionary funding accounts are:

- **VA Health Care** – \$45.2 billion, providing for 6.7 million patients to be treated in FY 2014. Funds include: \$7.2 billion in mental health care services; \$7.4 billion in homeless veterans treatment, services, housing, and job training; \$250 million in rural health initiatives; \$229 million for traumatic brain injury treatment; and, \$133 million in suicide prevention activities. In addition, a total of \$58.7 billion is provided for advance FY 2016 medical care funding for VA. This funding provides for medical services, medical support and compliance, and medical facilities.
- **Medical and Prosthetic Research** – The new law provided \$589 million for this account.
- **National Cemetery Administration** – This agency received \$257 million for its operations.
- **Information Technology (IT)** – This account received \$3.9 million.
- **DOD-VA Electronic Health Record** – \$344 million for efforts within the VA. The legislation includes language to ensure VA creates a truly interoperable, working system – in a timely and cost-effective fashion – to help prevent unnecessary mistakes or delays in veterans’ medical care.
- **Disability Claims Processing Backlog** – \$2.5 billion is appropriated to help VA meet its goal of ending the disability compensation claims backlog by 2015. This includes language directing that: increased funding be used to support digital scanning of claims; to hire additional claims processors in regional offices; and for the centralized mail initiative. Funding for the Board of Veterans Appeals is increased by \$11 million over FY 2014 – totaling \$99 million – to address the looming appeals backlog.
- **Construction** – Major construction funding totals \$562 million, while minor construction is \$495 million.
- **Construction Grants** – The state extended care facilities account will receive \$90 million, with the state cemeteries programs being assigned \$46 million. Both of these programs have been essentially flat-lined for a number of years; The American Legion has urged Congress to make substantial increases in both grant accounts.
- **Oversight** – Includes provisions to increase oversight at VA, including requiring the agency to report on construction expenditures and savings, forbidding changes in the scope of construction projects, and restricting the agency from taking certain spending actions without notifying Congress.

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

Other provisions contained in PL 113-175 (outlined above in the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation section) would address other areas affecting veterans. They include:

- Extends through 2015 VA authority to provide expanded services and housing assistance to homeless veterans;
- Extends through 2015 VA authority to provide treatment, rehabilitation, and related services for homeless veterans;
- Extends through 2015 the Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans; and,
- Extends through 2015 the Veterans' Advisory Commission on Education.

The consolidated appropriations bill for FY 2015 – PL 113-235 – included funding for the Department of Labor, specifically for the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS). Spending for VETS totals \$270 million. Funding for individual VETS accounts includes:

- \$175 million for Jobs for Veterans state grants, which fund DVOP and LVER personnel;
- \$39.5 million in federal administrative costs;
- \$38.1 million to fund the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs;
- \$14 million to carry out the Transition Assistance Program (TAP); and,
- \$3.4 million to fund the operations of the National Veterans' Employment and Training Services Institute (NVTI).

114th Congress, 1st Session

The First Session of the 114th Congress convened on January 6, 2015. Major issues on the agenda for both chambers revolved mainly around fiscal year (FY) 2016 appropriations for the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Veterans Affairs (VA). To date, The American Legion has participated in thirty-one congressional hearings during the First Session.

On February 2, the Obama Administration released its budget request for the FY 2016 federal budget, including VA. This proposal includes \$73.5 billion in discretionary funding to include medical programs to provide high-quality health care for veterans and research for conditions and diseases that affect these veterans. This figure includes an estimated \$3.2 billion in medical care collections. The proposed budget would also allocate \$95.3 billion for VA's mandatory funding accounts, for a total of \$168.8 billion for all VA programs.

Some of the major areas of emphasis which are an integral part of the FY 2016 budget's services to veterans include:

- \$63.3 billion in advance appropriations for FY 2017;
- \$7 billion to continue VA's focus on expanding and transforming mental health services for veterans to ensure accessible and patient-centered care;
- \$2.7 billion to fund the Veterans Benefits Administration; an increase of \$164 million;
- \$1.4 billion to serve homeless and at-risk veterans;
- \$1.1 billion for major construction projects, an increase of \$581 million over current year funding, and \$406 million for minor construction, a reduction of \$89 million;
- \$622 million for medical and prosthetic research; and,
- \$266 million for the National Cemetery Administration, an increase of \$9 million over FY15.

The FY 2016 appropriations process started strongly, as the House Appropriations Committee completed work on all 12 funding measures by the August recess, with the full House passing six of those measure. However, Senate work on companion measures has lagged. The Senate Appropriations Committee has approved seven, and none of these measures has been voted on by the full Senate. It is now looking more likely that a continuing resolution will be passed to give both chambers time to work on these funding vehicles for the next fiscal year.

AMERICANISM

Since its introduction earlier this year, House Joint Resolution (HJ Res.) 9 – flag protection legislation – has failed to garner a great deal of support in the 114th Congress. Since being assigned to the House Judiciary Committee, no hearings have been held. The measure has 34 cosponsors. The American Legion will continue to seek passage of a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag because it is the right thing to do. Let “We the People” decide.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

On June 4 by a vote of 242-183 the House of Representatives approved HR 2578, a measure to fund the Departments of Commerce and Justice, and Science programs for FY 2016. On June 11 the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a draft funding measure, by a vote of 27-3, sending it to the full Senate for consideration. The Department of Justice (DOJ) would receive \$27.5 billion in funding for the upcoming fiscal year under the House measure, while the Senate version would give DOJ \$27.8 billion. Several of the DOJ accounts are of particular concern to The American Legion. Funding amounts for selected accounts include:

- \$8.5 billion for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the House bill, \$8.4 billion in the Senate measure;
- \$2.4 billion for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in both versions;
- \$2.3 billion for U.S. Marshals in the House measure, \$2.7 billion in the Senate bill;
- \$2 billion for state and local law enforcement and crime prevention grant programs in the House measure, \$2.3 billion in the Senate bill;
- \$1.24 billion for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) in the House bill, \$1.20 billion in the Senate version;
- \$187 million for juvenile justice and mentoring grants in the House version, \$295 million in the Senate bill; and,
- \$5 million for setup/training costs of veterans’ treatment courts in both measures.

NATIONAL SECURITY

FY 2015 funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was contained in PL 114-4, signed by the President on March 4, 2015. A total of \$39.7 billion were appropriated, an increase of \$400 million compared to FY 2014. Some of the major accounts which interest The American Legion are:

- **Customs & Border Protection (CBP):** \$9.9 billion, about \$700 million below last year’s amount. This funding will allow nearly 21,400 Border Patrol agents and 23,775 CBP officers.
- **Coast Guard:** \$9.86 billion, which was nearly \$600 million below the previous fiscal year’s funding.
- **Disaster Relief:** Funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) totals \$7 billion. This includes \$2.5 billion for first responder grants; and \$1.5 billion for state and local grants, amount equal to the previous year’s amounts.
- **Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE):** The law provides \$5.9 billion for ICE, \$600 million above FY 2014 levels. Among ICE’s areas of responsibility are human trafficking, child exploitation, cyber-crime, and drug smuggling. The bill also fully funds E-Verify, a program that helps companies check if their employees may legally work in this country.
- **Transportation Security Agency (TSA):** \$4.8 billion. This includes funding for security enforcement, cargo inspections, intelligence functions, and increases for canine detention teams and privatized screening operations.

- **Secret Service:** \$1.7 billion. The bill increases funding for cybersecurity investigations, rejects the President's proposed cuts to critical Secret Service staffing, and continues funding for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children which the President proposed to zero out.

The measure also includes a prohibition on the transfer or release of detainees from Guantanamo Bay.

On April 30 the House of Representatives by a vote of 255-163 approved HR 2029, the FY 2016 Military Construction and Department of Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies spending bill. The Senate Appropriations Committee passed its version of this measure on May 21. A total of \$7.7 billion in overall military construction is contained in the House measure, an increase of \$904 million as compared to FY 2015 amounts. The Senate version would provide \$8.1 billion

- **Military Family Housing** – Both bills provide \$1.4 billion to fund construction, operation and maintenance of military family housing for FY 2016. This is \$223 million above the current year level and the same as the budget request. The funding will ensure quality housing is sustained for all 1.4 military families currently served by the program.
- **Military Medical Facilities** – The House bill includes \$607 million (\$678 million in the Senate version) for construction and alterations for new or existing military medical facilities, an increase of \$121 million above the FY 2015 enacted level. This funding will allow for continued support and care for 9.8 million eligible beneficiaries, including our wounded troops abroad.
- **DOD Education Facilities** – Both bills include \$334 million for essential safety improvements and infrastructure work at 10 DOD Education Activities facilities located within the U.S. and overseas.
- **Guard and Reserve** – The House measure includes \$512 million for construction or alteration of Guard and Reserve facilities in 28 states, an increase of \$85 million above the current year enacted level. The Senate version would provide \$551 million.
- **NATO Security Investment Program (NSIP)** – The House bill provides \$150 million – \$30 million over the President's request and \$49.7 million below FY 2015 – for infrastructure necessary for wartime, crisis, and peace support and deterrence operations, and training requirements. The funds will support responses to the challenges posed by Russia and to the risks and threats emanating from the Middle East and North Africa. The Senate version would fund this account at \$120 million.

On June 11 the House voted 278-149 to approve HR 2685, legislation to fund Department of Defense (DOD) programs for FY 2016 at \$578.6 billion. The Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the legislation – S 1558 – on the same day by a voice vote. Among the programs addressed were:

- \$218.8 billion for Operation and Maintenance in the House version, \$139.2 billion in the Senate bill. This funding supports key readiness programs to prepare our troops for combat and peacetime missions, including flight time and battle training, equipment and facility maintenance, and base operations;
- \$133.2 billion for Military Personnel and pay in the House bill, \$129.4 billion in the Senate version. This would provide for 1.3 million Active Duty personnel and 819,000 National Guard and reserve personnel;
- \$116.7 billion for Equipment Procurement in the House measure, while the Senate bill would provide \$109.8 billion. These funds support our nation's military readiness by providing the necessary platforms, weapons, and other equipment our military needs to train, maintain the force, and conduct successful operations;

- \$88.4 billion for the War on Terror in the House bill, \$86.8 billion in the Senate version;
- \$67.9 billion for Research and Development in the House bill, \$70.3 billion in the Senate measure, for research, development, testing, and evaluation of new defense technologies; and,
- \$31.7 billion for Defense Health and Military Family Programs in the House bill, \$32.3 billion in the Senate version, to provide care for our troops, military families, and retirees.

On June 18, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved S 1619, the FY 2016 funding bill for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). A total of \$47.1 billion would be assigned to the various programs of this agency, \$765 million above the FY 2015 funding level. The House Appropriations Committee passed its version of the bill, HR 3128, on July 14, providing \$39.3 billion for DHS programs. Some of the major accounts which interest The American Legion are:

- **Customs & Border Protection (CBP):** \$11.08 billion, about \$385 million above this year's amount in the Senate bill, \$11.1 billion in the House version. This funding will allow nearly 21,370 Border Patrol agents and 23,775 CBP officers.
- **Coast Guard:** \$10.44 billion, which was nearly \$496 million above current year's funding in the Senate measure, \$8.5 billion in the House bill.
- **Disaster Relief:** Funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) totals \$7.37 billion in the Senate measure, \$7.4 billion in the House version. This includes \$2.5 billion for first responder grants.
- **Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE):** Both bills provide \$5.8 billion for ICE, \$143 million below FY 2015 levels. Among ICE's areas of responsibility are human trafficking, child exploitation, cyber-crime, and drug smuggling. The bill also fully funds E-Verify, a program that helps companies check if their employees may legally work in this country.
- **Transportation Security Agency (TSA):** \$4.72 billion in the Senate measure, \$4.65 billion in the House bill. Included is funding for security enforcement, cargo inspections, intelligence, increases for canine detention teams, and privatized screening operations.
- **Secret Service:** \$1.9 billion, an increase of \$258 million above FY 2015 amounts in both versions. These bills increase funding for cybersecurity investigations, rejects the President's proposed cuts to critical Secret Service staffing, and continues funding for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children which the President proposed to zero out.

Neither chamber has acted on its funding measure for DHS.

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

On April 30, the House of Representatives, by a 255-163 recorded vote, approved HR 2029, a bill to fund VA operations for FY 2016. at \$163.2 billion, \$4.1 billion above the current year's funding amounts. Discretionary programs will receive \$76.6 billion, including \$55.6 billion in advance appropriations. The Senate Appropriations Committee passed its version of HR 2029 on May 21. The Senate panel would fund FY 2016 VA operations at \$163.8 billion.

The chart below indicates VA's medical care accounts with FY 2016 VA discretionary funding, the President's proposed FY 2017 advance appropriations for the medical care accounts, and the funding amounts passed by the full House and the Senate Appropriations Committee.

	Final FY 2016 Advance Approps. PL 113-235	President's FY 2017 VA Advance Approps.	HR 2029, FY 2017 House Proposal	Draft bill, FY 2017 Senate Proposal
Medical Services	\$48.57 billion [@]	\$51.67 billion	\$51.67 billion	\$51.67 billion
Medical Support & Compliance	\$6.21 billion	\$6.52 billion	\$6.52 billion	\$6.52 billion
Medical Facilities	\$4.91 billion	\$5.07 billion	\$5.07 billion	\$5.07 billion
Medical/Prosthetic Research ^s	\$589 million (FY 2015)	\$622 million (FY 2016)	\$622 million (FY 2016)	\$622 million (FY 2016)
Total Medical Care	\$60.27 billion	\$63.9 billion	\$63.9 billion	\$63.9 billion

[@] Includes \$969 million in additional funds requested by the House

^s This account is *not* included in the advance appropriations calculations.

The chart below presents discretionary funding for non-medical VA programs, showing FY 2015, the President's FY 2016 proposal, and the funding amounts passed by the full House and Senate Appropriations Committee.

	Final FY 2015 VA Approps. PL 113-235	President's FY 2016 Budget Proposal	HR 2029, House FY 2016 Proposal	Draft bill, Senate FY 2016 Proposal
National Cemetery Administration	\$257 million	\$266 million	\$266 million	\$266 million
General Operating Expenses – VBA	\$2.53 billion	\$2.69 billion	\$2.70 billion	\$2.69 billion
Information Technology	\$3.9 billion	\$4.13 billion	\$4.04 billion	\$4.11 billion
Major Construction	\$562 million	\$1.14 billion	\$562 million	\$1.03 billion
Minor Construction	\$495 million	\$406 million	\$406 million	\$378 million
State Homes Construction Grants	\$90 million	\$80 million	\$80 million	\$100 million
State Cemetery Construction Grants	\$46 million	\$45 million	\$45 million	\$46 million

Other accounts in the measure which interest The American Legion include:

- \$74 million for the American Battle Monument Commission (ABMC) in the House bill, \$75 million in the Senate version;
- \$32 million for the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in both versions;
- \$71 million for Arlington National Cemetery in both bills; and,
- \$64 million for operations, maintenance, and the capital plan for the Armed Forces Retirement Home in both versions.

On May 22, President Obama enacted PL 114-19, the "Construction Authorization and Choice Improvement Act." This legislation authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to carry out the replacement of the existing VA Medical Center in Denver, Colorado, in FY2015 in an amount not to exceed \$900 million. This provision expanded the funding authorization for the replacement hospital from \$850 million to \$900 million.

The public law also made modifications to the 40-mile distance requirement for a veteran to use a non-VA medical facility under the veterans choice program of the "Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014" (PL 113-146) shall allow a veteran to access a non-VA medical facility if:

- The veteran resides more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA facility; or
- The veteran faces an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to such VA medical facility not only because of geographical challenges (as under current law) but also because of environmental factors, such as roads that are not accessible to the general public, traffic, or hazardous weather, because of a medical condition that impacts the ability to travel, or because of other factors as the Secretary determines.

This measure was further modified on June 15, when the President signed PL 114-25. That law increased the authorization for the Denver replacement medical center to \$1.5 billion. It also delineated transfers of funds from various accounts throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs budget and assigned them to the construction funding for the new hospital.

On July 20, the President signed PL 114-31, “Veterans Identification Card Act of 2015,” a bill that creates a new identification card (ID) for military veterans. Sponsored by Representative Vern Buchanan (FL), the bill allows VA to issue a veteran's identification card (VA currently only provides VA-enrolled veterans an ID card). The newly-legislated VA card would allow veterans to prove their veteran status without having to carry a military service record, such as the most common form of proof of service known as the “DD-214.” DD-214s contain sensitive personal information, such as the veteran’s Social Security Number, thus leaving a veteran at risk for identify theft.

The new law was introduced on the first day of the current session of Congress and had 82 cosponsors. The bill directs VA to provide the ID card to all veterans who request the card and if they are not already entitled to either military retired pay or enrollment in VA health care. A veteran will have to provide a name, photograph, and proof of service, with a DD-214 or other official document from their military personnel file that describes their military service. VA will charge a fee for the card. The card will state that the card is NOT proof for entitlement to any benefits.

PL 114-31 passed the House in May by a vote of 402-0 and the Senate in June by unanimous consent with one amendment. The bill was returned to the House for approval of the amendment, approved July 7, and the House sent the bill to the president July 9.

The President on July 31 signed PL 114-41, the “Surface Transportation and Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 2015.” This measure directs VA to develop a plan to consolidate all non-VA provider programs into a new, single Veterans Choice Program to furnish hospital care and medical services at non-VA facilities for veterans in the patient enrollment system. It further requires the presidential budget for FY2017 and every ensuing fiscal year to include an appropriations account for non-VA provider programs.

It also grants the VA temporary authority, until the end of FY 2015, to use certain transfers from the Veterans Choice Fund to pay for health care for eligible veterans at non-VA facilities, including pharmaceuticals for treatment of Hepatitis C.

The law also modifies requirements of the “Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014” to:

- repeal the 60-day limit on follow-up care;
- repeal the August 1, 2012, enrollment limitation on the eligibility of veterans in the patient enrollment system;
- extend provider eligibility to any health care provider meeting VA criteria; and
- base the 40-mile distance requirement on distance traveled from a VA medical facility, including one offering primary care for a veteran seeking primary care.

The new law prohibits the use of funds by the VA to expand the dialysis pilot program, or to create any new dialysis capability provided by the VA in a facility that is not an initial facility under the dialysis pilot program, until an independent analysis of the dialysis pilot program is conducted for each initial facility and 180 days have elapsed since the VA reports on the results.

Finally, PL 114-41 amends the Internal Revenue Code to:

- exclude individuals covered for medical care under TRICARE or the VA from the determination of whether an employer is an applicable large employer with respect to employee enrollment in minimum essential health care coverage under an eligible employer-sponsored plan,
- treat a veteran receiving hospital care or medical services for a service-connected disability as not disqualified from participating in or contributing to a tax-preferred health savings account.

On July 29, the House of Representatives by a vote of 256-170 passed HR 1994, the “VA Accountability Act of 2015.” This bill authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to remove or demote a VA employee based on performance or misconduct. The VA may also remove such individual from the civil service or demote the individual through a reduction in grade or annual pay rate. In addition, an employee shall have the right to an appeal before the Merit Systems Protection Board within seven days of removal or demotion. An administrative judge shall have to make a final decision within 45 days of such appeal or the original decision becomes final.

The VA may not remove or demote an employee without the approval of the Special Counsel if the individual seeks corrective action from the Office of Special Counsel based on an alleged prohibited personnel practice. The appointment of an individual to a permanent position within the competitive service or as a career appointee within the Senior Executive Service shall become final after an 18-month probationary period, which the Secretary may extend. Final appointment to a permanent hire shall be made by the employee's supervisor.

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

The consolidated appropriations bill for FY 2015 – PL 113-235 – included funding for the Department of Labor, specifically for the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS). Spending for VETS totals \$270 million. Funding for individual VETS accounts includes:

- \$175 million for Jobs for Veterans state grants, which fund DVOP and LVER personnel;
- \$39.5 million federal administrative costs;
- \$38.1 million to fund the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs;
- \$14 million to carry out the Transition Assistance Program (TAP); and,
- \$3.4 million to fund the operations of the National Veterans’ Employment and Training Services Institute (NVTI).

On July 10 the House Appropriations Committee approved HR 3020, a bill to fund the Department of Labor’s Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) programs. Under this measure, VETS would receive \$271 million, an increase of \$1.1 million over current year funding amounts. The Senate Appropriations Committee passed its bill, S 1695, on June 25 by a vote of 16-14, allocating \$270 million for VETS programs. Funding for individual accounts includes:

- \$175 million for Jobs for Veterans state grants, which fund DVOP and LVER personnel in both measures;
- \$40.5 million for federal administrative costs in the House bill, \$39.5 million in the Senate version;
- \$38.1 million in both bills to fund the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs;
- \$14 million in both measures to carry out the Transition Assistance Program (TAP); and,
- \$3.4 million to fund the operations of the National Veterans’ Employment and Training Services Institute (NVTI) are contained in both versions.

On July 28, President Obama enacted PL 114-38, the “Veterans Entrepreneurship Act of 2015.” This measure amends the Small Business Act to prohibit the Small Business Administration (SBA) from collecting a guarantee fee in connection with a loan made under the SBA Express Program to a veteran or the spouse of a veteran on or after October 1, 2015, except during any fiscal year for which the President’s budget includes a cost for the Program that is above zero.

This law also requires the SBA to assess for Congress the level of outreach to and consultation with female veterans regarding access to capital by women’s business centers and Veterans Business Outreach Centers.

MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Benedict A. Lee, North Carolina, Chairman

Jeff Stoffer, Indiana, Director

The newly created American Legion Media & Communications Commission oversees the majority of print and digital media products and channels delivered from National Headquarters. The commission also has oversight of the organization’s media outreach program, including press conferences, appearances in national news, media alerts and support for key marketing initiatives and corporate relationships.

The flagship of the program is The American Legion Magazine, the nation’s best read and most widely circulated veterans magazine. With a circulation of nearly 2.3 million households and a readership exceeding 3.2 million, The American Legion Magazine ranks No. 1 in readership frequency, according to independent research. That means subscribers have read four out of the last four or three out of the last four issues more often than readers of all other U.S. magazines. Its content is general interest, driven by the organization’s main areas of engagement – patriotism, defense, veterans, children, youth, national and international affairs.

The integration of two former commissions, Magazine and Public Relations, and the addition of some marketing functions previously managed by the national Fundraising Division occurred in the first half of 2014.

The division draws most of its revenue from advertising sales into the magazine. In 2013, the year-end sales figure was \$9,900,325, or nearly 91 percent of total advertising revenue. The percentage of ad sales from digital media assets, meanwhile, continues to grow, having more than doubled in the last three years. The bulk of the remainder of the division’s operating revenue comes from a \$3 per member allocation.

The integration of the former Magazine Division with Public Relations and the addition of new marketing responsibilities represents no additional revenue for the new Media & Communications Division. However, the efficiency and effectiveness of a single realigned communications division were demonstrated clearly between late April and July 2014 when internal and external communications worked synergistically to produce an unprecedented wave of media awareness, from more than 20 million impressions in national broadcast, print and web media over the VA crisis, to near-record website visitation and strong growth in social media audience. The key metrics of this integrated approach are not necessarily dollars in revenue but eyes on brand and an engaged audience.

The division’s media assets can now be indexed as follows:

- **Print.** This category includes The American Legion Magazine, The American Legion Dispatch (monthly leadership newsletter), The American Legion Annual Report, The American Legion National Convention Guide, several brochures and internal documents and additional print media as assigned from national leadership, including event programs, reports for Congress, and other specialty products. Additionally, the division fulfills editing and designing needs of 200 brochures and documents associated with other National Headquarters divisions.

- **Web.** The American Legion national website at www.legion.org is the nation's most-visited veterans web platform and serves as a gateway to virtually all American Legion media products and channels. The site, which receives between 300,000 and 500,000 visits per month, offers news, videos and photography; transactional engagement through donations, membership and merchandising; entrance to special-interest microsites on such topics as the 100th Anniversary of The American Legion and Legiontown USA, where members are invited to fulfill their own content and share it; The American Legion Online Extension Institute training module; and the Burn Pit blog site, to name a few. Legion.org is also the entry point to the organization's interactive and transactional platform supporting American Legion Baseball. The American Legion's video vault, called LegionTV, also houses all of the organization's video content in one microsite.
- **E-mail.** The division produces a portfolio of popular e-newsletters, led by the weekly American Legion Online Update, which reaches more than 500,000 subscribers every Thursday with links to the top stories of the week on the Legion.org platform. Another e-newsletter with nearly as many subscribers is the National Commander's Message, which goes out twice monthly, typically to promote a particular subject or interest. The Online Update and the National Commander's Message receive open rates of over 30 percent on a frequent basis — a rate far above the industry standard. Other e-newsletters include Flag Alert, The American Legion Riders, Legislative Update, The American Legion Baseball Dugout, The American Legion Career Center and The American Legion Centennial.
- **Social.** The American Legion has a fast-growing tapestry of social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest. The Legion's Facebook community now has approximately 70,000 in its audience, and the national Twitter following is approximately 35,000.
- **Mobile.** The American Legion's mobile audience has shown dramatic increases in the past four months, doubling in the number of page views associated with smartphone and tablet users. The surge is attributed to a combination of the VA news and the redesigned website, which is much improved for the mobile user.
- **Smartphone apps:** The American Legion Media & Communications Division has produced and developed five smartphone mobile apps, including a general American Legion app introduced in 2014 that already has nearly 10,000 downloads; an American Legion Claims Coach app to help in the VA benefits process; which has more than 11,000 downloads; an American Legion World Series app, which generated more than 3,200 downloads in 2014; along with a National Convention app and a Sons of The American Legion app.
- **Physical.** The American Legion Media & Communications Division produces a variety of physical displays, including parade floats, plaques, convention booths and other forms of physical media for the organization.
- **Media Outreach.** The division is responsible for the organization's outside media outreach program, which includes regular engagement with national broadcast, print and web media producers, the development and delivery of media events and press conferences, timely alerts and audience quantification.
- **Marketing.** In June 2014, the division assumed responsibility for a portion of the organization's marketing program, including support for Direct Response TV advertising, corporate relationship development and special projects.
- **100th Anniversary.** The American Legion Media & Communications Division is deeply involved in the organization's centennial program, including organizational structure, merchandising, promotion, media products and general support.

The goal of this integrated approach to American Legion media is to maximize efficiencies, resources and talents to deliver the organization's message in a well-branded, effective strategy that aims to improve awareness, generate membership, inform visitors, stimulate interactions and ease transactions. Overall, the media and communications program is built to replicate and represent the values and interests of The American Legion, from the individual member to the local post to the state department to the national headquarters, internal and external, and beyond.

NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman
Joe Grassi, District of Columbia, Director

The following report covers the activities of the National Security Commission and its staff during the program year ending June 30, 2015.

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 24, 2014, 149 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security initially met in the Charlotte Convention Center, Room 217, Ballroom level. Mr. G. Michael Schlee (Maryland) was elected Chairman and Mr. E.C. Toppin (North Carolina) was appointed Secretary.

After the initial meeting, the following convention committees met, held elections and dealt with the resolutions assigned to them:

Aerospace	Robert C. Weyenberg (WI), Chairman William Bryant (VA), Secretary
Conventional Armed Forces	Charles E. Kruger (MN), Chairman Thomas Schottenbauer(MN),Secretary
Foreign Relations	Randall Fisher (KY), Chairman Todd White (WY), Secretary
Law and Order & Homeland Security	George Wehrli (FL), Chairman E.C. Toppin (NC), Secretary
Military Benefits & Quality of Life	Melvin Smullen (MD), Chairman Dennis M. Duggan (MD), Secretary
National Guard and Reserve Forces	William Goede (MN), Chairman Milton Lahus (MA), Secretary
Unconventional Forces and Intelligence	Douglas Haggan (FR), Chairman Daniel Watrous (OH), Secretary

At 11:00 a.m., Sunday, August 24, 2014, the delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security reconvened in the Charlotte Convention Center, Room 217, Ballroom level. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 104 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security or prepared by the Committee to meet problems which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. The Convention Committee authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report of the Convention Committee on National Security on behalf of its delegates and make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of the Committee.

AEROSPACE COMMITTEE
Robert C. Weyenberg, Wisconsin, Chairman

APPROVED

Resolution No. 81: Fully Fund NASA

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Commercial aviation is vital to the nation's economic well-being; and

WHEREAS, NASA's aeronautics research contributes significantly to air travel innovation and aligns with the principles, goals, and objectives of the National Aeronautics Research and Development Policy and its related National Aeronautics Research and Development Plan; and

WHEREAS, NASA explores early-stage concepts and ideas, develops new technologies and operational procedures through foundation research, along with demonstrating the potential of promising new vehicles, operations, and safety technology in relevant environments; and

WHEREAS, NASA is focused on the most appropriate cutting-edge research and technologies to overcome a wide range of aeronautics challenges for the nation's current and future air transportation systems; and

WHEREAS, NASA is addressing the research challenges that must be overcome to achieve the goals of the Next Generation Air Transportation System or NextGen, a technology modernization effort that will make air travel safer, more flexible, more efficient, and to enable the design of vehicles that can support NextGen including unmanned aircraft; and

WHEREAS, The goals of NASA are to expand airspace capacity, enable fuel efficient flight planning, reduce the overall environmental footprint of airplanes today and in the future, diminish delays on the ground and in the sky, and improve the ability of aircraft to operate in all weather conditions while meeting or exceeding safety standards; and

WHEREAS, NASA's contributions to the nation's civilian aviation is essential to public safety and comfort of those flying; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to make funding of NASA's programs among its highest priority ensuring the continued superiority of the American aviation industry and continued high safety record of American aircraft while looking toward future innovation in a collaborative effort between NASA and the aircraft industry; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That upon passage at The American Legion National Convention that this resolution becomes a part of The American Legion's efforts in lobbying for continued adequate funding of NASA in the upcoming Congress.

Resolution No. 95: Support for the United States Air Force

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, People are the United States Air Force's top priority and the Air Force is the world's premier aerospace force because its great people—active-duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian—continue to serve selflessly as a total force under increasingly difficult circumstances; and

WHEREAS, In order to grow the force, recruiting and retention are among its highest priorities and to continue attracting and retaining dedicated men and women the Air Force recognizes that it must continue its efforts to improve pay, benefits, and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, Since September 11, 2001 the Air Force has executed more than 440,000 airlift sorties, moving more than 3.6 million tons of cargo and nearly 6.9 million passengers in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and then New Dawn; and

WHEREAS, The Air Force simultaneously provided top cover and weapons on target with more than 162,000 sorties supporting those same operations; and

WHEREAS, Air Force aeromedical evacuation crews surged to complete over 180,000 patient movements, averaging 52 per day; and

WHEREAS, On the home front, Air Force fighter, air refueling, and early warning aircraft have flown over 62,000 total sorties supporting Operation Noble Eagle; and

WHEREAS, The Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve have flown more than 65 percent of these domestic sorties with the Air National Guard currently operating 17 of 18 Aerospace Control Alert sites across the United States; and

WHEREAS, To meet the challenges of adversaries at home and abroad, Air Force strategy calls for a capabilities-based approach to defense planning which enables the service to answer a broad range of challenges posed by potential adversaries, while also developing the capabilities it needs for the future; and

WHEREAS, In assessing existing and potential adversaries' capabilities against our own, the Air Force is developing task forces for a variety of mission requirements, from strategic response to homeland security, for example, Global Strike Task Force, which describes how we will operate in an anti-access scenario is the next step in the journey to fully achieve Air Force missions, while also opening doors to adaptive and innovative operational plans and relevant organization structure; and

WHEREAS, The Air Force has reduced its force by over 4,200 to 325,952 over the past three years to meet the lower budget levels called for by the Budget Control Act of 2011; and

WHEREAS, To meet the lower budget levels called for in the Budget Control Act of 2014, the Air Force will downsize its civilian workforce by 900 positions and leave 7,000 unfilled jobs vacant; and

WHEREAS, Continued investment in the core competencies of aerospace power— aerospace superiority, global attack, precision engagement, information superiority, rapid global mobility, and agile combat support—will continue to be the key to preserving the Air Force's ability to respond to threats to America's national security whenever and wherever they occur; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the Congress to appropriately support the United States Air Force's commitment to attract, retain, and train quality people and to mold them into an expeditionary aerospace force capable of flexibly responding to threats to America's national security; to enhance readiness through its continued focus on total force integration and the integration of air and space systems; and to build and implement a transformation and modernization program that will maintain America's dominance in air, space, and cyberspace well into the 21st century.

Resolution No. 97: Support for NASA and Advancements in Aeronautical and Space Research

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is critical to defending our nation and maintaining military superiority; and

WHEREAS, U.S. progress in aerospace research has also had a profound impact on our nation's quality of life and its economic, social, environmental and political institution and made possible communication on a global scale; and

WHEREAS, The dissemination and use of space systems technology, the research programs on which it is based, and the spin-off products, techniques and services derived from the U.S. space program are vital components of the nation's economy and the well-being of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. space program has kept the nation on the leading edge of the technology frontier, has created jobs, improved communications, electronics, material, diagnosis and treatment of medical care for veterans and all Americans, fostered new scholastic interest in space science, provided insight into the evolution of the universe and current state of the earth, its environment and its solar system, and has provided visions and objectives for the future for business, industry and academia and the nation's youth; and

WHEREAS, The final Space Shuttle mission was completed on August 31, 2011; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 7,000 NASA employees lost their employment to the ending of the 30-year Space Shuttle Program; and

WHEREAS, Continued U.S. economic growth is dependent on further expansion of air transportation system which requires further investments and aeronautical research, and in addition, the stunning success of air power in Afghanistan and Iraq is the result of research performed a decade or more ago and reminds us that continued emphasis on military aviation R&T is essential to future U.S. air superiority; and

WHEREAS, To meet lower budget levels called for in the Budget Control Act of 2011, significant budget reductions to NASA's near-term and long-term projects are expected; and

WHEREAS, On September 14, 2011, NASA announced that it had selected the design of a new Space Launch System that it said would take the agency's astronauts further into space than ever before and provide the cornerstone for future human space exploration efforts by the U.S; and

WHEREAS, In light of current reductions and possible additional cuts due to impending sequestration, the viability of NASA's long-term basic research programs and exploration initiatives remain vulnerable; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion deems it imperative that the United States, in the face of increasing competition, maintain its hard won status as the world leader in aeronautics and aircraft production and in space exploration and research; to realize this goal, we urge the Congress to provide: adequate funding for NASA along with the nation's civilian and military aerospace research and development programs to maintain U.S. technological leadership; adequate funding to build, upgrade and enhance the nation's civilian and military aerospace research facilities and wind tunnels; a renewed national commitment to education involving academia in aeronautical and aerospace engineering research and technologies insuring a state of the art educated work force; oversight and investigating functions and related activities with respect to the transfer of American aerospace technology abroad; provide that all of our military aircrafts are design, manufactured and assembled within the borders of the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the nation must sustain its commitment to aerospace engineering research and development if it is to maintain its role as the world leader as we move into the next century; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall employ maximum effort to make this nation and Congress rectify the decline in aeronautics research which is imperative to the nation's continued world leadership in economic prosperity and military superiority.

Resolution No. 98: Support for Research and Development of Air Breathing Scramjet
Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The X-43A Scramjet test flights are part of NASA Hyper-X program, an advanced research effort in propulsion technologies for high speed flight within the atmosphere and into Earth orbit; and

WHEREAS, After many years of research and development testing the craft met major milestones propelling itself slightly over Mach 7, seven times the speed of sound, or some 5,000 miles per hour in 2004; and

WHEREAS, Unlike any other space vehicle that must haul along weighty amounts of oxygen for propulsion, scramjets use the atmosphere as an oxygen source so that scramjet powered craft could haul greater payload into orbit and suborbital flights; and

WHEREAS, In 2010, Scramjet broke its own world record on its third and final flight with a new world speed record for jet-powered aircraft of Mach 9.6 which equates to nearly 7,000 miles per hour; and

WHEREAS, Researchers predict scramjet speed could reach 15 times the speed of sound so that an 18 hour trip to Tokyo from New York City becomes a 2 hour flight; and

WHEREAS, There are few or no moving parts in the scramjet, allowing engine ignition and combustion in a matter of milliseconds which is considered a major aerospace engineering achievement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to direct NASA to continue and expand research and development of the air breathing scramjet powered vehicle program and to fully fund and continue this revolutionary program which will once again bring the United States to the forefront of aerospace engineering achievement.

CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES
Charles E. Kruger, Minnesota, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 3: Commission the USS American Legion

Origin: Florida

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization, committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome programs in our communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow service-members and veterans; and

WHEREAS, In 1941, after participating in the U.S. build-up in Iceland, a 13,736-ton transport, originally built at Camden, New Jersey, as a civilian passenger ship was transferred to the Navy and commissioned as USS American Legion (AP-35); and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense should have the authority to designate a ship name to support the veterans of our great nation, The American Legion's focusing on service to veterans, servicemembers and communities, The American Legion evolved from a group of war-weary veterans of World War I into one of the most influential non-profit groups in the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion strongly support the Department of Defense and the United States Navy in designating a Naval Warship be named the USS American Legion by the year 2019.

Resolution No. 34: Name a United States Navy Ship in Honor of A. Denton, Jr.

Origin: California

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The late Rear Admiral Jeremiah A. Denton Jr. was historic in war as a U.S. Navy Aviator and as a prisoner of war in Vietnam for seven years and seven months; later served as a United States Senator, was a statesman and humanitarian whose work

continues worldwide through the Admiral Denton Legacy Initiatives (formerly the Admiral Denton Foundation) he founded and led to his death; was author of the now classic book on the horrific torture endured by American POWs by their communist captors, "When Hell Was In Session;" and was an American Legionnaire who lived a heroic life in war and in peace which is an extraordinary and inspiring example of selfless service to duty, honor, God and Country, as expressed in the American Legion creed; and

WHEREAS, Admiral Denton's passing on March 28, 2014, was marked as the loss to the nation of a true American hero, patriot, and humanitarian, in an outpouring of tributes all across the country, including from The American Legion, V.F.W. and other veterans service organizations; U.S. Senator, members of the House and others holding public office from across the political spectrum; thousands of editorials, commentaries, and news reports in print and broadcast media universal in their praise of his heroic life; and including, perhaps most importantly, salutes as a hero from American POW's who served under him and knew him best as one who led them in resisting demands that they betray their country and collaborate with the North Vietnamese communist enemy refused to abide by the Geneva Convention and instead inflicted barbaric torture on them as POW's; and

WHEREAS, Torture of our POW's was first confirmed when Admiral Jeremiah Denton Blinked T-O-R-T-U-R-E in Morse Code when the communists attempted to use him in an internationally television propaganda broadcast, resulting in Admiral Denton suffering retaliatory torture so horrendous it almost killed him when the communists discovered he has outwitted them; and

WHEREAS, The epic true story of the heroism of our POW's in resisting torture rather than betray their country, as exemplified by the group of resisters most hated by the communists who became known as the "Alcatraz 11," led by the late Admiral James B. Stockdale, who received the Medal of Honor, and Admiral Jeremiah A. Denton, who received the Navy Cross, is now accurately and comprehensively told by Author Alvin Townley in the new book, "DEFIANT: The POW's who Endured Vietnam's Most Infamous Prison, The women Who Fought for Them, And The One Who Never Returned"; and

WHEREAS, Surviving POW's of the "Alcatraz 11" have themselves initiated a call for a U.S. Navy ship to be named in honor of Admiral Jeremiah A. Denton as was done to honor their other leader, Admiral James B. Stockdale; and

WHEREAS, At the initiative of Defense of Veterans Memorials Project of The American Legion Department of California, the Department of California by resolution dedicated a plaque honoring Admiral Denton at Mt. Soledad National Veterans Memorial on National POW/MIA Day in 2008; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports and joins the initiative of the surviving Vietnam prisoners of war known as the "Alcatraz 11", who served under the late Rear Admiral Jeremiah Denton Jr., to call the Department of Defense, the United States Navy, The Congress of the United States, and any and all relevant federal agencies or entities, to take appropriate action to cause a ship of the United States Navy to be named in honor of the late Rear Admiral Jeremiah A. Denton, Jr.

Resolution No. 78: Develop Defense Against Electromagnetic Pulse Attack

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In defiance of the United States and international community, both North Korea and Iran actively strive for missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. must maintain superior strategic deterrents and defense systems in the interest of national defense from both conventional and unconventional foes operating in either symmetrical or asymmetrical environments; and

WHEREAS, Islamic violent extremists and rogue nations continue to plot against the West and seek to destroy the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, Although the U.S. Missile Defense Agency has requested \$1.9 billion (2015) over the next five years to overhaul ground-based missile-defense systems including \$939.5 million budget for a new long-range discrimination radar through fiscal 2019, critics suggest that these figures underscore the deficiencies in the current infrastructure and the need to employ newer technologies rather than continuing to invest in aging systems; and

WHEREAS, The Congressionally-sanctioned Commission to Assess the Threat to the U.S. from Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) has clearly defined the vulnerabilities in America's homeland defense posture to include potential catastrophic damage to U.S. infrastructure, telecommunications, banking, energy, transportation, food, water, emergency services, space systems, and government agencies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to fully fund, develop, and deploy a national ballistic missile defense system designed to intercept electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attacks; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to swiftly commission the further development and installation of electronic equipment and components resistant to EMP to quickly provide significant protection and limit damage to high-value electrical generation and transmission assets as well as emergency generation and re-start capability; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to expeditiously develop an EMP response plan to include necessary back-up systems and corresponding supply of electronic parts and equipment vital to a successful American defense and response in the event of such an attack.

Resolution No. 85: Long-Range Strike Capabilities

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, United States Air Force Chief of Staff General Schwartz once stated that "Deterrence is not a fading construct in national security – re-emerging and growing in importance as an aspect of U.S. defense policy, risks and uncertainty cloud our ability to forecast the weapons needed to offer deterrence in a world of changing economies, alliances, competing political systems all of which require defense planning for the potential threats of ten and twenty years in the future"; and

WHEREAS, Russia and China continue to update their strategic-missile capabilities evidenced by exercises such as the Russia's intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test conducted on March 4, 2014 and China's test of a long-range ICBM which occurred in December 2013; and

WHEREAS, Development of Russian surface-to-air missiles (SAM) has progressed to the point where there is concern about the ability of present non-stealth vehicles in the bomber mix to penetrate modern air defenses; and

WHEREAS, Although the President's 2015 budget proposal provides at \$0.9 billion for Air Force Long Range Strike Bombers for FY 2015 and \$2.4 billion for seven KC-46 Tankers in FY 2015, the U-2 high-altitude altitude reconnaissance aircraft is being retired in favor of the unmanned Global Hawk system; and

WHEREAS, The growth of Predator/Reaper-drone forces is being slowed, and plans for the new combat rescue helicopter are being reviewed; and

WHEREAS, Russia and China have a history of supplying their weapon systems to nations which are often unfriendly with the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, We need to be prepared to deal with advanced fighter technology in quantities and locations beyond Russia and China; and

WHEREAS, China and Russia have failed to support efforts to impose effective sanctions on Iran's nuclear program and in the case of Russia have offered the potential sale of advance SAM capabilities to protect Iran's nuclear installations; and

WHEREAS, Technical opportunities are changing constantly making the selection of what new capabilities should be developed to counter anticipated threats a major challenge as an error in selection of a course of development can have repercussions for decades; questions concerning manned or unmanned, hypersonic conventional or nuclear, missile or aircraft will constantly face the strategic planner while restricted defense budgets and the need to support other facets of the spectrum of conflict will persist; and

WHEREAS, Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James recently said the top three priorities for modernization remain the newest fifth generation fighter, the F-35 Lightning II, the new KC-46 tanker, and the Long Range Strike Bomber; and

WHEREAS, Protecting modernization priorities, including the Long Range Strike Bomber, the KC-46A refueling tanker, and key space and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance programs, is vital to the future force; and

WHEREAS, Questions exist about the nature of the strike solution uncertainties that may arise in the next decade that warrant the relatively inexpensive efforts to define the requirements of a long range strike weapon; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges the Department of Defense to undertake an adequately funded and prioritized program to define the nature of a long-range strike capability in the acquisition cycle where a concept including performance is established, systems engineering plans are ready, a request of proposal is on-hand and ready to commence the development test and production of a new long-range strike capability to address potential threats; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to fully fund the initial steps leading to capability of rapidly beginning the acquisition process for upgrades in long-range strike capabilities should the risk assessment determine it necessary circa 2018.

Resolution No. 86: Modify Battlefield Helmet

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is founded on four pillars of service, of which one of the pillars is to foster a strong national security; and

WHEREAS, United States military personnel serve our nation worldwide with many of them serving in harm's way; and

WHEREAS, These troops are being subjected to injury from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and these IEDs have been causing severe bodily harm and traumatic brain injuries; and

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Defense responded to the problem of traumatic brain injuries with unprecedented speed and installed sensors on the troops helmet to measure the concussive force suffered by individual service personnel and provided military medical professionals with treatment programs to minimize the dilatory effects of the concussion; and

WHEREAS, These appropriate actions have had a noticeable effect of reducing the amount of traumatic brain injury to our service personnel; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion petition the United States Department of Defense to provide research to modify the current battlefield helmet to provide possible relief of the shock wave caused by improvised explosive devices thus attempting to lessen the traumatic brain injury received by United States military personnel; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That this research be given the same fast track and unprecedented speed as the program responsible for the development of the shock sensors now installed on military helmets.

Resolution No. 94: Support Full Funding for the Department of the Army Budget

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Army is serving a nation at war and, as America's strategic and decisive land and expeditionary combat force, is a proud member of the Joint Force providing combatant commanders with relevant and ready campaign power; and

WHEREAS, The Army's compelling needs include providing landscape power, training and equipping soldiers and adaptive leaders for the rigors of war, sustaining the all-volunteer force, and providing the infrastructure and support systems to ensure the Army is able to execute its missions; and

WHEREAS, The momentum of Army transformation and modernization needs to be maintained so as to deal with irregular, catastrophic, disruptive and traditional challenges; and

WHEREAS, The Army vision is to remain the preeminent land power, the ultimate instrument of national resolve, that is both ready and relevant to the challenges of the dangerous and complex 21st century security environment; and

WHEREAS, Support and funding is required to achieve critical recruiting and retention goals for all Army components; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the Army's budget and wartime demands be fully funded and that supplemental funding is required for combat and contingency operations and to reset and replace battle losses of equipment; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The Congress will ensure that the Army is fully staffed, trained, and equipped to achieve victory in the War on Terrorism; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress enables the Army to maintain the momentum of key programs while accelerating transformation.

Resolution No. 99: Support for National Missile Defense System

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 between the United States and the Soviet Union had placed a cap on deploying missile defense systems and limited more advanced research on such defensive systems; and

WHEREAS, The Bush administration in January 2002 had given Russia and our allies the required six-months notice of U.S. intent to withdraw from the 1972 ABM Treaty and did so in June 2002; and

WHEREAS, Work on the underground silos for the first missile interceptors in Alaska began in June 2002 which reflected the urgency to begin moving on a missile defense system; and

WHEREAS, According to former Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, the New Start Treaty, which was ratified by the Senate in December 2010 and went into full effect in February 2011, in no way limits U.S. plans for missile defense or modernizing its nuclear arsenal; and

WHEREAS, In early 2010, NATO acquired the first phase of an initial capability to protect alliance forces against ballistic missile threats; and

WHEREAS, At the November 2010 NATO summit in Lisbon, NATO's leaders decided to develop a ballistic missile defense (BMD) capability to pursue its core task of collective defense; and

WHEREAS, Allied leaders recognized that the planned deployment of European-based U.S. ballistic-missile defense assets would help protect allies, and agreed that this

capability should be an integral part of any future NATO-wide ballistic-missile defense architecture; and

WHEREAS, In June 2011, the NATO-Russia Council defense ministers took stock of the work on missile defense since the 2010 Lisbon summit; and

WHEREAS, In March 2012, NATO began implementing the BMD plan; and

WHEREAS, As unreliable, hostile nations such as North Korea and Iran seem determined to acquire the capability to deliver a nuclear strike over long distances, including striking the continental United States, the need for a national missile defense as an essential ingredient of our homeland security for the continental United States has become as urgent as ever; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to develop and continue to deploy a national missile defense system which is in the national interest of the United States and the American people and an essential ingredient of our homeland security.

Resolution No. 169: Support Full Funding and Resourcing for the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Our national security depends to a large extent on the ability of the United States to maintain sea superiority as well as strategic combat capabilities of the United States Navy and Marine Corps; and

WHEREAS, The Navy and Marine Corps have continually shown the ability of the United States to maintain a forward posture, projecting U.S. power overseas, when and where needed around the world to uphold our national security; and

WHEREAS, To maintain force readiness, the Navy and Marine Corps must balance priorities of manpower, current and future readiness, quality of service and alignment; and

WHEREAS, Balancing critical combat readiness with future navy requirements is essential to US Naval superiority; and

WHEREAS, A 21st century Navy requires rapid technological advancements in the areas of command and control, which will require judicious upgrades of its systems; and

WHEREAS, The programs that will be the core of Navy and Marine Corps forces in the 21st century require substantial investments; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges the Administration and the Congress to fully resource and fund the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps to provide credible combat power from the sea.

Resolution No. 183: Rebuild America's Defense Industrial Base

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Administration recently proposed in its fiscal year (FY) 2013 budget to cut Pentagon spending by roughly \$487 billion over the next decade and because Congress failed to meet the Budget Control Act's deadline to reduce the long-term deficit by \$1.2 trillion, the Pentagon now faces the following scenario: current law now requires additional across-the-board cuts to the Pentagon budget totaling more than \$500 billion over ten years; and

WHEREAS, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel recently stated, "Continued sequestration cuts would compromise our national security both for the short-term and long-term"; and

WHEREAS, Although the Opportunity, Growth and Security Fund provides an additional \$26 billion for defense in FY 2015, the Secretary Hagel said that the Pentagon has planned for full sequestration for FY 2016 requiring the Army to be reduced from

450,000 soldiers to 420,000 as well as dropping Army National Guardsmen from 335,000 to 315,000 and Army Reservists from 205,000 to 185,000; and

WHEREAS, Full sequestration would also cut 50 Light Utility Helicopters from the National Guard; and

WHEREAS, Full sequestration in FY 2016 and beyond would mean retiring the aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN-73) instead of refueling it, bringing the Navy to a 10-carrier fleet instead of the congressionally mandated 11 carriers; and

WHEREAS, The Navy already plans to put half its cruiser fleet in reduced operating status to save money, but full sequestration would force six additional ships to be laid up and the service would also buy its new destroyers at a slower rate, resulting in 10 fewer large combatants in the fleet by 2023; and

WHEREAS, Full sequestration would mean the Air Force would retire 80 aircraft beyond the plans laid out in the FY '15 request, which include retiring the entire A-10 and U-2 fleets; and

WHEREAS, The additional Air Force cuts would include the entire KC-10 tanker and Global Hawk Block 40 fleets and Joint Strike Fighter acquisition would be slowed, meaning the service would have 24 fewer F-35s in FY '19; and

WHEREAS, Secretary Hagel also recently stated, "... the scale and timeline of continued sequestration-level cuts would require greater reductions in the military's size, reach and margin of technological superiority (and) under sequestration spending levels, we would be gambling that our military will not be required to respond to multiple major contingencies at the same time."; and

WHEREAS, Developing new technologies for the Armed Forces can be hindered by budget shortfalls despite the fact that the U.S. is currently the world leader in development of new technology, thereby disrupting materiel development vital to national security; and

WHEREAS, The United States fighting forces must be equipped with state-of-the-art technological advances to assure their capability to win on the modern battlefield, whether on land, sea, or in the air; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the Administration and Congress to rebuild America's industrial base by continuing to adequately fund research, development, and acquisition budgets to assure our military production can meet national requirements especially when U.S. military power is committed; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Administration and Congress encourage the rebuilding of America's defense industrial base by having a proper balance of policies that: increase and then sustain domestic production at levels that maintain a robust and internationally competitive defense industry, keep the arms industry internationally competitive and ensure that the U.S. is not putting itself at risk by having our armaments produced offshore.

Resolution No. 225: National Defense

Origin: Ohio

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 178 (MD))

WHEREAS, The American Legion views a strong national defense as paramount to national security; and

WHEREAS, The proposed spending cuts in the Department of Defense FY 2015 budget would reduce the Army to its smallest size since before World War II while significantly reducing the size and capabilities of the other branches of the armed services; and

WHEREAS, Not only do the spending cuts downsize the force structure, but also reduce servicemembers pay and benefits, which could potentially lead to the loss of highly trained men and women; and

WHEREAS, While the Department of Defense is content on shrinking the size and scope of the United States military, or major adversaries, Russia and China, along with rouge nations such as North Korea and Iran are ramping up their military stocks and capabilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to oppose the pending budget cuts in military spending proposed by the Department of Defense; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress not allow our military forces to reach a weakened state in these uncertain and perilous times.

Resolution No. 274: Identifying National Interests Before Committing Military Forces and Assets

Origin: Iowa

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, One of The American Legion's founding principles is national security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion considers itself to be a partner with the Department of Defense in ensuring the nation's security; and

WHEREAS, The United States Constitution clearly defines the duties and responsibilities of the branches of government relating to defense of the nation; and

WHEREAS, There is no greater responsibility of a government than to protect its population and infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, The War Powers Resolution of 1973 requires the President to advise the Congress and American people what national security interest is served by committing U.S. forces to combat in a sovereign nation; and

WHEREAS, The American people, due to a lack of experience in military matters, have no real understanding of the threats which face the nation; and

WHEREAS, The United States is currently under significant economic and budgetary constraints which has the potential to negatively impact the ability of the military to protect the nation; and

WHEREAS, It has been shown repeatedly an uninformed and uninvolved public will quickly lose confidence and deny support for military operations they do not understand; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support the War Powers Resolution of 1973 (50 U.S.C.1541-1548); and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion, in keeping with its founding principle of a strong national security, call on the President of the United States, in compliance with the War Powers Resolution of 1973, to inform the American people and Congress of the critical national interests served by committing U.S. armed forces or military assets to hostile action; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That before committing military assets to hostile action, specific goals, overwhelming force levels necessary to accomplish the goals, parameters identifying when the specific goals are met, and realistic costs in national treasure must be identified and articulated to the American people and the Congress; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion define hostile action as any action where the use of lethal force is authorized, imminent, or implied to accomplish a military objective within the borders of a sovereign foreign nation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage Congress to once again establish itself as the oversight mechanism as prescribed in the Constitution of the United States in Article 1 Section 8, "The Powers of Congress."

Resolution No. 277: Military Occupational Specialty Standards

Origin: Iowa

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long recognized the significant role and the contributions of women serving in the military services of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, Women veterans have been eligible for full membership in The American Legion since its founding in 1919, prior to the full franchise of women to vote in presidential elections; and

WHEREAS, There are approximately 205,000 women serving on active duty in the military comprising 14.5% of the total active force, and approximately 130,000 women serving in the National Guard and Reserve comprising 18% of the total Guard and Reserve all serving with distinction, honor, and valor; and

WHEREAS, Women have been excluded from serving in Combat Arms Military Occupational Specialties in the Army, Marine Corps, infantry, armor, artillery and Navy Seals where close combat, high intensity engagements with the enemy on a daily basis is expected; and

WHEREAS, The combat exclusion clause was based in large part on the findings of the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Military, final report dated November 15, 1992, based on the physical requirements of combat; and

WHEREAS, Women have and still are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan in low intensity combat, truck convoys, military-police units, female engagement teams, where they have interacted and assisted Afghanistan women and a number of other military occupations; and

WHEREAS, Wherever any member of our armed services serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are on the battlefield, which undergoes a constant changing definition, there are no truly secure areas; and

WHEREAS, As of January 24, 2014, 67 female servicemembers have been killed by hostile fire in Iraq and 33 have been killed by hostile fire in Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 1,000 female servicemembers have been wounded due to military action in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, A number of female servicemembers are suffering from what is termed the “signature wounds” of service in Iraq and Afghanistan, Post Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury; and

WHEREAS, Congress, in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, Section 596, mandated the creation of the Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC), whose report has been delivered to the President, the Secretary of Defense and Congress; and

WHEREAS, Recommendation 9 of the MLDC states: “DOD and the Services should eliminate the ‘Combat Exclusion Policies for women,’ including the removal of barriers and inconsistencies, to create a level playing field for all qualified:

Women in career fields/specialties currently open to them should be immediately able to be assigned to any unit that requires that career field/specialty, consistent with the current operational environment;

DoD and the services should take deliberate steps in a phase approach to open additional career fields and units involved in “direct ground combat” to qualified women;

DoD and the Services should report to Congress the process and time-line for removing barriers that inhibit women from achieving senior leadership positions”; and

WHEREAS, The President of the United States, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on receiving the MLDC, March 15, 2011, made public statements in favor of the elimination of the “combat exclusion clause” for women; and

WHEREAS, The Congress and the courts have held that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ensures all individuals are treated equally before the law with respect to civilian employment, does not apply to the military profession, no less than seven major Supreme Court decisions are distilled in these words from *Goldman v. Weinberger*; [T]he military is, by necessity, a specialized society [separate] from civilian society... ‘The military must insist upon respect for duty and a discipline without counterpart in civilian life,’ in order to prepare for and perform its vital role... The essence of military service ‘is the subordination of the desires and interests of the individual to the needs of the service.’; and

WHEREAS, Some countries have repealed “combat exclusion policies” in recent years, while others such as the Soviet Union and Israel have maintained their “combat exclusion policies”; and

WHEREAS, Retired Army General Norman Schwarzkopf, former Commander of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, spoke for many Americans when he declared, “Decisions on what roles women should play in war must be based on military standards, not women’s rights”; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) submitted its “Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces” to Congress on December 22, 2011 thereby meeting the requirements of Section 535 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011; and

WHEREAS, In 2013, the Department of Defense issued an order mandating that women have the same opportunities as men in combat jobs; and

WHEREAS, The Armed Services have been developing plans to update physical standards, training, education, and other programs for thousands of military occupational specialties that must be made available to female servicemembers by January 1, 2016; and

WHEREAS, In accordance with this mandate, if some military occupational specialties remain closed to women that the DOD must explain why; and

WHEREAS, There are valid concerns about the physical demands required of soldiers to qualify and service in the combat arms; Army and Marine Corps infantry, armor, artillery, Army Special Forces and Navy Seals; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion strongly believes that the Department of Defense and all branches of the military services must maintain the current physical and mental requirements and qualifications for acceptance into military service that have created the best and most respected military in the world; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the mental and physical qualifications of all military personnel, regardless of gender or age, should be held to a single duty position specific standard depending on Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and not be amended without Congressional authority; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion requests the Congress of the United States to hold extensive and in-depth hearings on Military Leadership Diversity Commission Recommendation 9 eliminating the “Combat Exclusion Policies for Women,” and the DOD’s Review of Laws, Policies and Regulations Restricting the Service of Female Members in the U.S. Armed Forces since Congress and only Congress can codify the elimination of the “combat exclusion clause for women”; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes that without such Congressional hearings and oversight there exists the distinct possibility that changes will be made to lessen the current standards or set a double standard, one for men and one for women, for the sake of accommodating personnel for “social experiments,” therefore, reducing our nation’s military effectiveness.

Resolution No. 279: Support for the Selective Service Registration Program

Origin: Iowa

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(Consolidated with Resolutions No. 12 (SD), No. 123 (DC) and No. 261 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion has given long-standing support to universal military training; and

WHEREAS, Despite the success of the all-volunteer force, Selective Service registration continues to serve as our defense manpower insurance policy; and

WHEREAS, The current reality of the upcoming reductions in end-strength across all branches of the active duty force as a result of the Budget Control Act of 2011 and continued sequestration only reinforces the need for the capability to reconstitute our forces in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, World Wars I and II began long before our country became involved, allowing the United States the benefit of abundant time to accomplish registration before troops were actually committed, a luxury we cannot expect to enjoy in today's unpredictable environment; and

WHEREAS, The Selective Service Registration Program has enjoyed remarkable success as more than 90 percent of our 18-25 year old men have registered and there is virtually no resistance to the program; and

WHEREAS, Registration is one of the few remaining obligations our nation requires of its young men and removing this "rite of passage" for all men would reduce each man's level of consciousness about military service and the obligation to defend our nation; and

WHEREAS, If a national emergency arose, females would be as willing as their male counterparts to serve their country; and

WHEREAS, Of the current 23 million veterans alive today, 12% are female; and

WHEREAS, Females make up approximately 14.5% of the active duty forces in the United States military; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has opened a majority of Military Occupational Specialties to female servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, Each year we see an increase in female membership in The American Legion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports the retention of the Selective Service Registration Program as being in the best interests of all Americans, and its maintenance is a proven cost-effective, essential, and rapid means of reconstituting the required forces to protect our national security interests; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to amend the Selective Service Registration Program to include the mandatory registration of females between the ages of 18-25 years of age.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 195 (NY): Cold War Service Ribbon

FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Randall Fisher, Kentucky, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 2: Taiwan Straits Dialogue

Origin: Alaska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Republic of China (Taiwan) is a long-time friend, ally, and major trading partner of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, closely cooperated with the United States against Japanese imperialism during World War II and in the fight against Communism during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Pacific Rim; and

WHEREAS, It is in the best interests of all parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to resolve political differences peacefully; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the United States Government encourages the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) to promote peaceful dialogue and avoid any negative actions by either side to change the status quo, which might lead to military conflict.

Resolution No. 39: Central America Democracy Promotion

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Over the past decade the nations of Central America have made great strides toward establishing democratic societies; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has taken a great interest in supporting democracy, development, and security in this area so close to our borders and strategically situated between the naval lifeline between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Panama Canal, and one of our major trading partners, Mexico; and

WHEREAS, In the light of the decreasing threat from subversion in Central America as well as budget restrictions in the United States, it is inevitable that U.S. aid to Central America must be reduced; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Government to continue economic aid to friendly, democratic Central American nations which are seeking to develop democratic societies with market economies; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommend the U.S. Government provide minimal amounts of military aid while urging Central American nations to adopt the model of Costa Rica and Panama and disband military forces and rely solely on police forces for internal security, thus freeing funds for development and contributing to peaceful relations in the region.

Resolution No. 40: Enhanced Funding for USAID

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Department of State is the first line of defense in combating the myriad security threats that face America from abroad, and is charged with a number of missions that are vital to the nation; and

WHEREAS, These missions include: diplomatic relations with foreign nations, promoting peace and stability in regions of vital interest, bringing countries together to address global challenges, creating jobs at home by opening markets abroad, and helping developing nations establish stable economic environments that provide investment and export opportunities; and

WHEREAS, The State Department has been allocated little more than 1% of the total federal budget to accomplish many of these development tasks through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in contrast to the approximately 19% spent on defense; and

WHEREAS, In recent years the State Department's responsibilities have expanded enormously to include combating threats from terrorism, international crime, and narcotics trafficking, and that development programs through USAID are in the frontline to offer solutions and alternatives for emerging states to prevent their economic and democratic failure; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support policies and legislation that increase funding for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) within the Department of State and seek use of that funding towards targeted states whose failure to provide for its people could result in the expansion of international terrorism; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That USAID, because of its technical knowledge and expertise, be given a greater role in the decision-making process for the disbursement and usage of funds targeted for reconstruction in nations in which our military presence resulted in the need for infrastructure redevelopment.

Resolution No. 41: Expand Foreign Service Officer Corps

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Foreign Service Officers have the mission to promote peace, support prosperity, and protect American citizens while advancing the interests of the U.S. abroad; and

WHEREAS, Foreign Service Officers are the primary force in bringing foreign policy objectives to fruition by acting as the essential link between strategic interests and the U.S. Aid and International Development programs that achieve those interests; and

WHEREAS, Given the current climate of international relations and the importance of reconstruction following U.S. combat operations, the Foreign Service Officer Corps needs to be increased to meet the ever growing challenges against American vital interests; and

WHEREAS, Due to the fact the work of the Foreign Service Officer Corps often takes place in hostile and desolate environments, qualified military veterans should be given veterans' preference in the staffing of such positions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the President, Congress, and the Department of State to significantly increase the number of Foreign Service Officers; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the President, Congress, and the Department of State to implement a veterans' preference policy with the aim of recruiting more veterans into the Foreign Service Officer Corps whose experience may be an essential enhancement of the nation's diplomatic mission.

Resolution No. 42: Foreign Policy Objectives

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion, as veterans of wartime service in the defense of liberty, have a special concern for maintaining peace with freedom and recognize that a strong U.S. foreign policy is vital in that regard; and

WHEREAS, The official concern of The American Legion stems from that part of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion which states: "We associate ourselves together ... to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion believes

that the following objectives should be incorporated into U.S. foreign policy in order to maintain peace with freedom while preserving and promoting democracy:

1. Recognition that the U.S. has great and multiple responsibilities as a leader of the Free World
2. Dedication to achievement of world peace with freedom, secured by a peace through strength posture
3. Support for a global fight on multiple fronts to end the scourge of terrorism
4. Support for democracy and human rights in other countries when such is consistent with U.S. national interests and national power
5. Participation in essential collective security alliances, provided our allies contribute their fair share
6. Negotiation of equitable, verifiable arms control agreements, which improve U.S. national security
7. Opposition to the spread of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or long-range ballistic missiles which may be used by terrorists, terrorist organizations, communists or aggressor nations
8. Determined opposition to international terrorism and drug trafficking
9. Support for responsible international organizations that are consistent with U.S. sovereignty and serve U.S. national interests
10. Participation in an increasingly interdependent Free World trading system based on fair and equitable trading practices
11. Recognition that the President must be the chief architect of U.S. foreign policy as envisioned in the U.S. Constitution, while Congress performs important functions of advice, oversight and funding
12. Support for the appropriate resources to promote and protect U.S. vital national interests world-wide.

Resolution No. 43: Military Retiree Mail at Overseas Embassies

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, As of January 1, 2010 the Department of State has said it cannot be responsible for the costs of mail going to military retirees at embassies, consulates, and diplomatic missions; and

WHEREAS, This decision has adversely affected the quality-of-life of U.S. military retirees and veterans living abroad; and

WHEREAS, This new policy has negatively impacted veterans' personal lives and will likely result in prohibitive costs in addition to potential unreliable delivery of medications, compensation, absentee ballots, legal correspondence and other important personal documents from Federal, state and local government agencies; and

WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Veteran Health Administration, the estimated number of veterans that live outside the continental United States at the beginning of FY 2012 was 333,000; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense cannot pay the Department of State for the delivery of retiree mail on the basis of the Anti-Deficiency Act (31 U.S.C. § 1341); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion strongly urges Congress to change any necessary laws to permit the Department of Defense to fund the cost of essential mail service delivered to military retirees at embassies, consulates, diplomatic missions or other U.S. government facilities.

Resolution No. 44: Middle East/Gulf States Foreign Policies

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The end of World War I brought about the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the arbitrary delineation of the middle eastern states of the former Turkish held territories of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Palestine (Israel), Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Aden, Oman, (United Arab Emirates), and the Gulf of Aden states of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan, and to include the sovereign states of Egypt and Libya; and

WHEREAS, Many of these nations continue to struggle with reforming from authoritarian regimes to more democratic and representative forms of governance; and that the call by their own populations to seek greater freedoms and the protection of individual human rights and universal suffrage must be heard; and that states which fail to provide the basic needs of their people creates an opportunity for extremists and terrorists to flourish and grow; and

WHEREAS, That as each of these nations strives to reform their government they will need the technical and economic support of more developed and advanced representative democracies, and these needs will include: creating diplomatic coalitions with other countries and international institutions, creating jobs, open market reforms, developing and establishing stable economic environments, achieving internal and international security cooperation; and

WHEREAS, The President and Congress have both called for a policy that will help promote and assist nations seeking to establish greater democratic reforms in the Middle East; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation and foreign policy that specifically targets diplomatic, economic, and educational programs to promote greater and peaceful democratic reforms in countries within the Arabian Gulf and Middle Eastern Region.

Resolution No. 45: Policy on Africa

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Decades of colonization, authoritarian rule, severe economic disparity, internal conflicts, rampant corruption, and, in many cases, great resistance to change have overwhelmed the African continent; and

WHEREAS, Today some African nations are beginning to develop strong economic markets, and are making determined efforts to put the continent towards a solid democratic course with multi-party systems and other significant political changes; and

WHEREAS, Promoting policies that support democracy, conflict resolution, economic development, free and open trade, and disease prevention in African countries are in the national interests of the United States, understanding that a major contributing factor to terrorism are failed states; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports bipartisan policies and legislation that identify areas and authorize and fund programs where the United States can provide economic, political, and social development in Africa; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes such U.S. policies toward African nations must be intertwined with our nation's overall strategy to promote democracy throughout the world; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That any African nation that clearly demonstrates open democratic reforms, human rights protection, and cooperation in the fight against international terrorism, will have the support of the U.S. government.

Resolution No. 46: Policy on Cuba

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The communist government of Cuba has ruined the Cuban economy, repressed the Cuban people, provided a base for forces inimical to the United States, and committed aggression in many lands; and

WHEREAS, Following the demise of the Soviet Union and the liberation of Eastern Europe, Cuba has lost the sources of foreign subsidies that alone sustained its inefficient communist economy; and

WHEREAS, If the Free World remains firm in its rejection of communism in Cuba, many economic, social, and political indicators point to the likely collapse of the Castro dictatorship in Cuba; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Government to continue to maintain control of Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, continue intelligence flights over Cuba, remain firm in opposition to the export of revolution by Cuba, continue broadcasting true news and information to the Cuban people, and encourage the development of democracy and a free market economy in Cuba.

Resolution No. 47: Policy on the United Nations

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion played a significant role in helping to establish the United Nations after World War II, believing it would help prevent the outbreak of future wars; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has remained generally supportive of the United Nations over the succeeding years, although it has been critical of particular ineffective, wasteful, or undesirable activities of the United Nations; and

WHEREAS, Countries with vast national budget surpluses are exploiting their working citizens for unfair economic leverage in the United Nations; and

WHEREAS, The current scale of assessments, which weighs and considers the "low per capita income" of each member nation, determines the funding structure of the United Nations, is inequitable to the United States; and

WHEREAS, Although the United Nations in half a century of operation has not fulfilled the lofty purposes of international peace and human betterment envisioned by its founders, it continues to be in the national interest for the United States to function as a member of the United Nations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to use American leverage to encourage the United Nations to focus on limited, necessary, achievable tasks that truly better the lot of humankind in a sensible, cost-effective manner; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress encourage the United Nations not to infringe on national sovereignty when operating economic and social programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress encourage the United Nations to recalculate the assessment of nations' funding obligations to be based on the Gross National Product of each country with no "low per capita income" factor to distort the proportion of such obligations; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That in the absence of such reform of the funding formula the United Nations should adopt a weighted voting strength based on the funds contributed by each member nation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That truly independent authority be provided to the UN Inspector General and ensure that United Nations agencies become subject to periodic, unannounced auditing, the findings of such audits to be reported to member nations; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That an equitable fiduciary relationship be established between the United States and United Nations.

Resolution No. 49: Prohibit Foreign Investments in U.S. Defense Industry

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In this era of changing technology, the United States must maintain ownership and control of critical defense industries so that U.S. technological secrets can be protected and adequate production facilities can be maintained to meet any national emergency; and

WHEREAS, The generally declining strength of the dollar and the downsizing of our industrial base in the 1990s and the continuing decline in the 2000s have made it very lucrative for foreign entities to purchase U.S. firms, including those involved in national defense production; and

WHEREAS, Some allies of the United States, which lease or purchase U.S. advanced technology, may transfer or resell to actual or potential enemies of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Such technology transfers threaten the security of sensitive U.S. military technologies and U.S. technological superiority; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Government to ensure that foreign entities are not permitted to own critical industries, especially those involved in producing defense items; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion opposes the transfer and sales of sensitive technologies which may endanger our national security and economic interests.

Resolution No. 50: Support for the American Battle Monuments Commission

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Battle Monuments Commission was established by law in 1923 as an independent agency of the Executive Branch of the United States Government; and

WHEREAS, The American Battle Monuments Commission was charged to erect suitable memorial shrines, for designing, constructing, operating and maintaining permanent United States military cemeteries and memorials in foreign countries; and

WHEREAS, These United States military cemeteries have been established throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, These cemeteries are hallowed grounds for America's war dead; and

WHEREAS, Funding reductions for the maintenance of the United States military cemeteries in foreign countries has created reductions in human resources, equipment and supplies; and

WHEREAS, United States military cemeteries exist in foreign countries today, which are in need of adequate funding for repair, maintenance, additional manpower and other functions necessary to preserve the integrity of all World War I and World War II cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, Visitation numbers are increasing annually at United States military cemeteries overseas; and

WHEREAS, This resolution had been approved by the National Executive Committee at the Spring 1998 meetings; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 27, 2014, That The American Legion urges the United States Congress to appropriate adequate funding and human resources to the American Battle Monuments Commission in order to properly maintain and preserve the final resting place of America's war dead located on foreign soil.

Resolution No. 51: Social Security Survivor Benefits for Non-Resident Alien and Dependents

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, From its inception The American Legion has been dedicated to guarding the well being of the surviving spouses of members and veterans of the armed services; and

WHEREAS, All Legionnaires pledge themselves to “devotion to mutual helpfulness”; and

WHEREAS, The survivors of veterans living in countries where appreciable numbers of U.S. military forces are based presently benefit from treaties and administrative agreements which are not applicable to other foreign domiciled “nonresident alien beneficiaries”; and

WHEREAS, Existing Public Law and administrative regulations of the Social Security Administration require Mexican and Central American nationals who claim survivor benefits to provide proof of physical presence inside the territory of the United States either:

a) 30 days every six months or

b) one day per month every month of the year, but such physical presence may not be required of Social Security beneficiaries of other nationalities when residing outside the United States depending upon whether or not the Social Security Administration has entered into international agreements with the governments of those beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, Establishing a physical presence in the United States requires considerable expense and disruption of family life when a Mexican or Central American beneficiary lives anywhere except along the U.S.-Mexico border; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (formerly the “Immigration and Naturalization Service or INS”), a bureau of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) exercises the ability to legally deny entry to non-U.S. citizens even when such persons hold valid visas issued by the Department of State; and

WHEREAS, Since the events of September 11, 2001 the USCIS has increased the level of its control of persons attempting to enter the United States; and

WHEREAS, The USCIS has denied entrance into the United States by visa-holding surviving beneficiaries of veterans based solely upon their apparent lack of means of support even though they would have received an appropriate level of income once they had met the physical presence requirements of the law; and

WHEREAS, The regulations implementing Public Law relating to Social Security Survivor Benefits are inherently unfair because they impose different conditions upon surviving spouses which may vary according to the location of that person’s domicile; and

WHEREAS, Existing law allows an individual USCIS officer to be the arbiter as to whether or not a potential recipient may enter the U.S. for the purpose of meeting the physical presence requirements of the Social Security legislation; and

WHEREAS, Proposed new Department of Homeland Security regulations would limit visitor visas to a period insufficient to establish physical presence under the requirements of the Social Security legislation; and

WHEREAS, Mexican and Guatemalan surviving spouses of American veterans have requested The American Legion assist them in gaining relief from these unfair and country-specific regulations; and

WHEREAS, Section 233 of 42 USC 433 allows for the establishment of agreements between the social security system established by the act and the social security system of any foreign country; and

WHEREAS, Section 404.463 of the Social Security Act contains a listing of the countries which meet the social insurances or pension system requirements which may result in relief from Section 404.460 “nonpayment of monthly benefits”; and

WHEREAS, The countries of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama are included in this listing; and

WHEREAS, The present situation can be remedied by administrative action by the Office of International Programs of the Social Security Administration without the necessity of new legislation; and

WHEREAS, The Social Security Administration's Internet web site indicates that in some cases bilateral negotiations are being conducted or are being planned, but that such negotiations are not currently planned for all countries of Central America and negotiations with Mexico have been postponed on more than one occasion; and

WHEREAS, The Social Security Administration has responded in writing to requests for information by Legion staff indicating that no discussions are even contemplated with the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, or Panama; and

WHEREAS, Rules of The American Legion relating to resolutions requiring Social Security legislation are different from resolutions which do not require legislative action by Congress, the following is submitted as a separate resolution from any other resolution relating to Non-Resident Alien Survivor Beneficiaries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion petition the Social Security Administration's "Office of International Programs" to expedite the negotiation of international agreements with the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama to permit the recession of the nonpayment provisions of Section 404-460 of the Social Security Act, thereby allowing the payment of survivors' benefits and any other legally accrued benefits to the non-resident alien spouses and children of U.S. veterans residing in the above named countries; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That such expedited negotiation apply to the matter of survivor benefits payments and that other matters related to interests of the Social Security Administration not be included if such negotiation would delay the realization of bilateral agreements relating to survivor benefits payments; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress, with the Social Security Administration, establish uniform eligibility requirements applicable to all foreign nationals receiving Social Security survivor benefits so that all such persons shall be subject to the same eligibility requirements regardless of the location of the recipient's domicile.

Resolution No. 52: Securing Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Pakistan is a long-time ally, which has partnered with the United States against terrorist threats in Iraq and Afghanistan during the Global War on Terror; and

WHEREAS, Pakistan's nuclear program is a vital concern to U.S. national security, due to the close proximity to al-Qaida and Taliban insurgents as well as suspected Islamist sympathizers imbedded within Pakistan's army; and

WHEREAS, The audacious attacks that occurred in 2011 on Pakistan Navy Aviation Base Mehran, in close proximity of a nuclear holding facility and alongside a Pakistan Air Force Base, once again brings renewed focus on the safety of Pakistan's nuclear weapons arsenal; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion seeks to deter the possibility of terrorists gaining access to nuclear weapons as the potential for the intersection of terrorism and nuclear weapons is arguably the greatest threat to U.S. national security; and

WHEREAS, In an effort to prevent the infiltration of a nuclear establishment by individuals sympathetic to al-Qaida goals, the U.S. must construct and implement policies that proactively thwart the unwelcome possibility of Pakistan's nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress to carefully formulate and execute policies toward Pakistan in order to deter the possibility of terrorists gaining access to nuclear weapons; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the U.S. should seek to provide assistance to Pakistan in implementing programs that will improve security and effective accountability at nuclear facilities thereby transforming Pakistan from a source of insecurity in the Middle East to a country committed to eliminating terrorism, and ensuring security from nuclear proliferation.

Resolution No. 54: Vietnam Human Rights

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the comradeship and loyalty of the ethnic minorities of Vietnam to include, Montagnards and Hmong hill people, whose assistance was invaluable during the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion, as veterans of wartime service in the defense of liberty, have a special concern for maintaining peace with freedom and recognize that the protection of human rights are vital in that regard; and

WHEREAS, Since diplomatic and trade relations have been established over the last 20 years and normalized as recently as 2007 between the U.S. and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the condition of tribal people who assisted United States forces during the Vietnam conflict has greatly worsened in terms of persecution; and

WHEREAS, The official concern of The American Legion stems from that part of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion which states: "We associate ourselves together...to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress to support legislation and policies that will compel the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to meet the international standards of human rights; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the ethnic and religious minorities within the country of Vietnam be extended those protections and rights to live and worship in peace without threat of imprisonment or retribution from their government; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to take such measures as are necessary to overcome the jamming of Radio Free Asia by the government of Vietnam; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That educational and cultural exchange programs with Vietnam should promote progress toward freedom and democracy; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to create a U.S. policy that will offer refugee resettlement to Vietnam nationals (including members of the Montagnard ethnic minority groups) who were eligible for the Humanitarian Resettlement program, the Orderly Departure program, the Resettlement Opportunities for Vietnamese Returnees program, the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1988, or any other U.S. refugee program, but who were deemed ineligible for reasons of administrative error, to include inaccurate language translation or certain circumstances beyond their control.

Resolution No. 55: Support for Foreign Exchange Education Programs

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States, Mexico, and Central and South America are historic, regional neighbors with a common heritage and thousands of miles of common boundaries; and

WHEREAS, The Congress and the Executive Branch have entered into the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico; and

WHEREAS, College scholarships and educational exchanges help reduce social, cultural, and international barriers and promote good will and understanding; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to increase financial and political support for existing international education exchange and scholarship programs, such as: the Fulbright, Gilman, and other programs, offered through the Departments of State and Education which will increase cooperative endeavors on all fronts to enhance the prosperity and security of those nations participating; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Government to expand the number of scholarships for Mexico, Central America, and South America, particularly for those highly qualified students, who lack funds to attend undergraduate and appropriate vocational-technical programs, provided said students promise to abide by current or future immigration student visa policies after completing their education or program requirements.

Resolution No. 56: Global Trade Policies

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, China and other trade countries have purchased billions of dollars worth of U.S. Government bonds, stock market shares, and individual companies with their windfall money from our trade deficit as a result of Congress approving the "World Free Trade" policy a number of years ago; and

WHEREAS, China and other trade countries have not adhered to the global trade rules initially agreed to in the treaty relating to import fees and tariffs resulting with below reasonable costs of the products in the U.S. and higher prices of U.S. products sold in their countries; and

WHEREAS, Revenues realized by other countries from these trade imbalances have resulted in greater purchasing power and the potential for foreign ownership of essential industries and corporations vital to our basic national security interests and infrastructure; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to balance trade deficits by pursuing the enforcement of the conditions of the trade negotiations made in good faith with these nations and support the efforts of our trade negotiators and diplomatic officials to use every avenue available through the World Trade Organization and the International Court of Justice to pursue our nation's claims for fair trade practices.

Resolution No. 57: Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC)

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) is established in Public Law 106-398, Section 911 which amended Chapter 108 of Title 10, United States Code by adding a new section numbered as § 2166, to enhance security, and promote democratic values, and foster cooperation among the Organization of American States; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the primary missions cited above, the mission of WHINSEC also includes promoting respect for human rights; knowledge and understanding of U.S. customs and traditions; and training programs covering ethics, the rule of law, international treaties and conventions, international humanitarian law, the military role in democratic societies and civilian control of the military; and

WHEREAS, WHINSEC inherited an unfair and unfortunate reputation from its predecessor, the School of Americas (SOA) and such reputation is being generated by public response to media coverage of claims by a number of human rights activist groups who accused SOA, without any specific cause and effect evidence, of conducting training that had influenced a total of eight military leaders from Central and South America to commit serious human rights violations and crimes against their fellow citizens, long after leaving SOA and serving in much higher positions of responsibility in corrupted governments; and

WHEREAS, WHINSEC and the Department of Defense have long maintained that no school should be held accountable for the actions of only a minute number of its large number of its graduates; and

WHEREAS, American Legion representatives visited WHINSEC in June 2008 and observed ethics and human rights courses being conducted and met with students from South and Central America who expressed appreciation for the training in American alliances, cooperation, democracy, living in free societies and traditional American values; and

WHEREAS, During their WHINSEC visit, The American Legion representatives observed the personal relationships and bonding developed between and among the WHINSEC faculty, the international military students and U.S. military students training along with the international military students and how effectively, therefore, WHINSEC is building the kind of partnering with other nations and their military, police, and first responders that is deemed as an essential element of national power to use in the long fight against extremist terrorism, as well as a very cost effective way to build improved relationships and the international partnering needed for success in the prolonged war against extremist terrorism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress and the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) is adequately funded on the basis that hemispheric training, alliance building, and the sharing of knowledge among the Organization of American States is a vital interest to the U.S. in terms of the establishment of alliances, hemispheric cooperation and national security; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls on Congress to ensure that such funding be restricted for use only for those purposes included in the mission statement of WHINSEC; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Secretary of Defense to establish similar institutes for other regions of the world where international mutual cooperation and alliance building can be beneficial to the vital interests of the United States.

Resolution No. 58: Support for World Press Freedom

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In a democratic society the essential right of the press (print and electronic) to report on government activities, social movements, scientific developments, and other significant events or breakthroughs is one of the basic pillars of our Bill of Rights; and

WHEREAS, Such reporting and expression of speech helps to ensure the transparency of the political and social systems that are in place and that an informed and educated public can more effectively participate politically; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that oppressive and restrictive regimes around the world work to deter, manipulate or out-rightly deny their citizens the ability to get unfettered information, or to allow free press to investigate and report in those countries; and

WHEREAS, Department of State and U.S. Government News Media Organizations under the Broadcast Board of Governors such as: The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti TV, and Middle East Broadcasting Network, are essential news resources to countries whose domestic news sources are oppressed or restricted; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to designate and provide appropriate funding for the Department of State and U.S. Government News Media Organizations under the Broadcast Board of Governors such as: The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti TV, and the Middle East Broadcasting Network; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports international press freedom and the protection of international journalists who report and investigate news throughout the world.

Resolution No. 59: Secure National Borders Against Illegal Drugs

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The borders that separate the United States, Canada, and Mexico are relatively open; and

WHEREAS, There are rising concerns among U.S. officials regarding the deteriorating security situation which allows significant smuggling of drugs, illegal immigrants, and other contraband across our borders; and

WHEREAS, The violence on the Mexican border has caused a change in smuggling from that area to other parts of our national borders such as Canada and our sea coast; and

WHEREAS, The Mexican government, while attempting to control the problem, is not able to counter the drug cartels due to being out-manned and out-gunned; and

WHEREAS, The United States has the capability to provide assistance to the Mexican Government that would allow it to reestablish control and eliminate the drug cartels; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support the President's and Congress' efforts to provide assistance and aid to the Canadian and Mexican Governments to secure the borders separating the United States, Canada, and Mexico from trafficking illegal drugs across those borders.

Resolution No. 60: Taiwan Defense Arms Sales

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, also known as Taiwan, is a long-time friend having fought with the United States against Japanese Imperialism during World War II and against communism during the post-war period; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is a major trading partner and democratic ally of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Asia-Pacific region; and

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8), the United States is committed to provide defense equipment and defense services, in such quantities that the Government of the Republic of China may maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports the sales of the latest American weapon systems, including naval vessels, submarines, military aircraft, high-tech electronics, communications equipment and air-defense missile systems to Republic of China of such quality and in such quantities so as to enable the Government of the Republic of China to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports the continued sales of sophisticated U.S. weapon systems, including, but not limited to, F-16 fighter aircraft, anti-submarine equipment and torpedoes, anti-aircraft/anti-missile systems, and electronics and communications equipment to Republic of China; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Government of the Republic of China be given preferential pricing for these items but not equal to that given to the U.S. government, to enable the Republic of China to purchase sufficient quantities of these items for their defense needs.

Resolution No. 61: Security of Overseas Embassies

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States has 294 embassies and consulates distributed around the globe; and

WHEREAS, Many of these embassies and consulates are located in countries that are hostile towards our culture and way of life; and

WHEREAS, The soil on which they occupy is sovereign territory of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The men and women who serve our country by representing us in these locations deserve the highest level of security we can offer; and

WHEREAS, In the wake of the recent murder of our ambassador to Libya and three other Americans in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012, marking the first United States ambassador death to a violent act since 1979; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the United States government review, and if necessary, take measures at all United States embassies and consulates to ensure the safety and security of all United States diplomatic personnel against our enemies and terrorists; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the American people receive a full accounting of the events that occurred in Benghazi on September 11, 2012, from the highest level of government within The United States of America.

Resolution No. 62: Ratify Disabilities Treaty

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, American servicemembers have sustained serious mental and physical injuries during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, Countless numbers of veterans continue to suffer from mental and physical injuries incurred on behalf of our country during prior conflicts; and

WHEREAS, In 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure equal opportunity for all people with disabilities in the United States; and

WHEREAS, In 2008, President George W. Bush reaffirmed support of the Americans with Disabilities Act by signing into law the ADA Amendments Act; and

WHEREAS, The United States has been the leader on access and equality for all people with disabilities, including disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Disabilities Treaty) supports equal treatment and non-discrimination for people with disabilities in access to rehabilitation, employment, educational opportunities and community living; and

WHEREAS, President Barack Obama signed the Disabilities Treaty on July 26, 2009; and

WHEREAS, As of August 15, 2013, 156 countries, including the United States, have signed the Disabilities Treaty and 133 countries have ratified it; and

WHEREAS, The United States must ratify the Disabilities Treaty because it embodies the principles of the ADA and reinforces our leadership in the promotion of opportunities for disabled veterans, servicemembers, and their families with disabilities to travel, study, work and serve in the world community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges the Senate to provide its advice and consent to allow the United States to ratify the Disabilities Treaty.

Resolution No. 72: Benefits and Burial Rights for Select Surrogate Forces

Origin: Colorado

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States government since the creation of the Union has engaged indigenous groups to support combat military operations in both the continental United States and areas outside the continental United States; and

WHEREAS, These surrogate soldiers, such as the Montagnards, Hmong, Philippines Guerrilla Units and others, fighting on behalf of the U.S. Forces, aided in the rescuing of downed air crewman, protecting radar facilities and suppressing supply routes utilized by the enemy, and in so doing saving untold lives, and gave of themselves the utmost sacrifice of life in support of the U.S. operations; and

WHEREAS, When U.S. Forces withdrew from those areas of operation, the majority of time these individuals were forced to flee from their homes, leaving their worldly possessions behind, escaping with their families to refugee camps and were then allowed to received refugee status in the U.S. or lawfully immigrated into this country; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion adopted resolution No. 159 at the 2002 National Convention in Charlotte, NC and resolution No. 92 at the 2005 National Convention in Honolulu, HI urging the federal government to recognize these and similar groups as U.S. veterans having served alongside U.S. Forces in all wars and conflicts since, for the purpose of federal veterans benefits in CFR 38.3.7; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That, The American Legion urge the U.S. Congress to investigate, evaluate and prescribe legislation to provide these special groups who have lawfully obtained U.S. citizenship, due benefits fitting their support of the U.S. military operations; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Congress to investigate, evaluate and prescribe legislation to provide these special groups who have lawfully obtained U.S. citizenship, burial rites in national cemeteries.

Resolution No. 227: Prevent a Nuclear Armed Iran

Origin: Ohio

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion views nuclear weapons development and proliferation a critical threat to national security; and

WHEREAS, Although denying the fact the Islamic Republic of Iran has been aggressively pursuing a nuclear weapons development program for the past decade by enriching uranium to the weapons grade level of 20 percent; and

WHEREAS, Iran has agreed to cease its nuclear weapons development program in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions levied on them by the United Nations in June 2010; and

WHEREAS, The United States and its allies stood idle and watched as North Korea, in a similar scenario, deceive the world and develop an atomic bomb; and

WHEREAS, Allowing Iran to develop or acquire a nuclear weapon would destabilize the entire Middle East and pose an eminent threat to Israel; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to resolve not to allow Iran to develop or acquire nuclear weapons; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the United States of America exercise all options up to and including military action to achieve this endeavor.

Resolution No. 53: POW/MIA Policies

Origin: Nebraska

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(As amended)

WHEREAS, American servicemembers and civilians remain missing in action or otherwise unaccounted for from America's past wars and conflicts, and reports indicate that in former enemy areas where Americans could still be alive, information has been deliberately and cruelly withheld; and

WHEREAS, The families of POW/MIAs suffer untold uncertainty due to the lack of an accurate accounting for their missing loved one, often in spite of heroic efforts by U.S. specialists; and

WHEREAS, The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2010 called upon the Secretary of Defense to provide funds, personnel, and resources as the Secretary considers appropriate to significantly increase the capability and capacity of the Department of Defense (DOD), the Armed Forces, and commanders of the combatant commands to account for missing persons so that, beginning with fiscal year 2015, the POW/MIA accounting community has sufficient resources to ensure that at least 200 missing persons are accounted for under the program annually; and

WHEREAS, While the Department of Defense has increased funding and resources to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) to support the expanded mission as explained in NDAA 2010, the military construction project for a new facility to meet the needs of JPAC has a funding shortfall of \$22.79 million, which will delay the ability to occupy the new building; and

WHEREAS, Advancements in science, forensic technology and foreign government cooperation have helped specific locations of alleged remains of US personnel to be recently identified by the U.S. Government; and

WHEREAS, Promising identification techniques involving radiographic comparison and facial superimposition have dramatically increased the U.S. Government's ability to identify remains of unaccounted for servicemen and civilians for whom DNA matching was not an alternative; and

WHEREAS, Each member of the DOD POW/MIA accounting community, including the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, the Defense Intelligence Agency POW/MIA specialists, the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory, and the service casualty and mortuary offices, plays a vital role in the mission to account for missing and unaccounted for U.S. servicemen and civilians from our nation's past wars and conflicts; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Defense recently directed “complete reorganization” of the DOD POW/MIA accounting community, a consolidation encouraging to family members and veterans, though the end-result will require close scrutiny for viability; and

WHEREAS, The single agency that will be formed as a result of the Defense Secretary’s directive for “complete reorganization” will be the agency responsible for policy, administration and operational implementation to achieve the fullest possible accounting for missing U.S. personnel; and

WHEREAS, The POW/MIA accounting effort should not be considered complete until all reasonable actions have been taken to achieve the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. personnel; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion advocates for the fullest possible accounting of missing Americans, in every country, on every continent; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes U.S. Government POW/MIA operations, though currently still inadequate, are achieving substantial progress; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28 2014, That The American Legion remains steadfast in our commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. military personnel and designated civilian personnel missing and unaccounted for from our nation’s wars and conflicts; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to speak out on every occasion to expedite the return of U.S. personnel still missing and unaccounted for, regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to support legislation and policies that will use all reasonable resources to achieve the fullest possible accounting of all missing American servicemembers and designated civilians regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to provide full funding, personnel, and any other resources for all members of the Department of Defense (DOD) POW/MIA accounting community, and to ensure these funds not be redirected by the DOD for any other purpose; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the Secretary of Defense to quickly fund the shortfall for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) construction project; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to continue to declassify all POW/MIA information (except that revealing intelligence sources or methods) in a form readily available to the affected families and public review; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to establish a joint standing congressional committee on POW/MIA affairs to ensure continued priority action by the executive branch in addressing the POW/MIA issue; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to initiate or strengthen joint commissions with Russia, the People’s Republic of China, and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to increase POW/MIA accounting and recovery efforts; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to take further favorable actions toward the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as Hanoi increases efforts to provide the fullest possible accounting for US personnel still missing in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia it controlled during the Vietnam War; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That “fullest possible accounting” is defined as turning over live prisoners, repatriating remains of those killed in action or who died in captivity, or providing convincing evidence when neither is possible.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 48 (NE): Taiwan Straits Dialog
 Resolution No. 174 (MD): Veterans' Mail at Overseas Embassies
 Resolution No. 207 (WI): Interment Rights for Hmong Veterans
 Resolution No. 209 (VA): JPAC to Investigate Crash Site of B24J-44-41258

LAW AND ORDER & HOMELAND SECURITY
 George Wehrli, Florida, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 79: Fully Enforce Immigration Laws

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Each sovereign nation is responsible for enforcement of laws regarding its borders; and

WHEREAS, Citizens of each sovereign nation should be protected from those who violate their borders; and

WHEREAS, The United States has laws specifying means to obtain legal means to enter our nation; and

WHEREAS, These immigration laws are being violated each day by persons entering our nation and endangering our national security; and

WHEREAS, There are existing means to arrest, detain, or deport those who violate these immigration laws; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support the strict enforcement of immigration laws already in existence; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That benefits of any kind should not be granted to those immigrants who have gained access to our nation in an illegal manner.

Resolution No. 80: Support for Financial Anti-Terrorism Enforcement

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Security, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Internal Revenue Service are the first line of defense of the nation in combating financial security threats that face America from both home and abroad, and are charged with a number of missions that are vital to the security of the nation; and

WHEREAS, These missions include: policing, investigation, and enforcement of financial laws to ensure the integrity and stability of our nation's banking and financial institutions from both foreign and domestic abuse or manipulation, and to ensure a stable economic environment that provides for legal investment and export opportunities; and

WHEREAS, These departments and agencies are charged with the role of securing both the physical and cyber borders of our nation, and while mindful of the constitutional rights of American citizens; and

WHEREAS, Financial investigations and prosecutions conducted by the Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Internal Revenue Service have uncovered illicit financing schemes and revenue accounts of listed terrorist organizations through knowing or unknowing individuals, investment development groups, associations, charitable, and other legitimate organizations; and

WHEREAS, These departments and agencies must have the ability to use every legal tool and policy at their disposal to ensure that terrorist organizations do not have the ability to be financed through domestic and international financial systems; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports legislation that strengthens the abilities of the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security and the Internal Revenue Service to police, investigate, and prosecute financial institutions or individuals within the parameters of the Constitution that use legitimate and illegitimate financial means to help support both domestic and international terrorism.

Resolution No. 83: Support for the Department of Homeland Security and Coast Guard
Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to violence from international terrorism; and

WHEREAS, On September 20, 2001, President Bush announced the establishment of the Office of Homeland Security, a new cabinet position designed to be the single source of authority, at the highest levels, for all homeland defense programs and policies; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was transferred from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was able to respond to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, within hours, and its homeland security missions have since significantly increased; and

WHEREAS, Included in the numerous peacetime and wartime missions of the Coast Guard is law enforcement in its many facets to include drug interdiction; interception of illegal aliens; environment protection; maritime safety, including search and rescue responsibilities and inspecting and licensing Merchant Marine ships; and national security to include port security, and serving as an essential wartime and peacetime partner of the U.S. Navy; and

WHEREAS, To carry out these critical missions, it is essential that highly skilled and motivated men and women continue to be recruited and retained by the Coast Guard and its Reserve, and that cutters, aircraft, and required facilities be fully funded; and

WHEREAS, Without adequate resources, the United States Coast Guard will be unable to meet its national and international commitments to the detriment of the American people and other democratic nations; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard needs to modernize and recapitalize its integrated surface and air sensors and communication assets allowing the Coast Guard to efficiently and effectively support national maritime security interests well into the 21st century; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports the Department of Homeland Security and urges the Administration and Congress to make security of the United States the top national priority; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to arm the Department of Homeland Security with the legal powers and fiduciary tools to harmonize the many agencies and offices with homeland security responsibilities into a viable and credible deterrent to those who seek to inflict violence on the United States and the American people; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to fund homeland security tasks and functions being performed at regional, state, and local levels; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Administration and Congress to fully fund the United States Coast Guard to achieve its numerous vital missions including homeland security, law enforcement, environmental protection, maritime safety, and other missions as assigned as well as its modernization and recapitalization initiatives; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the annual Congressional passage of the Coast Guard Authorization Act; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Department of Homeland Security to support pay and benefits equity for Coast Guard men and women as well as the same quality of life features as authorized for the other Armed Forces of the United States.

Resolution No. 84: Illegal Immigration Policy

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Immigration and Customs Enforcement estimates that there are 11.5 million illegal immigrants who currently reside within the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Homeland Security, Office of Audits stated that each year more than one million aliens attempt to illegally enter the United States without proper documentation or enter legally and violate the provisions of their visa; and

WHEREAS, A need exists for a broad exchange of intelligence and related action between regulatory agencies which govern immigration policy, social services, and the Department of Justice; and

WHEREAS, Aggressively tracking foreign nationals is a deterrent to terrorist activities and failing to effectively utilize the available systems and technology to track illegal aliens threatens the security and future of the U.S.; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to adopt an immigration reform policy which emphasizes border security against those individuals attempting to enter this country illegally and internal tracking of all resident aliens and illegal immigrants; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose legislation that would result in the granting of amnesty and legal residency, in any form or by any name, to illegal immigrants currently in the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Homeland Security be provided the monies necessary to ensure both the thorough performance of its responsibilities and the security of the borders of the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any change to "Title V of the Immigration and Nationality Act" (8 U.S.C. 1531-1537) that would require revealing the source(s) of secret evidence used in the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security, administrative deportation hearings; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the federal government to provide the needed resources to enforcement agencies tasked with curtailing illegal immigration in this country and encourage the Congress of the United States to mandate that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Student and Exchange Visitor Information System continue and be aggressively administered by the responsible agency of the federal government; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to provide agencies of the federal government with the necessary resources to track the arrival and departure of foreign nationals to the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages a thorough background check and interview for each candidate for a U.S. visa prior to issuing said visa; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That those foreign nationals who perpetrate fraud and/or are visa overstays be arrested by law enforcement and turned over to the Department of Homeland Security for removal/deportation proceedings; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages Congress to pass legislation prohibiting the acceptance of foreign-issued forms of identification deemed untrustworthy by the federal government for application for government-sponsored public services, and

that businesses, including financial institutions, be prohibited from accepting foreign-issued documents determined to be unacceptable forms of identification; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages Congress to authorize and fund the securing of the borders and points of entry in the United States by: construction of physical barriers; hiring a sufficient number of U.S. Border Patrol Agents; federalization of National Guard troops to assist border security operations; searching all vessel and their cargo arriving at our seaports; enforcement of existing laws and passing of new laws to reduce the illegal immigrant population; and the funding of the Department of Homeland Security to ensure its effectiveness in securing borders of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages Congress, the Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security to take necessary action to stop the flow of illegal immigration into this country by means that include, but are not limited to: requiring all legal aliens to carry U.S. Government-issued identification documents; enacting measures that effectively halt the smuggling of illegal immigrants into this country; granting law enforcement agencies at the local, state, and federal levels the authority to work together and with the Department of Homeland Security to apprehend and incarcerate illegal immigrants; and the utilization of military resources as appropriate to assist in stopping the flow of illegal aliens in to this country.

Resolution No. 88: Pipeline Construction and Energy Independence

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Our republic is in a state of emergency and our people are no longer secure in their “unalienable rights” to “liberty and the pursuit of happiness”; and

WHEREAS, All subsidies distorted the efficient and equitable function of our capitalistic economic system and encourage crony-capitalism; and

WHEREAS, Our current recession is exacerbated by the high cost of energy; and

WHEREAS, We have sufficient energy resources within our borders to make our nation energy independent for decades and centuries if we construct third and fourth generation nuclear power plants; and

WHEREAS, The development of our energy resources would greatly increase national security, create jobs, and facilitate paying down our national debt, which now exceeds our gross domestic product and threatens the collapse of our nation; and

WHEREAS, Despite the January 2014 State Department report which managed to conclude that the proposed pipeline Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and other points won’t significantly increase oil-sands production or worsen climate change, President Obama is still waiting to hear from other federal agencies before deciding to issue the necessary presidential permit in lieu of an approved veto-proof bill from Congress; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion call upon Congress and the President to expedite the approval and construction of a pipeline from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and other points as a step toward greater U.S. energy independence along with allowing the development of all viable energy resources; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion call upon Congress and the President to phase out all subsidies and tax loop-holes in connection with this transcontinental energy project; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That all duplicative and nonessential regulations in connection with this transcontinental energy project be revoked.

Resolution No. 89: Protection, Preservation and Retention of Federal and Military Monuments in the United States

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, At different times through history there have been attempts by either the Filipino government or other groups to petition the United States Government for the return of the church bells taken by American military forces from the belfry of the church in Balangiga, Samar, Philippines; and

WHEREAS, Any return of a Federal or military monument by the United States of America would set a negative and dangerous precedent on any and all federal or military monuments; and

WHEREAS, Military monuments honor those servicemen and servicewomen whose sacrifice for the United States of America has preserved the nation and recognizes those who have sacrificed their lives in service to their country; and

WHEREAS, Returning any military monument should never be considered as contributing to the enhancement or reaffirmation of any friendly relationship with foreign countries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the Congress of the United States to establish such laws to preserve and protect all federal and military monuments within the United States from any foreign government or religious order who attempts to have any federal or military monument removed from the United States of America.

Resolution No. 90: Reclassify Fort Hood Shooting

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, On November 5, 2009, Nidal Hasan entered the Fort Hood Soldier Readiness Processing Center, took a seat at an empty table, bowed his head for several seconds then suddenly stood up, shouted “Allah Akbar,” and opened fire, spraying bullets at soldiers in a fanlike motion before taking aim at individual soldiers; and

WHEREAS, During the course of the shooting, 12 soldiers and one Army civilian employee were killed and 32 other individuals were wounded in the incident; and

WHEREAS, Nidal Hasan targeted soldiers in uniform and it is the worst shooting to have taken place on an American military base; and

WHEREAS, Investigation before and after the shooting discovered email communications between Nidal Hasan and an al-Qaida leader, Anwar al-Awlaki, who had been monitored by the NSA as a security threat; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense and federal law enforcement agencies have classified this as an act of workplace violence and have declined to categorize it as an act of terrorism by militant Islamic religious convention; and

WHEREAS, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 requires, not later than six months after the date of the enactment, that the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report containing the results of a review of this matter and report findings of the review and any recommendations the Secretary considers appropriate regarding modifying the criteria for eligibility for the Purple Heart; and

WHEREAS, This legislation can ensure that the victims of the Fort Hood massacre and their families are entitled to the very same benefits that are afforded to Americans who have been injured in overseas combat zones and the families of those who have been killed in action; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge that the Fort Hood massacre should be re-classified as an act of terrorism and the soldiers killed and wounded on November 5, 2009 should be awarded all honors and benefits due to battlefield combat; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Fort Hood Shooting be re-classified to that of an Act of Terrorism against an American military base; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation that provides victims and families of the Fort Hood shooting with the same benefits that are afforded to Americans who have been injured in overseas combat zones and families of those who have been killed in action.

Resolution No. 92: Second Amendment

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees each law-abiding American citizen the right to keep and bear arms of his or her choice; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that over 60 million individuals, representing over half of the households in America, have chosen to exercise that right by owning one or more firearms; and

WHEREAS, Gun bans, registration, and licensing of firearms and their owners have had little or no effect in such urban areas such as New York City, California and Washington D.C. and have not prevented violent criminals from obtaining firearms illegally and committing crimes; and

WHEREAS, The restriction of firearms purchases by law-abiding citizens will create a black market in illegal firearms and incur further governmental costs to enforce such restriction; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion reaffirms its recognition that the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees each law-abiding American citizen the right to keep and bear arms; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the membership of The American Legion urges our nation's lawmakers to recognize, as part of their oaths of office, that the Second Amendment guarantees law-abiding citizens the right to keep and bear the arms of their choice, as do the millions of American veterans who have fought, and continue to fight, to preserve those rights, hereby advise the Congress of the United States and the Executive Department to cease and desist any and all efforts to restrict these rights by any legislation or order.

Resolution No. 93: Commercial Shipbuilding for Defense

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States emerged as the world's foremost economic power and trading nation after the Cold War, and America's policymakers have neglected to use these advantages to sustain the nation's naval and maritime power; and

WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Maritime Administration the number of merchant vessels sailing internationally flying the U.S. Flag has been reduced from 1,072 to 191 over the last six decades; and

WHEREAS, In 1955, the U.S. Flag fleet represented almost 25% of the world's overall tonnage while the U.S. share today is approaching a mere 2% of total world tonnage; and

WHEREAS, The 600-ship navy envisioned by President Ronald Reagan would have kept the ship yards busy; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Navy active ship levels have been reduced from 559 ships in 1975 to approximately 291 today, including 11 aircraft carriers, 22 cruisers, 60 destroyers, 26 frigates, 2 littoral combat ships, 9 amphibious assault ships, 2 amphibious command ships, 9 amphibious transport docks, 12 dock landing ships, 53 attack submarines, 14 ballistic missile submarines, 4 guided missile submarines, and 14 mine countermeasures ships; and

WHEREAS, According to the Navy News Service, only approximately 12 Navy ships are currently under construction and only about 25 ships are in the procurement process; and

WHEREAS, The Navy FY15 budget is a \$15 billion decrease from the level forecast in last year's budget submission and is a \$38 billion reduction over the Future Year Defense Plan from the FY14 Presidential Budget; and

WHEREAS, Although, the Defense Department's \$496 billion budget supports a Navy of 291 ships rising to a total 309 by fiscal year 2019, the Navy's 2015 budget request reduced purchase orders of littoral combat ships from 52 to 32; and

WHEREAS, The question of how the United States should respond to China's naval modernization effort has emerged as a key issue in U.S. defense planning and this question is important to the U.S. Navy because many military programs for countering improved military forces would fall within the Navy's budget; and

WHEREAS, A U.S.-Chinese military conflict is possible however unlikely, due to the significant economic linkages between the two countries and the tremendous damage that such a conflict could cause on both sides; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Navy programs for countering improved Chinese maritime military forces need to positively influence the political evolution of the Pacific region so that the United States can protect its national interests in the Pacific and around the world; and

WHEREAS, China's naval modernization effort encompasses a broad range of weapon acquisition programs including anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs), submarines, and surface ships along with improved maintenance, logistics, and training systems; and

WHEREAS, Potential issues for Congress include whether or not the U.S. Navy will be large enough to adequately counter improved Chinese naval capabilities and have the ability to counter Chinese ASBMs and submarines; and

WHEREAS, U.S. commercial build rates are not large enough to provide the strategic sealift needed in an emergency, or to support a shipbuilding industry large enough to meet future U.S. naval needs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to stop further erosion of our vital maritime capability; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to boost naval budgets, promote commercial shipbuilding, expand the use of U.S. flagships in world commerce, and resist foreign actions that would further damage America's defense industrial base.

Resolution No. 96: Support for U.S. Blood Banks

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The public needs to be constantly reminded that the blood banks of the United States need to be supported by The American Legion and the public; and

WHEREAS, Emergencies continue to come up where blood is needed without warning; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion continues its support of blood banks to cover such emergencies; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continues promoting the donation of blood for all emergencies where lives are at stake.

Resolution No. 162: Amend the "Temporary Protection Status" Portion of the Immigration Act of 1990

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 203 (WI))

WHEREAS, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is a classification granted to eligible nationals of designated countries who are temporarily present in the United States when natural disaster or political turmoil in their country interferes with their plans to return; and

WHEREAS, A person from a designated country who is in the United States is eligible to be granted TPS only by establishing that the designated country was the applicant's last place of habitual residence; and

WHEREAS, TPS beneficiaries are granted work authorization during the TPS period and for any extensions of the designation; and

WHEREAS, TPS was created by the Immigration Act of 1990; and

WHEREAS, Anyone in the United States from the designated country is eligible for TPS, whether they entered the country in violation of our immigration law in order to find work or for other reasons, or violated the law by staying in the country and taking a job illegally, or were a bona fide visitor; and

WHEREAS, Currently six countries are designated as TPS; and

WHEREAS, Conferring TPS status on persons illegally in the United States rewards them with a work permit that legitimizes their illegal activity; and

WHEREAS, Any person who can establish that they fear persecution if forced to return to their country of origin is eligible for asylum in the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to amend the Temporary Protected Status section of the Immigration Act of 1990 to limit its coverage to foreign visitors legally in the United States.

Resolution No. 173: Support for the Jones Maritime Act and Related Cabotage Laws
Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always stressed that maintaining a viable U.S.-Flag Merchant Marine and its supporting infrastructure is essential to the economic, national, and environmental security of this nation; and

WHEREAS, The maritime policy of the United States, as articulated in the 1936 Merchant Marine Act, states that "it is necessary for the national defense and development of its foreign and domestic commerce that the United States shall have a Merchant Marine"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is concerned about the continued decline of the U.S.-Flag Merchant Marine and the shortage of trained American mariners; and

WHEREAS, As of 2010, the privately owned ocean-going U.S.-flag fleet consisted of only 192 active ships, which included 97 ships in domestic trade and only 95 U.S.-Flag ships that operated in international trade in support of the nation's economic and national security interests; and

WHEREAS, The United States is the world's largest trading nation, but only three percent of U.S. imports and exports are carried in U.S.-flag ships which is economically unwise and militarily imprudent; and

WHEREAS, The Jones Act, which is critical to United States national security and to America's economic well-being, should be reaffirmed annually; and

WHEREAS, On October 8, 1996, the President signed the Maritime Security Act of 1996 establishing the Maritime Security Program (MSP) for Fiscal Years (FY) 1996 through 2005 and on November 24, 2003, the President signed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004, which contained the Maritime Security Act of 2003 (MSA 2003) reauthorizing the MSP for FY 2006 through FY 2015; and

WHEREAS, The MSA 2003 requires that the Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to establish a fleet of active, commercially

viable, militarily useful, privately-owned vessels to meet national defense and other security requirements; and

WHEREAS, MSA 2003 authorized \$156 million annually for FYs 2006, 2007, and 2008; \$174 million annually for FYs 2009, 2010, and 2011; and \$186 million annually for FYs 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 to support the operation of 60 U.S.-flag vessels in the foreign commerce of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Participating operators are required to make their ships and commercial transportation resources available upon request by the Secretary of Defense during times of war or national emergency; and

WHEREAS, The MSP maintains a modern U.S.-flag fleet providing military access to vessels and vessel capacity, as well as a total global, intermodal transportation network and this network includes not only vessels, but logistics management services, infrastructure, terminals facilities and U.S. citizen-merchant mariners to crew the government owned/controlled and commercial fleets; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support the Jones Act and related maritime cabotage laws critical to America's maritime infrastructure, and therefore, to the United States national defense.

Resolution No. 189: Support for Legislation Prohibiting Hate at Military Funerals

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Since its creation, the United States has honored its war dead by a sacred tradition of military funerals, and continues to treat its war dead with sanctity, dignity and honor, and recognizes the ultimate sacrifice made to protect, defend, and preserve the freedoms and way of life in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Certain groups oppose various policies of the United States, particularly the armed conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and protest those policies at the time and location of military funerals of servicemembers who were killed in combat or who died from battle wounds; and

WHEREAS, Such protests have included chants against the President, the United States and its armed forces; laced with profanity, insults to the deceased servicemember, and his or her family, desecration of the Flag of the United States, and other sacred symbols of our country; and

WHEREAS, Such protests at military funerals have led to confrontations between protestors and family or community members including members of veterans organizations who vociferously oppose the positions advanced by the said protestors, and who support and honor the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and others serving in the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, These protests are targeted at the deceased servicemember and their families and can be considered hate speech; and

WHEREAS, These protests interfere with the bereaved family's grieving process during the mourning period in connection with funerals administered by the United States Armed Forces and Congressionally chartered veterans organizations thereby violating Title 18 USC 13§ 245 Federally Protected Activities 1(b), which states, "Whoever attempts to interfere with any person participating in any service or activity provided or administered by the United States... shall be fined under this title, or imprisoned not more than one year, or both"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a Congressionally chartered organization pursuant to USC Chapter 217; and

WHEREAS, Under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, citizens have the right to free speech; and

WHEREAS, It is not an unreasonable or unconstitutional intrusion of the free speech rights of protestors to preclude them from intentionally targeting military funerals and dishonoring those servicemembers who have died in armed conflict and their families; and

WHEREAS, Justice Samuel Alito has stated, "... it is clear that the First Amendment does not entirely preclude liability for the intentional infliction of emotional distress by means of speech" and "in order to have a society in which public issues can be openly and vigorously debated, it is not necessary to allow the brutalization of innocent victims" in addition to "our profound commitment to free and open debate is not a license for... vicious verbal assault"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion finds the targeted protest of servicemember funerals to be a vile and despicable act and not worthy of American citizens who enjoy the freedoms purchased by the sacrifice and death of military heroes; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to designate political protests planned and conducted at targeted servicemember funerals as hate speech prohibited by law; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress define the official mourning period for servicemembers killed in combat to be at least one week; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress prohibit the planning for, or conduct of, protests aimed at a specific member of the military or the related family within the one mile radius of activity pertaining to funeral services, procession, and internment for a period of one day before and one day after the official mourning period.

Resolution No. 272: Buy American

Origin: Iowa

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime service veterans which pledges to foster and perpetuate one hundred percent Americanism; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense contracts with large corporations and small businesses for the construction and repair of military hardware to include ground systems, armaments, aircraft and other systems for all of our military branches; and

WHEREAS, These government contractors may rely on subcontractors for the production and overhaul of individual components and subsystems to be used in these equipment items; and

WHEREAS, The government contractor manufacturing a system or systems may choose to employ the services of subcontractors located in foreign countries rather than those subcontractors which have comparable equipment and comparable costs in this country; and

WHEREAS, The choices made by the government contractor not only can affect the security of our nation as well as the employment of many Americans and veterans who may work at these subcontractors at both the originating and overhaul facilities located in the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to require government contractors to utilize American-made components and subsystems in construction and repair of their equipment over those made by foreign subcontractors for use by the United States military to ensure the defense of the country as well as the continued employment of Americans and veterans at subcontractor facilities.

Resolution No. 273: Support Domestic Energy Production

Origin: Iowa

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States' continued reliance on foreign sources of energy places our national security and economic well-being as a nation at risk during times of crisis; and

WHEREAS, The United States continues to import approximately 60 percent or more of its crude oil; and

WHEREAS, The countries of Algeria, Angola, Ecuador, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela are bound by their membership in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC); and

WHEREAS, The United States imports 40 percent of its oil from OPEC-member countries; and

WHEREAS, The war on terrorism and continuing conflict in the Middle East has brought into sharp focus the heavy reliance of the United States on foreign oil which necessitates a re-evaluation of our current and long-range energy policies; and

WHEREAS, Congress has denied petroleum exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Region and the Administration has denied the construction of the northern section of the Keystone Pipeline XL even though such efforts to expand our domestic supply could reduce our reliance on foreign sources of energy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Administration to pursue further development of domestic sources of energy to include: increasing U.S. petroleum production in an environmentally sensible manner so as to reduce America's reliance on foreign petroleum; building new nuclear energy plants; implementing domestic crude oil; gas exploration; and Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming oil shale development; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That conservation of energy and development of domestic energy sources be more actively pursued in the American private and public sectors.

Resolution No. 278: Rare Earth Elements

Origin: Iowa

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Rare earth elements are a collection of 17 elements that are critical to civilian and military high technology applications: Scandium; Yttrium; Lanthanum; Cerium; Praseodymium; Neodymium; Promethium; Samarium; Europium; Gadolinium; Terbium; Dysprosium; Holmium; Erbium; Thulium; Ytterbium; and Lutetium; and

WHEREAS, Rare earth elements are distributed globally, with 36 percent of known reserves located in China, and 13 percent located in the United States; and

WHEREAS, China now produces 97 percent of the world's rare earth elements, key components in a large assortment of advanced technologies, and increasing global demand along with Chinese government reductions in export quotas over the past six years have led to international concerns about future supply shortages; and

WHEREAS, Some U.S. weapons and equipment that contain rare-earth elements are: Predator unmanned aerial vehicles, Tomahawk cruise missiles, Zumwalt-class destroyers, night vision goggles, smart bombs, and sonar transducers as well as other sophisticated military applications including guidance and control systems; advanced optics technologies; radar and radiation detection equipment; and advanced communications; and

WHEREAS, China may use its monopoly over rare earths to leverage its influence on U.S. foreign policy, and numerous analysts have expressed concerns that Chinese quota reductions will increase U.S. element dependence; and

WHEREAS, National Defense Authorization Act for FY2011, Congress had mandated that the Secretary of Defense conduct an assessment of rare earth supply chain issues and develop a plan to address any vulnerabilities; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) was required to assess which rare earths met the following criteria: (1) the rare earth material was critical to the production, sustainment, or operation of significant U.S. military equipment; and (2) the rare earth material was subject to interruption of supply, based on actions or events outside the control of the U.S. government; and

WHEREAS, The DOD report was issued in March 2012; and

WHEREAS, Given that DOD's assessment of future supply and demand was based on previous estimates using 2010 data, there could be new concern for a possible rare earth material supply shortage or vulnerability that could affect national security; and

WHEREAS, Dependence on foreign sources alone for rare earths may pose a national security threat; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to continue to require the Department of Defense to provide regular assessments of the needs of the U.S. rare earth supply-chain for defense and require the Defense Secretary to have a long-term rare-earth supply plan in the interest of national defense.

Resolution No. 77: Support Research and Funding for Alternative Energy Resources

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(As amended)

WHEREAS, Our growing dependence on foreign oil adversely affects the United States and world economies as was discovered during the oil embargo in 1973 and interruption in the supply of foreign oil during the years of conflict between Iran and Iraq; and

WHEREAS, There is a growing need for creating new employment for the American people and developing new skills especially for our veteran population; and

WHEREAS, The development of alternate energy sources is vital to America's maintaining a competitive advantage in the world economy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to fund research and development of all alternative sources of energy including the utilization of coal; crude oil; oil shale; natural gas; wind; and solar energy as well as nuclear energy to ensure our nation will never be an economic hostage and we can always meet the ever growing competition from China and other Far Eastern industrial complexes and the European Common Market; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the federal government be strongly encouraged to substantially expand its incentives to industry, either through tax incentives or through research and development grants, in a greatly expanded effort to develop and use alternative energy resources, including substitute power and heating supplies.

Rejected

Resolution No. 187 (MD): Strategy to Address Social, Economic and Population Problems Related to Illegal Immigration

Resolution No. 226 (OH): Support Research & Funding for Alternative Energy Resources

Military Benefits & Quality of Life
Melvin Smullen, Maryland, Chairman

Resolution No. 163: Include Chiropractic Care and Services in Tricare Coverage

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Many retired veterans have TRICARE for Life as their supplemental health care program; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE is not an insurance plan, but rather a health care entitlement earned by our nation's military members for their service to this country; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE does offer its Chiropractic Health Care Program to active duty servicemembers including activated Guard/Reserve members only when approved by the servicemember's primary care manager; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE currently does not provide any chiropractic care to active-duty family members, military retirees, former spouses or survivors; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress include chiropractic care for all those enrolled in the TRICARE health system.

Resolution No. 164: Codify Burial Eligibility for Arlington National Cemetery

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Arlington National Cemetery is our nation's most sacred shrine representing an embodiment of the sacrifices that were made to uphold our country's ideals and freedoms; and

WHEREAS, More than 400,000 veterans and their dependents are buried here on 612 acres of land; and

WHEREAS, Arlington is one of more than 100 National Cemeteries but, unlike the others, Arlington Cemetery is administered by the Department of the Army; and

WHEREAS, In spite of restrictive regulations (Title 32, CFR), there have been numerous waivers in past years, falsification of military records to gain interment at Arlington and even an unprecedented presidential requested waiver and reservation; and

WHEREAS, Eligibility criteria for burials at Arlington need to be codified in order to assure compliance and fairness and to assure that the remaining space at Arlington is judiciously used; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to codify eligibility criteria for burial at Arlington National Cemetery and that such burial be restricted to servicemembers who die on active-duty; to our most decorated veterans to include recipients of the Purple Heart; former members of the armed forces separated from the military with a physical disability of 30 percent or more before October 1, 1949; and to veterans who spent full careers in uniform, and to their spouses and eligible children; to former prisoners of war; and for the President or former Presidents as Commanders in Chief of the Armed Forces; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes there should be no waivers for unqualified persons except under unique and compelling circumstances that comport with codified non-partisan waiver procedures as established by Congress; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes eligibility for interment of cremated remains of honorably discharged veterans in the Columbarium at Arlington should also be codified.

Resolution No. 165: Support for Concurrent Receipt of Military Retirement Pay and VA Disability Compensation

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 185 (MD))

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, Sections 3.750 states a veterans who is entitled to military retired pay and disability compensation for a service-connected disability rated 50 percent or more, or a combination of service-connected disabilities rated 50 percent or more, under the schedule for rating disabilities is entitled to receive both payments; and

WHEREAS, Beginning in 2014, retired servicemembers eligible for Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) will no longer have to waive any portion of their military retirement in order to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation; and

WHEREAS: The CRDP program, enacted in 2004, allowed military retirees with a VA disability rating of 50% or higher to receive both military retired pay and VA disability compensation at the same time; and

WHEREAS, This has been commonly referred to as the “concurrent receipt” of disability pay and retired pay; and

WHEREAS, Before creation of the CRDP, military retirees were forbidden by law to receive both military retirement benefits and VA disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, Parties seeking disability benefits were required to waive an equivalent portion of their military retired pay; and

WHEREAS, Retirees with a VA disability rating lower than 50 percent, however, are still not eligible for concurrent receipt; and

WHEREAS, Disabled retirees with disability ratings less than 50 percent have been entitled to receive disability compensation only by “waiving that portion of retired pay as is equal in amount to such compensation,” so that this group of disabled military retirees essentially fund their own disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense retirement system and the VA disability program compensate for different characteristics of military service; rewarding longevity in the former case and remunerating pain and suffering in the latter; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion expresses its gratitude to Congress for the authorization of both Combat-Related Special Compensation and partial concurrent receipt but urges Congress to authorize and fund full concurrent receipt for all disabled military retirees with a service connection.

Resolution No. 167: Earned Military Benefits

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this nation to remain at peace; and

WHEREAS, The profession of arms cannot be compared to any civilian occupations because of the required amount of sacrifice or necessary individual dedication; and

WHEREAS, An all-volunteer military requires benefits commensurate with sacrifices made by military personnel to entice enlistment and re-enlistments; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DoD) has on several occasions conducted studies to change, modify, and update military retirement, healthcare, or other earned benefits yet recommendations from those studies have been repeatedly found to be unsatisfactory; and

WHEREAS, Regardless of identified negative impacts to servicemembers and retirees, DoD continues to attempt to conduct a “bait and switch”; changing benefits for military service with no recourse for currently serving individuals; and

WHEREAS, A change in earned retirement benefits, known as REDUX, was instituted in 1986 but was changed in 2000 because of negative impact on recruiting and retention; and

WHEREAS, The Murray-Ryan Bill and the Bipartisan Budget Act 2013 were passed with the devastating cut to Military COLA included, though no input was received from the Department of Defense or the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Board; and

WHEREAS, On February 12, 2014, under tremendous pressure from the military community, Congress overwhelmingly voted 95-3 to repeal the COLA cut for all military members who joined prior to January 1, 2014 and President Obama signed the repeal into law; and

WHEREAS, Any changes to the existing military benefit system would violate contracts made with military retirees and currently serving military personnel and would undermine morale and readiness; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion encourage Congress to ensure that any benefit in force at the time of initial enlistment cannot be reduced in value, and that benefit is to remain in force throughout the entire military career and retirement of a servicemember.

Resolution No. 168: Flexible Savings Accounts

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Medical savings accounts, also known as "flexible savings accounts," are recognized by Title 37 of the United States Code for civilian employees and active duty members of the Department of Defense; and

WHEREAS, Medical savings accounts are pretax dollar savings utilized by families specifically for health care, dental care, and child care expenses; and

WHEREAS, Reserve Component members not under TRICARE historically have had significant mobilization issues due to deferred preventive health care due to cost for such things as dental checkups, which reduced the mobilization readiness of both servicemembers and their units; and

WHEREAS, Medical savings accounts would allow Reserve Component members to afford regular health care, thus improve their mobilization health readiness, and thereby also improve the readiness of the Reserve Components; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports benefits that support Reserve Component members, their military families and the nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the Department of Defense, by not allowing medical savings accounts for the Reserve Components equal to the active duty components, is discriminating against those members of the Armed Services Reserve Component who, although they serve equally in the defense of this nation, are not allowed access to a medical savings account; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports the participation in pretax medical savings accounts for both active duty and Reserve Component servicemembers and military families; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress be urged to pass legislation that enables participation in pretax medical savings accounts.

Resolution No. 170: Grant Access to all U. S. Military Facilities to Military Retirees and Their Dependents

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, A portion of the earned benefits of military retirees is considered to be the use of military facilities, such as post and base exchanges, commissaries, health care, recreational facilities, mail, and other U.S. military facilities worldwide; and

WHEREAS, As a direct result of the Status of Forces Agreements between the U.S. government and host countries many of these benefits are usually denied to retired military members and their dependents residing or visiting U.S. military facilities located outside the U.S.; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That all future Status of Forces Agreements negotiated, renegotiated, or revised with host countries allow for the unimpeded use of all U.S. military facilities by retired U.S. military members and their dependents.

Resolution No. 172: Handling of Military Remains

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In December 2011, it was revealed that the Dover Air Force Base Mortuary had dumped the incinerated partial remains of at least 274 American troops in a Virginia landfill before halting this secretive practice three years ago; and

WHEREAS, The landfill dumping was apparently concealed from families who had reportedly authorized the military to dispose of the remains in a dignified and respectful manner; and

WHEREAS, When queried, the Department of the Air Force reported that the military wanted to spare families of the additional anguish and "to open up the wound would be cruel," and the Air Force also indicated they would confirm for family members whether their loved one's partial remains had been placed in the landfill if they came forward and requested that information; and

WHEREAS, In January 2014, Stars and Stripes obtained internal communications from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) documenting allegations that JPAC's Central Identification Laboratory personnel were involved in the desecration and mishandling of remains; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion go on record as urging the Congress to objectively and thoroughly review the military's handling of remains at all military mortuaries and cemeteries, including Arlington National Cemetery, and that military war dead disposition be accomplished with a spirit of reverence and transparency; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That when war dead and partial remains are unidentifiable as a result of combat action, that they be interred or inurned as unknown remains at national cemeteries with the dignity and decorum as earned and entitled.

Resolution No. 175: Military Commissaries

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 276 (IA))

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense is developing plans to cut \$1 billion from the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) budget over the next three years; and

WHEREAS, General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs stated that the Joint Staff did not ask DeCA to come up with a plan to close U.S. commissaries; and

WHEREAS, Defense officials have asked DeCA for cost-saving options including how the system would operate with reduced or no taxpayer subsidies; and

WHEREAS, DeCA currently operates nearly 250 stores worldwide and received \$1.5 billion in subsidies in 2013; and

WHEREAS, These potential cuts aimed reducing discounts or calling for store closures are a direct result of the military budget reduction plan along with the sequestration-based cuts as mandated in the Budget Control Act of 2011; and

WHEREAS, By using commissaries, financially challenged military families can save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared with commercial supermarkets; and

WHEREAS, In addition to improving the quality of life for the troops and their families, commissary privileges help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve our country; and

WHEREAS, Without commissary savings, pay compensation for active duty and military retirees would be less competitive with the civilian sector; and

WHEREAS, Retired as well as drilling Reservists and National Guardsmen are now authorized to use the commissaries and their access to the DeCA should not be restricted; and

WHEREAS, Any effort to reduce or dismantle the integrity of the military commissary system would be seen as a serious breach of faith with a benefit system that currently serves as a mainstay for the active and reserve components, military retirees and military survivors, military personnel involuntarily discharged or released from active duty, and 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans and others; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge the Department of Defense and Congress to continue full funding of the military commissary system and to retain this vital non-pay compensation benefit system which is essential to the morale and readiness of the dedicated men and women who have served, and continue to serve, the national security interests of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any efforts to institute “variable pricing” or to privatize the military commissary system or to reduce discounts or to dismantle or downsize the Defense Commissary Agency.

Resolution No. 176: Department of Defense Military Retirement System

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this nation to remain at peace; and

WHEREAS, Preserving an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components is critical to maintaining an effective all-volunteer force; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has on several occasions conducted studies to change, modify, and update the military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, Recommendations from those studies have been repeatedly found to be unsatisfactory; and

WHEREAS, The July, 2011 Defense Business Board study recommended significant changes in the current military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, Many of these same recommendations were made by the 1978 Presidential Commission on Military Compensation; and

WHEREAS, The 1978 report from the Congressional Budget Office addresses the significant risk to maintaining a viable volunteer force if dramatic changes to the current system are made; and

WHEREAS, In the attempt to slow the growth in military personnel costs, The Department of Defense 2013 Budget Request calls for the creation of an independent commission to study the military retirement system; and

WHEREAS, The Murray-Ryan Bill and the Bipartisan Budget Act 2013 were passed with the devastating cut to Military COLA included, though no input was received from the Department of Defense or the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Board; and

WHEREAS, On February 12, 2014, under tremendous pressure from the military community, Congress overwhelmingly voted 95-3 to repeal the COLA cut for all military members who joined prior to January 1, 2014 and President Obama signed the repeal into law; and

WHEREAS, Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Board continues review the military compensation and retirement programs in preparation of their recommendations for financial sustainability to the President and Congress due February of 2015; and

WHEREAS, Any changes to the existing military retirement system may violate contracts made with military retirees and currently serving military personnel, and would undermine morale and readiness; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion oppose any changes to the current military retirement system which reduces the incentive for enlistment or re-enlistment.

Resolution No. 177: Support for the Reformation of the Military Voting System

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The 1986 Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (Public Law 99-410) streamlined the procedures for overseas absentee voting; authorized a back-up write-in overseas ballot if the voter did not receive one requested from the state; Postal Service was to ensure that balloting materials were “carried expeditiously and free of postage;” and the overall intent was to ensure “maximum access to the polls” by both uniformed and civilian overseas voters; and

WHEREAS, The 2000 general election demonstrated numerous problems concerning uniformed and overseas citizens absentee balloting procedures exist not only in Florida, but nationally as well; and

WHEREAS, Although a presidential election is held on the same date across the United States, it is composed of 50 separate state elections; and the Constitution of the United States grants the responsibility for the conduct of elections to the states; and

WHEREAS, Many states have difficulty printing and mailing ballots to overseas military voters in a timely manner, thus, posing a challenge for military members and their family members to vote and return ballots within deadlines; and other states will not accept ballots received 30 days before general elections making it difficult, particularly, for military personnel deployed overseas; and

WHEREAS, Absentee ballots from forward deployed military members entitled to free postage in locales like the Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia often are not postmarked at mailing but are postmarked en route resulting in late postmarking in CONUS; and

WHEREAS, Military voters should be protected from disenfranchisement based on technicalities that are beyond their control such as postmark discrepancies, missing notarized signatures, and confusion on residency requirements; and

WHEREAS, Some military units compound military absentee voting problems because voting assistance in the military is often an additional duty relegated to the most junior officers and special vigilance is often not given to handling election mail; and

WHEREAS, A worldwide Internet voting pilot program was recently tested by a Department of Defense contractor using digital signatures and ballot encryption, however, it was rejected for security reasons; and

WHEREAS, Many states now allow the fax transmission of absentee voting materials; and

WHEREAS, Despite progress made after more than a decade by the Department of Defense cooperatively working with the states, on average, some 30 percent of all military absentee ballots are still not counted in federal elections; and

WHEREAS, National defense is uniquely a constitutional mandate that gives the federal government the authority and responsibility to ensure military personnel and their families are not disenfranchised by the circumstances of their service and, thereby, necessitating federal legislation as the states have not resolved the problem for nearly a century, and a more adequate uniform and consistent system, not 50 unique systems, is needed; and

WHEREAS, The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), administers the federal responsibilities of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)

of 1986, as amended in 2010 by the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE); and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the progress made by FVAP and the usefulness of its website www.FVAP.gov; and

WHEREAS, The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws promotes drafts of uniform and model acts, and it could offer uniform formats for the states to follow on military absentee voting; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion ensure that satisfactorily drafted uniform acts and/or regulations pertaining to the Military Voting Absentee System, are made available to all appropriate state and local election entities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges that appropriate laws and guidelines be developed at federal, state, and local levels with the intent that all military absentee voters and their families will have their votes counted in every election; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the sending and receiving of blank and completed military absentee ballots be accomplished electronically as much as possible; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion takes an advocate role on this vital issue at national, state and local levels.

Resolution No. 179: Oppose TRICARE Fee Increases

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the debt owed to the entire military retirement community for their sacrifices and hardships endured in honorable military service to this nation; and

WHEREAS, Administration and defense leaders are seeking to impose very large health care fee increases on military retirees and their families; and

WHEREAS, The proposed fee increases are inappropriate and out of line with career servicemembers' unique sacrifices; and

WHEREAS, Military medical and retirement benefits must be markedly better than civilian benefits because they are primary offsets for decades of extraordinarily arduous service conditions; and

WHEREAS, Military retirees' careers entailed unique and arduous service conditions few other Americans are willing to endure for 20 or 30 years including hazardous duty, service in foreign countries, often in hostile environments, extended family separations, just to mention a few; and

WHEREAS, The fiscal 2014 budget proposed fees for future enrollees in TRICARE for Life as well as fee increases or new fees for other TRICARE programs based on retirement pay; and

WHEREAS, The Pentagon's 2015 budget is likely to contain instituting enrollment fees for TRICARE for Life; and

WHEREAS, The current fiscal realities dictate certain financial concessions may have to be made by our citizens but to unfairly burden America's military retiree families any further is unconscionable; and

WHEREAS, Those who point to the disparity in cost between civilian and military health insurance, and hint at unfairness, simply do not appreciate the huge premiums already paid by the selfless service and sacrifice of our servicemembers and their families; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion sees this proposal as an erosion of quality of life earned benefits from a grateful nation for honorable military service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion is strongly

opposed to proposed hikes in premiums and or enrollment fees being paid by enrollees in the military's health insurance program known as TRICARE; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to decisively reject these unjust proposed increases in the military retirees' TRICARE enrollment fees, deductibles, or premiums.

Resolution No. 180: Department of Defense Personnel Policy

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans created by an act of the United States Congress in 1919; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense establishes fitness for duty criteria and standards of conduct consistent with the Uniform Code of Military Justice; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense's current standards and directives have produced one of the most dominant military forces in history; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to conduct and maintain continuous oversight of the current Department of Defense (DoD) personnel policies to ensure satisfactory retention, recruitment, morale, health and effectiveness of the armed forces; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That in the event Congress detects issues which negatively impact the armed forces as a result of the current DoD personnel policy, The American Legion urges Congress and DoD to pass legislation or implement policies to address those issues.

Resolution No. 181: Correction of Military Records

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 provided for the recognition of representatives of The American Legion, and other organizations, to serve as counsel before the discharge and retirement boards of the Armed Forces, and this recognition was extended to cover the Boards for Correction of Military Records (BCMRs) when they were created under the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion was actively involved in the legislative process that established the Correction Boards under section 1552 of title 10, United States Code (USC); and

WHEREAS, Although under provision of title 10, USC, 1552, a three year statute of limitations was created which begins as of the date of discovery of an error or injustice on the military records of a former servicemember, the boards are also authorized, under statute, to excuse filings beyond the three year period if it is in the interest of justice to do so; and

WHEREAS, For many years, the boards routinely waived the three year statute of limitation so as to provide veterans the opportunity to correct any error or injustice in their records; and

WHEREAS, In the past, the BCMRs have considered that the effective date of commencement of the three year limit was effective the date of the final separation from service; and

WHEREAS, Congress is investigating the fairness and independence of the BCMRs and the effective date for the commencement of the correction of records by active servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, Section 205 of The Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act of 1940 provides for the waiver of periods of limitation for persons in military service with respect to civil proceedings; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruling in the case of *Detweiler v. Pena*, held that the three year rule does not apply to active duty personnel; and

WHEREAS, The Discharge Review Board, considered to be a lower review agency, has a 15 year statute of limitation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That appropriate action be taken in support of legislation to amend title 10, United States Code, section 1552, so as to eliminate all time limitations restricting when a claimant may petition the Boards for Correction of Military Records for relief of an error or injustice.

Resolution No. 182: Support for Military Quality of Life Standards

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for members of the Armed Forces, their dependents, and military retirees, and survivors as people are the foundation of our Nation's fighting forces; and

WHEREAS, Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this nation to remain at peace; and

WHEREAS, Military compensation is only one factor in the quality of life equation as to whether a good service members and their families remain in military service: Other major factors include fair treatment, career stability, regular promotions, adequate quarters, adequate health care, commissaries, and day care facilities, all of which ease the numerous sacrifices that are demanded of servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, Our military retirees and their dependents and survivors are deserving and rightfully entitled to adequate health care treatment, concurrent receipt, and regular cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to military retirement pay and survivor benefit plans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress and the Department of Defense to support and fund quality of life features including, but not limited to, the following: military pay comparability for the Armed Forces and regular increases in the Basic Allowances for Quarters; renovation and construction of military quarters and increased funding for child day care centers and pay raises must be competitive with the private sector; adequate medical, mental, and dental health services; morale, welfare, and recreational facilities; and non-privatized exchanges and commissary facilities; and the Defense Commissary Agency (DECA) and its functions should be retained and not relegated to the military services; preserving an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components; oppose any changes to the military retirement system, whether prospective or retroactive, that would violate contracts made with military retirees and that would undermine morale and readiness; requiring the Services perform mandatory physical examinations, without waivers, for all separating and retiring servicemembers within 90 days of separation from service; full funding concurrent receipt of military retirement pay, and VA disability compensation as well as Special Compensation pays for disabled military retirees; that the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (SBP/DIC) offset be eliminated; TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy program for Medicare-eligible military retirees, their dependents and military survivors, should be adequately funded; and regular cost-of-living adjustments to military retirement and increased death gratuity payments, and combat zone tax exclusions for service in South Korea; that Congress to extend and improve additional quality of life benefits, allowances and privileges to the National Guard and Reserves involved in homeland security and other missions so as to more closely approximate those of the active force; military retirement pay and TRICARE

health care for members of the Reserve Components should be authorized before age 60; tax credits to private businesses that pay the difference between military and civilian salaries to mobilized reserve component service members and restore travel exemptions for Reserve and Guard members for expenses associated with attending drills; military health care should also be provided to members of the Reserve Components and their dependents, who become injured while on active duty status regardless of the number of days served on active duty, to the same degree as active duty members under the same circumstances; and whenever a Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) is conducted, certain base facilities such as base medical facilities, commissaries, exchanges and other facilities be preserved for use by active duty and Reservist personnel and military retired veterans and their families.

Resolution No. 184: Reference Veterans Service Organizations at Discharge

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion are veterans of the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires would like to share the veterans services available to newly discharged and retired servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recommends that a separation package be supplied to each of these newly discharged and retired veterans and recommends that separation packets contain the names and addresses of all major veterans service organization in the United States by state; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that the transition from military life to civilian life is sometimes difficult and recognizes that association with fellow veterans and access to available services is highly beneficial in their efforts to become productive citizens; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion respectfully requests each military service include such a package of information in the separation process from the military; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion support legislation to insert a clause into the briefing of transitioning servicemen and women that makes specific reference to veterans service organizations, such as The American Legion, in their civilian communities.

Resolution No. 188: Support Armed Services Retirement Homes

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH), formally known as United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home (USSAH) and the United States Naval Home (USNH), is a pair of continuing care facilities which was created more than 150 years ago to offer retirement homes for distinguished veterans who had served as soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines in our nation's conflicts; and

WHEREAS, Persons are eligible to become residents of AFRH who served as members of the Armed Forces, at least one-half of whose service was not active commissioned service (other than as a warrant officer or limited-duty officer), are eligible to become residents of the Retirement Home: are 60 years of age or over; and were discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces under honorable conditions after 20 or more years of active service; persons who are determined under rules prescribed by the chief operating officer to be incapable of earning a livelihood because of a service-connected disability incurred in the line of duty in the Armed Forces; served in a war theater during a time of war declared by Congress or were eligible for hostile fire special pay were discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces under honorable conditions; and

are determined under rules prescribed by the chief operating officer to be incapable of earning a livelihood because of injuries, disease, or disability; served in a women's component of the Armed Forces before June 12, 1948; and are determined under rules prescribed by the chief operating officer to be eligible for admission because of compelling personal circumstances; and

WHEREAS, A person who has been convicted of a felony or is not free of drug, alcohol, or psychiatric problems shall be ineligible to become a resident of the Retirement Home; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to 24 U.S. Code and 37 U.S. Code, monthly pay deductions of \$1.00 from every enlisted member, warrant officer, and limited-duty officer provide a substantial stream of revenue, among other sources of support, fund the AFRH; and

WHEREAS, The extensive downsizing of the Armed Forces due to the Budget Control Act of 2011 and associated sequestration is subsequently resulting in the reduction in the number of military personnel; and

WHEREAS, The current and upcoming reductions in end-strength evidently will reduce revenue and, coupled with rising nursing home care costs are a cause for concern which would potentially require both locations of the AFRH (Gulfport, Mississippi and Washington, D.C.) to close their doors; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to continue support and fund those measures, to include annual appropriations, which will provide for the long-term solvency and viability of the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

Resolution No. 190: Support for Pain Management Research, Treatments and Therapies at DOD, VA and NIH

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The characteristics of modern warfare, including the global war on terrorism, exposes members of the uniformed services to many adverse and dangerous environmental diseases and living conditions; and

WHEREAS, War zone conditions, replete with noxious gases released from explosive devices among other potentially harmful environmental exposures in such theaters as the Middle East and Southwest Asia, as well as in other areas of the world in which servicemembers are exposed to combat-like conditions, produce traumatic, life altering, battlefield scars, and casualties unheard of in previous wars including infections, instant crushing of protective skull and body bones, loss of sight and limbs, dehydration, blood and other body infections and, in some cases, severely impairment or total loss of mental and physical body motor functions; and

WHEREAS, Military medical rapid response teams provide superb, state of the art, medical and psychological life-saving treatment and care at battlefield sites with an extraordinarily high success rate; and

WHEREAS, Military, Department of Veterans Affairs, and some specialty civilian health care treatment facilities are overburdened with caring for the most serious and most painful battlefield casualties ever witnessed from war; and

WHEREAS, The nation's medical and mental health care professionals have not been provided with sufficient resources to adequately research, diagnose, treat, and manage acute and chronic pain associated with present day battlefield casualties; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That federal funding for pain management research, treatment, and therapies at the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs and at the National Institutes of Health be significantly increased and

that Congress and the Administration re-double their efforts to ensure that an effective pain management program be uniformly established and implemented; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs increase their investments in pain management clinical research by improving and accelerating clinical trials at military and VA treatment facilities and affiliated university medical centers and research programs.

Resolution No. 191: Support for Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), since its establishment in 1972 as the nation's federal academic health center dedicated to providing uniquely educated and trained uniformed officers for the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, and Public Health Service; and

WHEREAS, The university's nationally ranked military and civilian faculty conduct cutting edge research in the biomedical sciences and in areas specific to the Department of Defense (DOD) health care mission such as combat casualty care, infectious diseases, and radiation biology; and

WHEREAS, The university specializes in military and public health medicine, focusing on keeping people healthy, disease prevention, and diagnosis and treatment, and USU faculty offer significant expertise in tropical medicine and hygiene, parasitology, epidemiologic methods, and preventive medicine; and

WHEREAS, The DOD and Congress have recognized the extensive military-unique and preventive health care education provided in the multi-service environment of USU ensures medical readiness and force health protection for the Military Health System (MHS); and

WHEREAS, USU is recognized as the place where students receive thorough preparation to deal with the medical aspects of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, radiological and biological, nuclear, and high yield explosive (CBRNE) terrorism or other catastrophes; and

WHEREAS, USU has developed similar training for civilian first responders, medical professionals and emergency planners; and

WHEREAS, USU is also uniquely qualified and experienced in simulation technology, education and training; and

WHEREAS, USU, recognized by DOD as the Academic Health Center for the MHS, has graduated thousands of uniformed physician officers who represent approximately one-quarter of the total physicians on active duty in the Armed Forces; USU alumni have been described as the backbone of the MHS, and in addition, the USU Graduate School of Nursing has conferred Masters of Science in Nursing degrees to uniformed, critically required advanced practice nurses during the current nationwide nursing shortage; and, the university has conferred master and doctoral degrees through its Graduate Education Programs in essential areas requested by the MHS; and

WHEREAS, The establishment of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) expands the role of USU; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to: continue its demonstrated commitment to the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), as a national asset, for the continued provision of uniquely educated and trained uniformed physicians, advanced practice nurses, and scientists dedicated to careers of service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the United States Public Health Service; support timely construction and maintenance of the USU campus; continue funding the university's collaborative effort for sharing its chemical, radiological and biological, nuclear, and high yield explosive (CBRNE) expertise and training; support development of the USU Immersive, Wide Area Virtual Environment (WAVE) Simulation

for CBRNE/WMD Medical Readiness Training; support funding for the Graduate School of Nursing Teaching/Educational Programs and, encourage continued close collaboration between Walter Reed National Military Medical Center with USU as the core academic health center.

Resolution No. 230: Prescription Drugs and Military Suicides

Origin: Ohio

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The suicide rate for service personnel in all branches of the United States military is at an unprecedented level; and

WHEREAS, More service personnel are lost to suicide than to enemy action; and

WHEREAS, Psychotropic drugs are now prescribed to our service personnel at unprecedented levels; and

WHEREAS, The side effects of some of these drugs are suicidal tendencies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion request The Department of Defense to re-evaluate providing these drugs to active duty service personnel; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion undertake a study of the effects of these prescription drugs on active duty service personnel.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 198 (MD): Eliminate Costs of Shipping Packages to Overseas Military Personnel Via the United States Postal Service

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE FORCES

William Goede, Minnesota, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 76: Position on the Operational Reserve

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Historically, America has in times of relative peace looked for an immediate economic “peace dividend”; and

WHEREAS, This fervent call for cost savings has repeatedly placed the national security of the nation at risk; and

WHEREAS, The nation is currently undergoing severe economic times; and

WHEREAS, Once again the Department of Defense (DOD), in order to meet budget constraints has been required to reduce active duty end strength; and

WHEREAS, A reduction in active duty end strength will require a continued and even increased dependence on the reserve components in the form of an “Operational Reserve” to meet mission requirements; and

WHEREAS, The 2012 Department of Defense base budget request does not identify missions nor budget line items for an operational reserve; and

WHEREAS, The 2013 Department of Defense Budget Request states, “the reserve component (RC) must continue to serve in an operational capacity as well as in a strategic capacity...Preventing and deterring conflict will likely necessitate the continued use of RC elements to protect and serve the Total Force”; and

WHEREAS, The Fiscal Year 2014 budget anticipates the DOD will use the Guard and Reserve as a vital part of the operational force, and where it makes sense as a force of first choice; and

WHEREAS, An operational reserve requires increased commitment by servicemembers and their families; and

WHEREAS, An operational reserve requires sufficiently increased, timely, and dedicated funding for training, equipment, and family support issues; and

WHEREAS, In order to insure sufficient, timely, and dedicated funding, the operational reserve must be properly missioned in accordance with the current National Security Strategy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion shall urge Congress to reform the laws and policies governing the reserve components to provide them programmable sustainability as an operational force; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense be directed to, in compliance with those laws and policies, establish missions and funding supporting taskings consistent with the National Defense Authorization Act, the Quadrennial Defense Review, the National Security Strategy, and the National Military Strategy, which directly impact national security and support the readiness of and the rotational nature of the operational reserve.

Resolution No. 82: Guard and Reserve Space-A Travel

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Defense (DoD) in DoD Regulation 4515.13-R has established a program of travel known as space-available travel—also known as “Space-A”—to allow authorized passengers to occupy DoD aircraft seats that are surplus after all required passengers have been accommodated; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of this privilege was to provide uniformed servicemembers with a respite from the rigors of military service, and to provide retired uniformed service members with recognition for a career of rigorous duty; and

WHEREAS, Under the current rules, Guard and Reserve members qualify for Space-A travel, however, unlike active duty family members, dependents of the Guard and Reserve currently cannot fly Space-A; and

WHEREAS, So called, “gray area” retirees (retirement eligible members of the Guard and Reserve who are under 60 years old) are excluded from traveling outside the continental United States (OCONUS) on Space-A; and

WHEREAS, Both the Guard and Reserve have transitioned from a Strategic Reserve into an Operational Force to meet the exigencies of an all-volunteer force in an era of persistent conflict in which all soldiers, active-duty and reserve-component alike, are expected to regularly deploy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to authorize the Department of Defense to offer space available worldwide travel on military aircraft to dependents of Guard and Reserve members, “gray area” retirees, and widows and widowers of retired members and dependents.

Resolution No. 87: Support for the Non-Federal Roles of the National Guard

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Members of the National Guard swear dual allegiance to support and defend the United States as well as the individual states in which they serve; and

WHEREAS, National Guard units perform invaluable non-federal roles such as quelling domestic civil disturbances, providing relief assistance in man-made or natural disasters, as well as civil defense and drug interdiction functions, and other vital missions as determined by state authorities; and

WHEREAS, National Guard units are often the first relief or rescue forces to provide immediate on-scene response in the event of such emergencies; and

WHEREAS, Past large scale natural and man-made disasters could be repeated across the country requiring the immediate intervention of military units to supplement and assist state and local authorities and our citizenry; and

WHEREAS, Numerous overseas missions are expected to continue; and

WHEREAS, The participation of the National Guard in these traditional non-federal roles may be in danger of being severely limited or even eliminated in some cases; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to retain National Guard units at reasonable readiness levels so that in addition to their active duty missions they may continue to provide civil disturbance and natural and man-made disaster assistance, perform civil defense and drug interdiction functions as well as other essential state or federal roles as required, to include border security.

Resolution No. 91: Reserves and National Guard Retirement Benefit Fairness

Origin: North Carolina

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Congress has passed laws that allow Reserve and National Guard members retirement credit points to retire early provided that they served on active duty for 90 consecutive days in a fiscal year and have completed 20 years of service before the age of 60 years; and

WHEREAS, The effective date for this benefit is for those who served after its signing in early 2008; and

WHEREAS, The law signed leaves out all the Reserve and National Guard members who were activated between August 2, 1990 through present that would give them credit for their active duty service toward early retirement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges Congress to amend the law to retroactively allow early retirement for those Reserve and National Guard members who have completed 20 years of service had been activated to Active Federal Duty since August 2, 1990 the same benefit.

Resolution No. 271: Authorize and Fund TRICARE for Reserve Components Dependents

Origin: Iowa

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) created TRICARE to augment its Military Health System; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE largely consists of regional federally-contracted, for-profit health care providers; and

WHEREAS, DOD's utilization of Reserve Components in the performance of traditionally active duty missions continues globally; and

WHEREAS, Many members of the Reserve Components, when activated to perform full-time duties, can no longer afford their civilian health care coverage for themselves and their dependents and numerous activated Reservists have been non-deployable due to health or dental problems; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to authorize and fund the Department of Defense in providing permanent TRICARE health care access for members of the Reserve Components and their dependents.

Approved

Resolution No. 166: Support Fight Against Cyberspace Threats

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The security of the United States is being increasingly challenged by non-traditional threats which may extend the fields of battle and terrorism to cyberspace warfare; and

WHEREAS, The United States government maintains a comprehensive and integrated system of federal agencies, including the Armed Forces, law enforcement, intelligence, and public health, to detect, deter and defend against cyberspace warfare threats to critical government and private infrastructures; and

WHEREAS, Presidential Decision Directive 62 (PDD-62), titled Combating Terrorism established the National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counterterrorism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urge Congress to appropriate the necessary funding to combat the continuing cyberspace warfare threats to the United States in the 21st century; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also urge the American public to be vigilant of cyberspace attacks, and that all efforts be made to detect, deter, and defend against the threats of cyberspace warfare, and to prosecute violators to the fullest extent of the law.

Resolution No. 171: Support for the Global War on Terrorism

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 275 (IA))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans created by an act of the United States Congress in 1919; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is committed to the security and defense of the United States and its allies; and

WHEREAS, In any war, continued public support not only for the troops, but also for their mission, is essential for victory; and

WHEREAS, The United States of America was suddenly, and without provocation, attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001, resulting in the death of nearly 3,000 innocent people, injuring over 6,000 victims, and causing untold economic damage to the nation; and

WHEREAS, This attack was not an isolated event, but one in a long series of terrorist attacks aimed at destroying such core American values as liberty, democracy and respect for human rights; and

WHEREAS, In response to this clear act of war against the United States, Congress authorized the use of military force against those persons and organizations who planned and helped carry out the attack, their affiliates and those that harbored them, and to deter and pre-empt future acts of terrorism; and

WHEREAS, Our servicemembers have made tremendous sacrifices over the past decade in fighting the forces of tyranny and terror, including over 6,700 the number of U.S. casualties from Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn as confirmed by U.S. Central Command; and

WHEREAS, Members of the United States military and intelligence agencies, displaying great courage and commitment to the mission, are still deployed around the world in support of the Global War on Terrorism, including Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, the Philippines, and elsewhere; and

WHEREAS, While the U.S. and our allies have had great successes in the war on terrorism, most notably the killing of Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, associated global terrorist groups, and their sponsors continue to operate in many locations and pose a grave threat to the national security of the United States; and

WHEREAS, As of 2014, the number of U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan is approximately 35,000; and

WHEREAS, Defense officials continue to urge Afghan President Hamid Karsai to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement which is imperative to the U.S. and NATO plan Operation Resolute Support which focuses on more training and assistance for the Afghan military and is set begin on January 1, 2015; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion fully supports the men, women, and leadership of our armed forces as they are engaged in the Global War on Terrorism; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges all Americans and freedom-loving peoples everywhere to stand united in their support of the Global War on Terrorism, and united in their support of the troops who are engaged in protecting our values and way of life; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the National Commander be, and is hereby authorized, to use whatever means at his disposal to disseminate accurate information about the Global War on Terrorism, and to engage whatever means necessary to ensure the united support of the American people.

Resolution No. 186: Establish a Strategic Plan for the Internal Security with the United States

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always recognized the importance of investigations that expose the truth about subversive activities that may harm or seek to destroy our constitutional government; and

WHEREAS, The Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, both security agencies of this nation, perform functions essential to the maintenance of our national security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports the thorough background investigation of all applicants for federal employment to expose possible links to subversive activities or membership in subversive organizations that contribute to the weakening of the internal security of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to immediately take such action as may be appropriate and necessary to effectively fund and staff federal intelligence and security agencies at a level that will help protect the United States from foreign espionage, organized crime, terrorism, and subversive activities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to enact legislation and take executive action as necessary to deny subversive individuals or groups the ability to infiltrate and subsequently destroy our government agencies and institutions through federal employment.

Resolution No. 280: Support Unmanned Vehicles

Origin: Iowa

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Historically unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones, were primarily used for reconnaissance; and

WHEREAS, Currently, military UAV's perform both reconnaissance as well as attack missions; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard and U.S. Border Patrol use drones to monitor land and sea to protect oil and gas pipelines; and

WHEREAS, The CIA operates a covert drone program targeting terrorist leaders in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen; and

WHEREAS, The State Department uses surveillance drones to protect U.S. diplomatic personnel; and

WHEREAS, As the war in Afghanistan ends and new threats emerge in the Asia-Pacific region, the Pentagon is considering adapting multiple weapons for drones, including the Cold War-era Hydra 70 rocket and the Laser Homing Attack or Anti-Tank Missile, or LAHAT, according to its latest report on the future of unmanned systems; and

WHEREAS, Although the Pentagon plans to spend almost \$24 billion on unmanned air, ground and maritime systems over the next five years through fiscal 2018, research and development funding for drones is expected to fall by \$1.3 billion, more than a third, from fiscal year 2013 to fiscal year 2014; and

WHEREAS, It is difficult to find any other technology in the Defense Department that in a single decade has made such a tremendous impact on our war-fighting capability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That the U.S. Government be encouraged to continue to proceed on a path of transforming American's armed forces into a modern force capable of providing for the security of all Americans, strengthening and expanding our military capabilities using unmanned vehicles.

Consolidated

Resolution No. 275 (consolidate with Res. No. 171)

Subject: Support the Global War on Terror

Origin: Iowa

Mr. Commander, national officers, and fellow delegates. I am particularly pleased to announce the winners of the National Blood Donor Awards for this past year.

Category I - Departments with 100,000 or more members

Post & Individual Participation: Department of California

Category II - 70,000 to 99,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: Department of Maryland

Category III - 40,000 to 69,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: No Submission

Category IV - 25,000 to 39,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: Department of Washington

Category V - 10,000 to 24,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: No Submission

Category VI - less than 10,000 members

Post & Individual Participation: Department of Alaska

Many of our Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. A total of almost 3,900 medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2012-2013 are the Departments of Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Maryland, and Minnesota. This speaks well for these Departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

Mr. Commander, as a Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Maryland, I move the adoption of this report.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall 2014

Defense Resourcing

Americans should be braced for a long battle against the brutal terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Again, U.S. resolve will be tested. A number defense experts are estimating that we will be conducting military actions in the Middle East for another 30 years.

This is at a time when the defense budget faces even more cuts if sequestration returns in fiscal year 2016. In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee this month, Gen. Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he would recommend sending U.S. ground troops to Iraq if airstrikes weren't enough.

The U.S. has committed about 1,600 troops in support roles in Iraq in recent months after U.S. troops withdrew in 2011. President Obama has ordered ongoing air strikes in Iraq and Syria against terrorist targets.

As you well know, sequestration will continue to cut about \$500 billion out of the defense budget over the next nine years in addition to the nearly \$500 billion cut in spending as a result of the 2011 Budget Control Act.

Our military is facing constant pressure with new missions, from military strikes in the Middle East to responding to the Ebola epidemic in Africa. You can't cut the military while we keep asking them to do more.

ISIS Conflict

In light of these severe budget cuts, U.S. airstrikes against the ISIS will cost tens of billions of dollars per year, further straining the DoD's budget as it still adjusts to mandatory budget cuts put in place.

The strikes will cost up to \$10 million a day and could cost between \$2.4 billion and \$8.6 billion a year. Lawmakers are relying on a pool of extra wartime funding the U.S. has used for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan but leaders in the Pentagon say it's time to get rid of the budget caps.

Efforts to eliminate sequestration have always been met by partisanship on Capitol Hill because of differences in how to make up for the higher spending. Republicans want to look for deeper, permanent cuts in domestic programs, while Democrats think that higher taxes should make up for it.

New "DPMO"

The consolidation of Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) is underway. The work that is being led by senior DoD civilian, Alisa Stack, who is the head of a transition team: the Personnel Accounting Consolidation Taskforce (PACT). Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Assistant Secretary Michael Lumpkin have both stated that communication with the families will be among their highest priorities.

The first among of many adjustments will apply to budget and to communications. More details to follow regarding those areas of concern. The instructions from PACT are now to begin acting as one agency, with initial operational capability set for January 15, 2015. Full operational capability is set to occur on January 15, 2016. Until the start-up date early next year, DPMO and JPAC plus all other active elements of the accounting community, have been directed to continue their work at hand. PACT is promising that the mission will not be interrupted by this reorganization plan.

96th National Convention Resolution Highlights

The commission was assigned 104 resolutions for consideration during National Convention week. This year, the chief subjects included the defense budget, War Powers, MOS Standards, and the military retirement system.

National Defense Budget

- The effects of sequestration and its additional impending spending cuts in the DoD FY 2015 budget would reduce the army to its smallest size since before World War II while significantly reducing the size and capabilities of the other branches of the armed services.
- Not only do the spending cuts downsize the force structure, but also reduce service members pay and benefits, which could potentially have a discouraging effect on highly trained men and women in terms of reenlistment.
- While the DoD shrinks the size and scope of the military, our major adversaries, Russia and China, along with rouge nations such as North Korea and Iran are ramping up their military stocks and capabilities at the same time as terrorist threats and acts continue.

War Powers/ Identifying National Interests Before Committing Military Forces and Assets

- There is no greater responsibility of a government than to protect its population and infrastructure.
- The War Powers Resolution of 1973 requires the President to advise the Congress and American people what national security interest is served by committing us forces to combat in a sovereign nation.
- The United States is currently under significant economic and budgetary constraints which have the potential to negatively impact the ability of the military to protect the nation.
- It has been shown repeatedly an uninformed and uninvolved public will quickly lose confidence, and deny military operations they do not understand.
-

Military Occupational Specialty Standards

- There are approximately 205,000 women serving on active duty in the military comprising 14.5% of the total active force, and approximately 130,000 women serving in the National Guard and Reserves comprising 18% of the total guard and reserve all serving with distinction, honor, and valor.
- In 2013, the DoD issued an order mandating that women have the same opportunities as men in combat jobs.
- The Armed Services have been developing plans to update physical standards, training, education, and other programs for thousands of military occupational specialties that must be made available to female servicemembers by January 1, 2016.
- In accordance with this mandate, if some military occupational specialties remain closed to women that the DoD must explain why.
- There are valid concerns about the physical demands required of soldiers to qualify and service in the combat arms; Army and Marine Corps infantry, armor, artillery, Army special forces and Navy SEALs.

The Department of Defense Military Retirement System

- In the attempt to slow the growth in military personnel costs, the DoD 2013 budget request called for the creation of an independent commission to study the military retirement system.
- The Murray-Ryan Bill and the Bipartisan Budget Act 2013 were passed with the devastating cut to military cola included, though no input was received from the DoD or the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Board.
- On February 12, 2014, under tremendous pressure from the military community, Congress overwhelmingly voted 95-3 to repeal the cola cut for all military

members who joined prior to January 1, 2014 and President Obama signed the repeal into law.

- Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Board continues review the military compensation and retirement programs in preparation of their recommendations for financial sustainability to the President and Congress due February of 2015.
- Any changes to the existing military retirement system may violate contracts made with military retirees and currently serving military personnel, and would undermine morale and readiness.

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander Michael D. Helm, our NEC Liaison and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee for their continuing support.

Washington Conference

The National Security Commission convened on February 23rd during the 55th Annual Washington Conference at the Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C. The following report is a summary of this session:

The commission was honored to welcome National Commander Michael D. Helm and Past National Commander (PNC) Clarence M. Bacon, PNC John P. "Jake" Comer, PNC Anthony G. Jordan, PNC Thomas L. Bock, and PNC Martin F. Conatser. The National Security Commission was honored by their attendance and very appreciative of their participation.

National Commander Helm began the session by giving an in-depth discussion on the importance of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), established January 15, 2015. DPAA integrates the former offices of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), and Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory (LSEL). National Commander Helm described his personal experiences of being imbedded with a DPAA recovery team in Vietnam and Laos and encouraged the commission to continue its support for full funding for these very meaningful missions.

The program proceeded in the following four sections: 1. Future of Military Medicine; 2. Homeland Security; 3. POW/MIA Update Resolution; and 4. National Security Commission Business.

1. Future of Military Medicine

Major General Richard Thomas, U.S. Army, Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Defense Health Agency Healthcare Operations Directorate was our first guest speaker. Prior to his current assignment, MG Thomas served as the Commanding General of Western Regional Medical Command; Chief, U.S. Army Medical Corps and Senior Market Executive for TRICARE Puget Sound Multi-Service Market. Previous duty assignments include Surgeon General, United States Forces-Afghanistan and Senior Medical Advisor, International Security Assistance Forces Joint Command-Afghanistan; Assistant Army Surgeon General (Force Projection), the Pentagon. His deployments include Operation Just Cause, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. In light of the recent recommendations made by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC), MG Thomas explained that the growth of costs in the military's healthcare system is unsustainable. He said that he and his team are focused on finding opportunities to generate savings without compromising quality, access or safety of the delivery of healthcare. The MCRMC is recommending that the military's TRICARE health care system largely be replaced, giving families the ability to choose from a wider menu of insurance plans, similar to those used by federal employees. "TRICARE often limits access to care by confining beneficiaries to a lengthy and frustrating process for obtaining specialty care and to weak networks of civilian health care providers," the MCRMC report

said, adding that the problem is more profound for those who live in remote locations, including troops in the National Guard and Reserves. "The Congress should replace the current health care program with a new system that offers beneficiaries a selection of commercial insurance plans." In accordance with Resolution 176 (2014), The American Legion opposes any changes to the current military retirement system which reduces the incentive for enlistment or re-enlistment.

2. Homeland Security

Guest speaker Rear Admiral Todd Sokalzuk, Assistant Commandant for Resources & Chief Financial Officer, United States Coast Guard led the Homeland Security portion of the program. RADM Sokalzuk commanded Air Stations Savannah and Clearwater directing their operations for Hurricanes Katrina, Ike, Gustav and the Haiti Earthquake. His most recent assignment was as Chief of the Office of Budget and Programs leading the development and submission of the Coast Guard's annual federal budget request. RADM Sokalzuk reported that the budget constraints placed on the Pentagon due to the policy of sequestration is significantly impacting the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). As a consequence, DHS is being stretched to address major issues with constrained resources; especially concerning immigration reform, border security and cyber security. RADM Sokalzuk outlined forthcoming budget strategies emphasizing increased maritime-technology investments; mission excellence and maximum service to the nation.

3. POW/MIA Update

The National Security Commission welcomed Rear Admiral Michael T. Franken, interim Director of the of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency; and Ann Mills-Griffiths, Chairman of the Board, National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, who briefed the commission on the progress of the DPAA and noted the challenges that lay ahead for the new agency charged with the accounting and recovery of missing DoD personnel.

The speakers provided membership with very informative updates regarding overcoming successive budget crises, the remaining obstacle to increasing the pace and scope of accounting efforts while ensuring the safety of field recovery teams, and efforts made in cooperation with the Lao Government regarding the over-price payment for helicopter support and denying permission for ground transportation to accessible incident sites.

Admiral Franken updated the commission on the progress of the reorganization, mandated by Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel. The three major offices of the accounting community JPAC, DPMO, and the Life Science Equipment Laboratory have now been combined into one agency and titled as the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. Admiral Franken also discussed the current process of selecting his replacement as the new Director of DPAA.

4. Business Session

The business session commenced with a briefing on the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization (MCRMC) Report by Director John Stovall. Mr. Stovall discussed the MCRMC's final recommendations concerning changes to the military healthcare and retirement systems. These recommendations include changing the existing 20-year career pension system to an increased accessibility and flexibility investment plan open to all servicemembers and the creation of a joint readiness command for combat casualty care. The MCRMC also recommends replacing Tricare with commercial insurance plans for active-duty family members, Reserve Component members and retirees through a Department of Defense health benefit program.

The business session continued with a quick overview of the upcoming plans for this year's National Security Commission Pre-Convention Trip. Deputy Director Joe Grassi indicated a visit to the United States Naval Academy will be the likely destination for the

commission's tour just prior the 2015 National Convention which will be held in Baltimore. To round out the meeting Commission Chairman Mike Schlee engaged in a dialogue with the commission and council members in attendance regarding general day-to-day operations and invited additional commentary from Mr. Stovall, Mr. Grassi, and Assistant Director Freddy Gessner. The meeting concluded with breakout sessions among the committees of Aerospace, Conventional Armed Forces, Foreign Relations, Law and Order & Homeland Security, Military Benefits & Quality of Life; National Guard and Reserve Forces, and Unconventional Forces & Intelligence for the purposes of reviewing current positions and prospective updates.

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Finally, Chairman Schlee thanked the National Executive Committee and National Commander Mike Helm for their continued support of the National Security Commission and our mission to ensure this nation maintains a strong and ready national defense.

National Security Division

Responsibility for the daily conduct of the extensive work of The American Legion in defense and foreign policy is assigned to the National Security Division located in the Washington, D.C. office. The staff of the Division consists of Joseph Grassi, Director; Freddy Gessner, Deputy Director and Roshawn Hyde, National Security Division Administrative Assistant.

During the year, the combined Division has endeavored to not only fulfill its responsibility to implement the mandates and policies of The American Legion relating to national defense and foreign affairs, but to constantly expand and improve the ways and means of projecting our interest in these two important areas. The duties have consisted of maintaining liaison with the Departments of Defense, State, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Homeland Security and Coast Guard; the Selective Service System, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and others. These contacts related to a variety of matters, some of which involved members of the armed forces.

Liaison also is maintained with a host of military and quasi-military organizations with whom common goals are shared. Among these are: Reserve Officers Association; Air Force Association; Military Officers Association of America; Association of the U.S. Army; and the National Guard Association of the United States. Most importantly, the National Security-Foreign Relations Division provides a steady flow of information on defense matters to members of both commissions and the leadership at all levels of our organization.

Writing and delivering speeches; writing letters to Congress, the President and the Department of Defense; preparing reports; preparing and delivering Congressional testimony; coordinating foreign travel; and answering correspondence and telephone inquiries are all part of the duty of the staff. Additionally, promotional material is prepared and distributed to support the national programs in the national security field.

Continual use is made of all American Legion national publications, such as The Dispatch, The American Legion Magazine and The American Legion News Service, the principal means for distribution of factual information and program support in the fields of national defense and foreign affairs. The organization's website www.legion.org is increasingly becoming the primary mode of communicating information both within and outside The American Legion.

Committee Reports

The following reports, received with grateful appreciation, were prepared under the leadership and guidance of the following Committee and Council Chairmen:

Aerospace Committee

Robert C. Weyenberg, Wisconsin, Chairman

During the past year, the Aerospace Committee continued its efforts to ensure that the United States does not become a second-rate power in modern air power or advanced aerospace technology. The authority for the Committee's efforts are the resolutions

adopted at the 96th National Convention. The effort to implement these positions required both administrative and legislative activities.

The Aerospace Committee's current resolutions clearly state The American Legion's full support for a fully funded Air Force and National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The Committee also emphasizes the importance of funding research. Research and development are what keeps the United States second-to-none in the air and in space. To be anything less than number one in these areas is a grave threat to our national security.

Conventional Armed Forces Committee
Charles E. Kruger, Minnesota, Chairman

During the year, the Conventional Armed Forces Committee has directed its major efforts toward maintaining a strong and modern United States armed forces that is second to none in the world. Our activities have been guided by the resolutions adopted by the 95th National Convention and subsequent National Executive Committee actions. Those resolutions were widely disseminated to Congressional, government, military and industry leaders to inform them of our positions for supporting strong and modern military forces to include the Reserve Components. Bound volumes of the resolutions were presented to the President, Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The National Commander designated "Maintaining a Strong National Defense" and "Support for the War on Terrorism" as a legislative priority.

Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy: Criterion for judging the winners of the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy is based on Departments giving the greatest degree of support to ROTC programs to include the number of medals presented and Legion participation in award ceremonies this year. Among the winners of the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy are the Departments of Alaska, Hawaii, Colorado, and Minnesota. The American Legion presented several thousand ROTC Medals to ROTC students in 2014.

Foreign Relations Committee
Randall Fisher, Kentucky, Chairman

The Foreign Relations Committee has remained dedicated to the full accounting of POWs and MIAs; human rights and freedom; the promotion of peace; and caring for veterans and their families who live abroad. The Committee worked diligently throughout the year to implement resolutions that speak to key foreign relations issues concerning America's national interests.

The committee conducted meetings and programs throughout the year to keep membership fully informed on current foreign policy issues. The commission has encouraged bipartisan development of foreign policies, which are consistent with the principles of democratic activism as well as the entire portfolio of The American Legion's active resolutions.

Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee
George W. Wehrli, Florida, Chairman

The Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee has established The American Legion's position on how to best deal with and lower the crime rates in America. The Committee continues to focus on our General Security issues to ensure a strong national and homeland defense and supports full funding of the Department of Homeland Security and all associated agencies. Its comprehensive focus includes holding parents responsible for fines imposed on youthful offenders, as appropriate. While also, looking at the issues

of Conservation and Natural Resources. Energy Independence will continue to grow as a national security concern.

Its position on the second amendment is that the Constitution guarantees the right of every law-abiding American citizen the right to keep and bear arms.

The Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee continued this year to emphasize crime prevention.

American Legion Departments, Posts and individual citizens have been responsive to the Legion's Crime Prevention and Fire Protection/Prevention programs. This program is viable, ongoing and important to our National interest. The Law and Order Committee have continued to promote its goals in this area.

National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Program: Based on its published criteria, the Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee annually selects Regional winners who contend for the prestigious honor of being selected as the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. Deputy Andrew D. Aninsman of Bensalem, Pennsylvania was named as the 2014 National Law Officer of the Year and was presented with the honor at the 96th National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina.

National Firefighter of the Year: Based on its published criteria, the Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee annually selects Regional winners who contend for the prestigious honor of being selected as the Firefighter of the Year. Deputy Chief Sara A. Shaffer of Prince George, Maryland was named as the 2014 National Firefighter of the Year and was presented with the National Firefighter of the Year Award at the 96th National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Selective Service System: The American Legion, over the past year, has continued to support the Selective Service System by strongly advocating the maintenance of the Selective Service Registration Program as a viable preparedness measure.

Blood Donor Activities: The American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary continue to be principal sources of blood donors in the United States. Through our vast network of Posts and Units organized into Department programs, Legionnaires and Auxiliary members continue to supply the blood needs of their own members, hospitalized veterans and through cooperative agreements, to patients in civilian hospitals. During August 2014 through June 2015, many thousand pints of blood were donated by tens of thousands of American Legion donors.

Military Benefits & Quality of Life Committee **Melvin G. Smullen, Maryland, Chairman**

The Military Benefits and Quality of Life Committee was established to reinforce The American Legion's support for quality of life features for members of the Armed Forces, their dependents, and military retirees, and survivors as people are the foundation of our Nation's fighting forces.

Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this nation to remain at peace. Military compensation is only one factor in the quality of life equation as to whether good service members and their families remain in military service: Other major factors include fair treatment, career stability, regular promotions, adequate quarters, adequate health care, commissaries, and day care facilities, all of which ease the numerous sacrifices that are demanded of servicemembers.

Our military retirees and their dependents and survivors are deserving and rightfully entitled to adequate health care treatment, concurrent receipt, and regular cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to military retirement pay and survivor benefit plans

The Committee remains strongly opposed to proposed hikes in premiums and or enrollment fees being paid by enrollees in the military's health insurance program known as TRICARE.

National Guard & Reserve Forces Committee
William B. Goede, Minnesota, Chairman

The National Guard and Reserve Forces Committee was established to review the budgets of the National Guard and Reserve components of the armed services to ensure that the Guard and Reserve Forces have sufficient numbers of personnel for assigned missions both state and federal, sufficient budgets for training, as well as modern equipment to meet all obligations.

Its position on retirement is to amend the law to retroactively allow early retirement for those Reserve and National Guard members who have completed 20 years of service had been activated to Active Federal Duty since August 2, 1990 the same benefit.

The Committee continued this year to emphasize the need for the Department of Defense to offer space available worldwide travel on military aircraft to dependents of Guard and Reserve members, "gray area" retirees, and widows and widowers of retired members and dependents.

Unconventional Forces & Intelligence Committee
Douglas C. Haggan, France, Chairman

The Unconventional Forces and Intelligence Committee recognizes the importance of investigations that expose the truth about subversive activities that may harm or seek to destroy our constitutional government and supports full funding of all federal intelligence and security agencies.

The Committee urges the American public to be vigilant of cyberspace attacks, and that all efforts be made to detect, deter, and defend against the threats of cyberspace warfare, and to prosecute violators to the fullest extent of the law. The committee supports necessary funding to combat the continuing cyberspace warfare threats to the United States in the 21st century.

The Committee recognizes that it is difficult to find any other technology in the Defense Department that in a single decade has made such a tremendous impact on our war-fighting capability than unmanned surveillance aircraft. It encourages the U.S. government to continue to proceed on a path of transforming American's armed forces into a modern force capable of providing for the security of all Americans, strengthening and expanding our military capabilities using unmanned vehicles.

National Security Council

The National Security Council was established to support the Commission and to review and be familiar with the resolutions pertaining to the Commission and to be available from time to time at the request of the Commission Chairman or National Commander to participate in activities relative to the purposes of the Commission.

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION COMMISSION
Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado, Chairman
Louis Celli, Massachusetts, Director

The following report covers the activities of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and its staff during the program year ending June 30, 2015.

The Ninety-sixth Annual National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, and the Fall and Spring Meetings of the National Executive Committee approved certain positions expressed in resolutions submitted to those bodies through the Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation and the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, respectively. The approved resolutions are set forth as follows:

**2014 National Convention
Charlotte, North Carolina**

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
16	Assured Funding for VA Medical Care	GA
17	Amend Title 38, United States Code, to Increase the Special Monthly Compensation (K) Award	GA
18	Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation	GA
19	Extend the Filing Period of an Appeal Notice to the Court of Veteran Appeals for Veterans Claims	GA
20	Presumptive Conditions for Former Prisoners of War	GA
21	State Veteran Home Per Diem Reimbursement	GA
22	National Cemetery Administration	GA
23	The Department of Veterans Affairs Dental Care	GA
24	The Department of Veterans Affairs' Role in National Emergency Preparedness	GA
30	Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense	MT
31	Prevent Exploitation of Veterans and Family Members Applying for Benefits, to Include Aid and Attendance	UT
35	Oppose any Reduction to the Department of Veterans' Affairs' Budget Due to Sequestration	KY
36	Department of Veterans Affairs Child Care Programs	KY
37	Department of Veterans Affairs Rural Healthcare Program	KY
65	Veterans Discount on Federally Funded Public Transportation	CO
66	Department of Veterans Affairs Means Test	CO
67	Military Sexual Trauma	CO
68	WWII Veterans Hospital and Medical Entitlements	CO
70	Include Korean War Veterans in Priority Group 6 for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care	MA
105	Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record	DE
106	Veterans Transportation System & Benefits Travel	DE
107	Prosecution of VA Employees Engaged in Fraudulent Practices in the Department of Veterans Affairs	MN
114	Department of Veterans Affairs Integrated Service Networks	WA
125	Environmental Exposures	MD
126	Extend the Department of Veterans Affairs Mortgage Protection Life Insurance to Service-Connected Veterans who are Permanently and Totally Disabled	MD
127	Gulf War Illnesses	MD
128	Increase the Transparency of the Veterans Benefits Administration's Claims Processing	MD
129	All Veterans Receive "Wartime" Benefits for Active Military Service Between February 28, 1961 and August 5, 1964	MD
130	Amend the Eligibility Requirements and Extend the Eligibility Time Period for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance	MD
133	Designate United States Air Force C-123K Transport Aircraft as Agent Orange Exposure Sites	MD
134	Disability and Death Pension Program	MD
135	Extend the Presumptive Period for Service Connection for Gulf War Veterans with Undiagnosed Illness	MD

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
136	Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives to develop Claims Directly on behalf of The Department of Veterans Affairs	MD
137	Radiation Exposure	MD
138	Recognize Operations in Lebanon (1958), Grenada (1983), and Panama (1989-1990) as Periods of War for Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Purposes	MD
139	Revision of Work-Rate Standards for Department of Veterans Affairs Adjudicators	MD
140	Support Presumption of Service-Connection for Hepatitis C	MD
141	Means Test for Married Veterans	MD
142	Opening the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals to Medicare and Medicaid	MD
143	Oppose Any Reduction of Eligibility Criteria for Department of Veterans Affairs Per Diem Payments to State Veterans Homes	MD
144	Prostate Cancer and Research Treatment	MD
145	Protection of Religious Rights and Ceremonies at National Cemetery Administration National and State Cemeteries	MD
146	Provide the Department of Veterans Affairs the Ability to Purchase Medications Located Outside the United States	MD
147	Exempt Purple Heart and Medal of Honor Recipients from VA Prescription Co-Payment	MD
148	Request Congress Provide the Department of Veterans Affairs Adequate Funding for Medical and Prosthetic Research	MD
149	Service Dogs for Injured Service Personnel and Veterans with Mental Health Conditions	MD
150	Strategic Capital Investment Planning Program	MD
151	Support Legislation to Place Mariner Medal Recipients in Priority Group 3 for the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care	MD
152	Support Medicare Reimbursement for the Department of Veterans Affairs	MD
153	Policy on State Veteran Home Inspection	MD
154	Department of Veterans Affairs Enhanced-Use Leasing	MD
155	Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services	MD
156	Department of Veterans Affairs Nursing Home Capacity	MD
157	Department of Veterans Affairs Pharmacy Benefits	MD
158	State Veteran Homes' Extended Care Facilities Grant Program	MD
159	Veterans Treatment Courts	MD
160	Veterans Receive the Same Level of Benefits	MD
194	Authorization to Apply for a Headstone, Marker, or Medallion	NY
196	Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act	NY
200	Dependency and Indemnity Compensation for Surviving Spouses	NY
201	Service Officer Participation in the Transition Goals, Plans and Success Program	NY
202	Department of Veterans Affairs to Provide Interim Benefits for Pending Claims Over 90 Days	NY
212	Designate Hypertension as a Presumptive Condition for Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange	GA

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
215	Extend Eligibility for National Cemetery Administration Medallion	IL
216	Automatic Waiver for Over-Payments of \$300 or Less	IL
219	Increase Maximum Coverage Under the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance	IL
220	Oppose Lump Sum Payments for Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation	IL
233	Agent Orange	MI
234	Co-Payments and Enrollment Fees for Priority Groups 7 & 8	MI
235	Improvements to Department of Veterans Affairs Women Veterans Program	MI
236	Exempt Certain Income from VA Pension Rate Determination	MI
238	State Veterans Home Funding for Construction Grants	MI
239	Research to Develop a Blood Test to Detect Colorectal Cancer	MI
245	Exempt Funds Related to Interment Services at Cemeteries from any Future Sequestration	IL
248	Add Agent Orange Component to Code of Federal Regulations 4.16	IL
250	Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans	IL
251	Extended Hours and Weekends for Veterans' Health Care	IL
255	Allow Beneficiaries to Retain \$90 of their Benefits While in Medicaid-covered Nursing Homes	IL
257	Exempt Certain Income from VA Pension Rate Determination	IL
262	Grant a 10% Rating for Veterans Who Must Take Daily Medication for Hypertension	IL
264	Timely Processing of Overpayments for Reserve Components and/or Active Duty Pay	AZ
281	Advance Appropriations for all of the Department of Veterans Affairs' Discretionary Accounts	IA
282	Congressional Budget Office Scoring on Department of Veterans Affairs Leasing	IA
283	Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists	IA
284	Department of Veterans Affairs to Develop Outreach and Peer to Peer Programs for Rehabilitation	IA
285	Congress to Provide Back Pay to Veterans and Dependents	ID
287	Agent Orange Presumption for Service in Southeast Asia since 1975	PA
288	Department of Veterans Affairs Involvement in the Department of Homeland Security	PA
291	Oppose Lowering Cost-of-Living Adjustments	PA
292	Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Programs	PA

2014 Fall National Executive Committee Meeting

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
3	Agreement with the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP)-2014-2015	VA&R

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
19	Exempt VA Benefits and Services From Pay-Go Provision	MI DEC
20	Department of Veterans Affairs Preservation of National Historic Properties	SD 2014 National Convention
21	Legislation to Provide Reporting, Tracking, and Action Dealing with Sexual Assaults at Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities	PA 2014 National Convention
22	Rescinding Resolutions from the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission	VA&R

2015 Spring National Executive Committee Meeting

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
21	Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Award	AK Department Convention
22	Reinstate Enrollment of Priority Group 8g Veterans into the Department of Veterans Affairs' Patient Enrollment System	AK Department Convention
23	Department of Veterans Affairs Quadrennial Plan for Budget	AK Department Convention
24	Department of Veterans Affairs Construction Programs	AK Department Convention
25	Code of Procedures for Accredited Representatives	AK Department Convention
26	Veterans Benefits Center	AK Department Convention
27	Veterans Crisis Line	PA DEC
28	Department of Veterans Affairs Appeals Process	AK Department Convention
29	Institute of Medicine Studies of Agent Orange and Oral Cancers	IL DEC
30	Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability	AK Department Convention
31	Rescinding Resolution from the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission	VA&R

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Meetings

Members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission held three meetings and one conference call during the period August 23, 2014, through May 6, 2015.

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee met on August 23, 2015 during the National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina and a report was subsequently made to the National Executive Committee relative to the Commission's meeting.

A Subcommittee of the Executive Section of the VA&R Commission met at National Headquarters, October 15-16, 2014, for the purpose of considering those matters, which had previously been referred for study, and to discuss a broad range of other veteran related matters. A report of that meeting was presented to the National Executive Committee on October 16, 2014.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met for the 92nd consecutive year in Washington, DC, on February 23, 2015, in conjunction with the 55th Annual Washington Conference.

The VA&R Commission held a conference call on Thursday, April 30, 2015 and a quorum was met. Commission Chairman Ralph P. Bozella, (CO) presided. Raymond Tim Grabin (CO) provided the invocation, and Edward Lilley (MD) Team Leader for Health Policy provided a roll call. Chairman Bozella held a moment of silence for Wendall “Sandy” J. Sandell and introduced William J. Smith (PA) as the new Chairman of the Veterans Benefits Committee. The Commission heard reports from the VA&R Committees and updates from the Washington Headquarters staff. Commission members were in agreement that “these conference calls are the way to go,” will “save a lot of money,” it is the “best modern way to go.” For future conference calls, the Commission recommended creating an “RSVP” process. The Commission meeting was moved to adjourn by Chairman Bozella and seconded by R. Michael Suter (NY).

Annual National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference

The 92nd Annual Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Conference was held at the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C. on February 23, 2015.

National Commander Mike Helm (NE) presented The American Legion Volunteer of the Year Award to James F. Varejcka (NE). Conferees was addressed by Dr. Carolyn M. Clancy, Interim Under Secretary for Health for the Veterans Administration (VHA); Danny Pummill, Principal Deputy Secretary for Benefits for the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA); and Ronald Walters, Interim Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs for the National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Legislative Activities

From September 2014 - June 2015, The VA&R Division participated in a total of twenty (20) hearings. Please refer to the following table for more information about the content and timeline of the hearings:

Date	Topic	Person Involved	Form of Testimony
September 10, 2014	Cases Languish and Data Manipulated at the Board of Veterans’ Appeals	Zachary Hearn	Oral & Written
November 19, 2014	Pending Legislation	None	Written
January 21, 2015	Building a Better VA: Assessing Ongoing Major Construction Management Problems within the Department	Roscoe Butler	Oral & Written
January 22, 2015	Veterans’ Dilemma: Navigating the Appeals System for Veterans’ Claims	Zachary Hearn	Oral & Written
January 27, 2015	Pending Legislation	Zachary Hearn	Oral & Written
January 28, 2015	Cost of the Care provided to Veteran Patients by the Department of Veterans Affairs	Louis Celli	Oral & Written

February 10, 2015	An Examination of Waste and Abuse Associated with VA's Management of Land-Use Agreements	Edward Lilley	Oral & Written
March 19, 2015	Pending Legislation	None	Written
March 24, 2015	The Veterans Choice Act – Exploring the Distance Criteria	Roscoe Butler	Oral & Written
April 14, 2015	Pending Legislation	Zachary Hearn	Written
April 23, 2015	Pending Legislation	Louis Celli	Oral & Written
May 12, 2015	Exploring the Implementation and Future of the Veterans Choice Program	Roscoe Butler	Oral & Written
May 13, 2015	Assessing the Promise and Progress of the Choice Program	Roscoe Butler	Oral & Written
May 13, 2015	Pending Benefits Legislation	None	Written
May 15, 2015	VA Staffing of Medical Professionals	None	Written
June 3, 2015	Pending Health Care Legislation	None	Written
June 10, 2015	Prescription Mismanagement and the Risk of Veterans Suicide	None	Written
June 11, 2015	Exploring VBA's Fiduciary Programs	Zachary Hearn	Oral & Written
June 24, 2015	Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs	Zachary Hearn	Oral & Written
June 24, 2015	Hearing on Pending Legislation	Ian de Planque	Oral & Written

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division

The VA&R Division has a budget of \$4,000,000 and is managed by Louis Celli, Director, VA&R. VA&R is responsible for directing all matters involving veteran's healthcare issues, veteran's related matters to include compensation, pension, disability indemnity compensation, claims submitted to the Board of Veterans Appeals and Special Claims Unit, the Appeals Management Center, all satellite offices to include Benefits Delivery at discharge offices, Pension Management Centers/Debt Management Center/Insurance, the Department Service Officer School, liaison to the Department Service Officers located in the 57 regional offices, the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service program, and resolutions. To assist him in carrying out these duties, he is assisted by a Deputy Director for Benefits, a Deputy Director for Health Care, a Deputy Director for Medical Evaluation Board/Physical Evaluation Board & DoD Programs, and an office assistant.

Informational Services/Distribution of VA&R Releases

The American Legion has several pamphlets and brochures available upon request to veterans and organizations in need.

In particular to the Department of Veterans' Affairs and Rehabilitation Division, offer the following pamphlets:

- The American Legion Guide
- Women Veterans – Identifies Risk, Services, and Prevention
- What to do before a Veteran Dies – A Guide to Pre-Planning
- Veterans Serving Veterans – A Summary on The American Legion Volunteer Program in the Community
- Agent Orange Benefits & Program – A guide for Vietnam Veterans and their Families
- Gulf War Era Benefits & Programs – A guide for Veterans and their Families
- Know Your Benefits
- Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Handbook
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

The handbooks and pamphlets, as well as those regarding the Department of Veteran Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program, are also distributed at seminars, conferences, and Department Conventions. Supplies of these and other VA&R pamphlets are maintained at The American Legion headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana and distributed upon request through The American Legion's Departments.

Report from the VA&R Cemetery Committee

The National Cemetery Committee met on February 23, 2015 in Georgetown East, Concourse Level with guest speaker, Mr. Glen Powers, Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs for the National Cemetery Administration and Mr. David R. McLenachen, Director of Pension and Fiduciary Service. Mr. Powers and Mr. McLenachen discussed the status of the committee's resolutions as well as the new monetary burial benefits that went into effect in July 2014.

Mr. Powers and Mr. McLenachen discussed the new monetary burial benefits that went into effect in July 2014. According to Mr. McLenachen, and a few members of the committee in attendance, this benefit has proved to be beneficial to veterans' families. The committee also discussed the issue of having to track down a next of kin in order to finalize the arrangements for the proper burial of veteran with unclaimed remains. According to Mr. McLenachen, if no next of kin can be located, the claim can be filed for unclaimed remains.

Regarding the new monetary burial benefits, the overall perception from the committee was that this change is for the better. The payments have decreased from an average of 270 days to 70 days and Mr. McLenachen informed the committee that if the deceased veteran was ever 100% disabled during his or her lifetime, than he or she would be presumed to have died from a service connected disability and would receive the maximum benefit.

Mr. Powers informed the committee that there was no limit to the amount of Presidential Memorial Certificates that the NCA can administer to the deceased veterans' family members and a question was brought out during the meeting regarding whether or not an increase has been made for the monthly Medal of Honor (MOH) benefit and whether or not legislation has been passed that would increase the benefit.

Congress has not recently passed any legislation to increase the monthly amount payable to MOH recipients. With respect to expanding MOH benefits, Representative Walberg introduced H.R. 272 – Medal of Honor Priority Care Act, on January 12, 2015.

The bill's intent is to increase the priority for enrollment of Medal of Honor recipients in the VA health care system and was supported by The American Legion.

Prior to 2003, Congress passed specific legislation to increase the MOH benefit. After 2003, Congress authorized VA to routinely increase the MOH benefit by the same annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) the Social Security Administration (SSA) provides to its beneficiaries.

On December 1, 2014, VA increased the MOH benefit from \$1,277.89 to \$1,299.61 per month as result of SSA's 1.7 percent COLA.

A history of MOH monthly benefit amounts from 1916 to present is displayed below:

Monthly MOH Benefit	Effective Date	Authority
\$10.....	04/27/1916	PL 64-56
\$10.....	09/16/1961	PL 87-138
\$200.....	01/01/1979	PL 95-479
\$400.....	12/01/1993	PL 103-161
\$600.....	12/01/1998	PL 105-368
\$1,000.....	09/01/2003	PL 107-330
\$1,027.....	12/01/2004	2.7% COLA
\$1,069.....	12/01/2005	4.1% COLA
\$1,104.....	12/01/2006	3.3% COLA
\$1,129.....	12/01/2007	2.3% COLA
\$1,194.....	12/01/2008	5.8% COLA
\$1,237.....	12/01/2011	3.6% COLA
\$1,259.....	12/01/2012	1.7% COLA
\$1,277.89.....	12/01/2013	1.5% COLA
\$1,299.61.....	12/01/ 2014.....	1.7% COLA

Following the discussion with Mr. Powers and Mr. McLenachen, the Cemetery Committee viewed the DVD, "A Sacred Trust: America's National Cemeteries," discussed the roles and responsibilities of the National Cemetery Committee, and brought up ideas for new resolutions. The American Legion's Department of Illinois and Arizona have volunteered to work on a resolution that would formulate a policy for all posts to have a point of contact that would encourage Presidential Memorial Certificates to be presented to the deceased veteran's family, rather than just mailed.

Government Life Insurance, Pension & Debt Management Activities

The United States Government, acting through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), directly administers four life insurance programs for veterans of the World War I, World War II and Korean War periods, as well as two special on-going programs for veterans in certain service-connected disabled categories. These programs are administered under the titles of United States Government Life Insurance (USGLI) for World War I era veterans, National Service Life Insurance (NSLI) for World War II era, Korean War era and Service-Disabled veterans (SDVI - Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance), and Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) for totally disabled veterans who are approved grants for specially adapted housing purposes by the VA. The USGLI and NSLI programs currently have some 764,961 policies in force as of June 30, 2015, with a combined life insurance coverage of some \$ 9.6 billion dollars. NSLI processes some 100,000-120,000 claims annually in addition to a very high number of other policy transactions as the program's policies are individual in nature and are composed of diverse plans of insurance. The VMLI program insures some 2516 veterans with approximately \$324 million dollars of coverage in force. Currently these programs are operated out of the VA Insurance Center in Philadelphia, PA. The National Association of Insurance Commissioners approved the use of the 2001 Commissioners Standard Mortality Table as the new mortality standard for life insurance. Since the law allows the VA Secretary to set the mortality table for the VMLI program, VA began using the 2001 table, rather than the previous 1958 table, effective October 1, 2006. This reduced premiums for the program an average of 37 percent.

In addition to the life insurance programs directly operated by the VA, the Department also has supervisory authority and responsibility over two other major government life insurance program issues. These are the Servicemember's Group Life Insurance (SGLI)

and Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) programs. These programs have provided insurance protection, since 1965 and 1970 respectively, to active duty and reserve military personnel (SGLI), spouses and dependents, and to separated veterans and to retired and separated reservists (VGLI). The SGLI and VGLI programs are administered by the Prudential Insurance Company at a center in Roseland, NJ (the Office of Servicemembers Group Life Insurance – OSGLI), with all administration and other program expenses being paid by the policyholders from a portion of their insurance premiums, save for the extra hazard mortality experience of wartime periods when general tax revenues take over. These insurance issues are solely group Term insurance without dividends, disability benefits, or diverse types of permanent plans with equity values such as the individual policy contracts contained in the VA's directly administered program. On June 30, 2015 SGLI provided some 5.14 million active duty and reserve personnel, spouses and dependents with more than \$ 1.163 trillion dollars of life insurance coverage, while VGLI covered some 428,000 veterans with insurance in excess of \$ 68.3 billion dollars. Of these policy accounts the OSGLI center in Roseland, NJ maintains only VGLI, with the various military service departments maintaining the rest. The OSGLI center processes between 2500-3500 death claims annually with minimal other transactions due to the very limited nature of the coverage as group term insurance only. Currently, claims arising from military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia are processed in less than two business days from the time the last required document is received at OSGLI. In 1992 VGLI became lifetime renewable instead of the single five year term previously in effect. The amount of VGLI a veteran can hold cannot be in excess of the amount of SGLI he or she held in service. In 1997 Retired Reservists, instead of being insured under the SGLI program until age 60 or the receipt of their first retired pay check, were merged into the VGLI program to allow them the option of retaining their coverage as long as desired. Reservists leaving reserve service without the amount of time needed for full retirement may be covered under VGLI if desired. In addition, veterans are now permitted to convert their SGLI/VGLI insurance, in partial amounts at different times or in whole, to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial insurance carrier as they leave service, or at any time they are in the VGLI program, without having to wait a stipulated period as was previously the case. Effective April 1, 2001 those entering active duty were automatically covered for a full \$250,000 under SGLI as authorized by Public Law 106-419, and members of the Individual Ready Reserve who have volunteered for assignment to a mobilization category were also made eligible for SGLI coverage under that law. . In addition, Public Law 107-14 authorized other program enhancements to the SGLI program, effective November 1, 2001, which allows up to \$100,000 in spousal coverage on a paid premium basis, and provides \$10,000 free life insurance coverage for a member's children. These dependent coverages still cannot, at present, be carried over into the VGLI program and cannot be doubled in the case of both parents being in service. However, while the member's SGLI is in force, spousal coverage can be converted to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial company upon written application in the same manner as a VGLI policy may be so converted. The American Legion insurance unit presented supporting testimony at that time on these legislative changes as they improved greatly the range of financial options available to veterans in these programs, not only at the time of their separation from service, but in later years as their life situation changed as well, and as they permit the SGLI and VGLI programs to more effectively compete with private insurers who have the privilege of excluding applicants as desired and who may, in the case of certain military associations, be co-located on military bases.

New SGLI legislation was enacted in May 2005. Public Law (PL) 109-13, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief of 2005, was signed into law May 11, 2005 and contained provisions for increases in the Dept. of Defense (DOD) Death Gratuity, for increases in the amount of maximum coverage under the Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program, and for a new SGLI group policy rider for Traumatic Injury Protection. The SGLI Traumatic

Injury Protection Rider became effective December 1, 2005 and currently provides over \$232 billion dollars in traumatic injury coverage as per a published schedule of losses caused by such physical injuries. On November 26, 2008 VA issued new regulations as a result of extensive reviews to expand the TSGLI schedule of losses and the time period involved. Additions to the TSGLI schedule included expansion of definitions for total and permanent loss of sight, hearing, speech, and various types of paralysis. Other additions included certain types of amputation, limb salvage, facial reconstruction, burns, injuries resulting from authorized use of controlled substances and traumatic brain injury effects. Effective September 1, 2005 regular SGLI coverage was automatically increased to \$400,000 from the previous \$250,000, and is the current maximum amount of SGLI coverage permitted. Servicemembers electing lesser amounts must do so in \$50,000 increments. Spousal and dependent coverage was not impacted by the legislation. The Act specified certain spousal and beneficiary notification requirements for members changing beneficiary designations or electing lesser amounts of coverage. The Act also provided for the group traumatic injury insurance rider to be attached to the group coverage provided under SGLI, the premium cost of which to the insured was to be \$1.00 per month. This injury protection ranges from \$25,000 to \$100,000 in accordance with a disability schedule which has been published and which is composed of a list of physical traumatic injuries involving significant loss of use of physical or mental abilities caused by such injury. Coverage under this rider began December 1, 2005. A retroactive provision for qualifying injuries (Iraq and Afghanistan service) from October 7, 2001 to the effective date was also provided for. The Secretary of Defense certifies to the SGLI center the individuals qualifying for retroactive payments. Public Law 111-275, enacted October 13, 2010, expanded this provision to include TSGLI coverage for all covered losses incurred on active duty regardless of location to be effective October 1, 2011. Servicemembers must be covered by SGLI to have this rider, and for members insured under SGLI the rider is mandatory. Rider coverage ceases on midnight on the date the member separates from the uniformed service. No retroactive period was contained in the legislation for the \$150,000 SGLI increase, but this was addressed through the Dept. of Defense's Death Gratuity benefit instead, as insurance underwriting requirements did not permit new coverage increases to be applied retroactively.

On September 30, 2005 the SGLI enhancement Act of 2005 (PL 109-80) was enacted which made permanent the increase in the maximum allowable SGLI regular coverage from \$250,000 to \$400,000, and which included various spousal notification requirements for beneficiary changes. This last requirement, for an insured married at the time of making a beneficiary election, that the Secretary of Defense notify the insured's spouse should the insured at any time take action to either reduce the amount of coverage or to name a beneficiary other than the insured's spouse, did not meet with the support of The American Legion. It has historically been the belief of The American Legion that this type of fundamental insurance benefit is a special contract between the service member (or veteran in the case of veteran's coverage) and the federal government, and is a matter personal and sacrosanct to those who serve (or have served) the nation in uniform, and that an insured's beneficiary information should not be released to third parties without the consent of the insured. Such spousal notification, however, does not affect a member's right to elect or change his/her beneficiary designation or amount of SGLI coverage at any time.

Further legislative changes in the SGLI program included PL 109-163, enacted January 6, 2006, which authorized the payment of an allowance to service members serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom for an amount equal to the premium of \$150,000 of SGLI coverage, affording them \$150,000 of free SGLI coverage provided they did not decline such coverage, and PL 109-233 enacted June 15, 2006. PL 109-233 extends the duration of SGLI coverage from one to two years for service members who are totally disabled upon the date of their separation from active duty or reserve status, effective upon the date of enactment for members released before October 1, 2011. Service members who were released within one year of the enactment date were also eligible for

this extended coverage period. Public Law 111-275, enacted October 1, 2010, makes this extension permanent. This legislation also provided the Secretary of Veterans Affairs the sole authority to determine the period of time between the date of a traumatic event and the date a member suffers a qualifying loss for all losses under the Traumatic SGLI (TSGLI) program. The law also removed the previously existing statutory requirement that quadriplegia, paraplegia, or hemiplegia occur within one year of the traumatic injury. For all losses this period has now been extended to two years.

The American Legion's National VA&R insurance unit at the Philadelphia, PA center had initiated and worked with the VA insurance management staff to provide added protection to those veterans leaving service in a totally disabled and life threatening status, to attempt to ensure these veterans do not lose coverage (as happens periodically) due to misunderstanding certain requirements of the SGLI to VGLI transfer system stemming from inconsistencies in the manner these are explained to them as they exit process from various military facilities, or failing to respond in a timely manner to initial insurance invitations and premium billings, etc. Recommended safeguards included such items as automatic coverage and premium deduction start-ups from military retired pay or VA disability compensation, policy liens for past due premiums, and closer contacts between the SGLI/VGLI administering office and veterans in this category. VA insurance management completed a staff study through the military service departments, the Defense Manpower Data Center, DPC Austin and OSGLI on the methods such individuals can be identified, and has created an Outreach program to contact by telephone and with additional letters veterans in this class, and advise them of their VGLI options as needed. Currently, separating service members who have been discharged on disability retirement at a rating of 50% to 100% by their branch of service are contacted. Of those contacted by phone, over 80% apply for either the SGLI Disability Extension (free coverage for two years) or VGLI coverages. In June 2011 the VA Insurance Center opened a formal, fully staffed Outreach Center in Philadelphia to expand these operations. An on-line SGLI/VGLI manual is available to all military out processing centers and veterans to ensure these have immediate access to correct information concerning the requirements for veterans being separated to convert their in-service SGLI coverage to VGLI coverage, and in February 2004 a detailed Insurance Needs Calculator was added to the VA Insurance website, for veterans to use to assess their life insurance needs and compare VGLI coverage to other insurance options. The Calculator includes VA, Social Security and military benefits in the final assessment. VGLI policyholders also have the ability now to access their policy information through the VA website as well, using passwords and policy information. For all programs the Department of Veterans Affairs administers and/or supervises some 6.37 million insurance policies for military personnel, spouses, dependents and veterans, with a total in-force coverage of over \$ 1.24 trillion dollars.

In the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) program many disabled veterans annually continue to take advantage of the new supplemental Service-Disabled insurance provided in the legislative changes of 1992, whereby now an additional Supplemental \$30,000 of coverage may be purchased by those veterans having a basic Service-Disabled policy and who become totally disabled before age 65. This option has a limited time period of one year from a grant of premium waiver and if application is made before age 65. The American Legion VA&R insurance office continues to maintain a special notification system for those veterans who choose The American Legion as their representative and who are applying for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) coverage to ensure they are informed as early as possible of these additional benefits. The notification system has been expanded to include compilation of a database of those qualifying for Supplemental coverage and the release of additional reminder notifications to them prior to expiration of their Supplemental insurance option. This is particularly needful as the current VA system may be faulty in communicating information on benefits such as disability premium waivers and supplemental coverage to veterans who may qualify for it, and who may very well be in life threatening (and therefore time constrained) conditions. A special activity

was initiated in this benefit area in 2004 and continued afterward by the VA Compensation and Pension Service to address concerns that many service-connected disabled veterans were not being informed enough on the program. A mailing on SDVI notification was included with the annual cost-of-living increase letters, reaching approximately 2.3 million veterans in 2004-2005, resulting in many thousands of new applications being received. This continues with insurance invitations being sent out on virtually all ratings actions. SDVI applications have also been made available on the VA's Insurance website through an Autoform program whereby applications can be made, saved, printed for mailing or submitted electronically as desired. This new tool became active March 5, 2004.

The VA Insurance Center continues their on-going effort to provide better service and program enhancements to their veteran policyholders by periodically updating their computer and communication systems, both as part of the overall VA area networks and through the Internet, and all records and transaction activities, previously done on paper, into their on-line computer systems. Beginning in summer 2001, the VA Insurance Center accelerated a planned program of transforming their insurance operation into a wholly computerized system no longer utilizing any paper insurance files, but using imaging technology instead to replace paper files with electronic ones. The impetus for this was to create space in the Philadelphia Regional Office and Insurance Center for one of the three regional Pension Centers which have been organized to assist in the reduction of the national backlog in compensation and pension cases. The insurance system, known as VICTARS (Veterans Insurance Claims Tracking and Response System) permits on-screen display of all file documents that would previously have been maintained in a paper insurance folder, and gives VA insurance specialists the ability to input and process claims, transactions and responses to inquiries with far greater speed than any earlier system used to date, and to maintain a full history of such in the policyholder's new electronic file. Currently, over 6 million images are available to insurance specialists via their desktop computers. All previous paper insurance folders (over 2.5 million) have been retired to a nearby Federal Records Center, but are still available for recall as may be needed on certain cases. This accomplishment has resulted in savings of some \$1 million annually. Insurance services are further augmented by automated assistance and call routing facilities added to a toll free number (800-669-8477). Faxed correspondence, claims, and transaction requests are acceptable for VA Insurance purposes. Additionally, in accordance with the federal initiative to have all government disbursements done by Direct Deposit (Electronic Transfer of Funds) the VA Insurance Center has completed actions for the direct deposit of monthly insurance installment awards to beneficiaries and those policyholders receiving monthly annuities. All monthly insurance award/annuity payments are by electronic transfer of funds to these insurance payees. In this vein, all policy loan, dividend refund and cash surrender payments are also sent to an insured's bank account if VA benefits are or were on direct deposit, or if an insured is paying premiums by automatic deduction from a checking account, unless requested otherwise. New settlement claim forms for death settlements contain blocks for beneficiaries to include bank information for EFT payment. As with the VGLI program, NSLI/SDVI policyholders may now also access their account information through the VA's insurance website with a PIN number, and perform certain transactions such as policy loan applications. For VMLI there is now also an on-line Insurance Needs Calculator, similar to that for VGLI, available as well.

Public Law 111-275, the Veterans Benefits Act of 2010, has made the following changes in government insurance programs for veterans and active duty personnel.

Effective October 1, 2011, the maximum amount of life insurance coverage permitted under the Supplemental Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance program (SDVI) increased from the present limit of \$20,000 to a new maximum of \$30,000. Supplemental SDVI is available to veterans who are approved for a basic SDVI policy (\$10,000 maximum), who qualify for a disability waiver of premiums on the basic policy, and who make an application for Supplemental insurance before age 65 and within one year of the date of notification by the VA of the disability premium waiver. Totally disabled veterans who

meet the qualifying criteria can therefore be able to have a maximum of \$40,000 coverage in force.

Also effective October 1, 2011, the Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) program increased in coverage from the previous \$90,000 limit to a new maximum of \$150,000. On January 1, 2012 this increased further to \$200,000 in the amount of coverage permitted.

Additionally, six months from the date of enactment of PL 111-275, those veterans under age 60 who are insured under the Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) program have an opportunity once every five years, beginning on the one year anniversary of the date of entry into the program, to purchase further VGLI coverage in the amount of \$25,000; the overall amount of coverage held, however, cannot exceed \$400,000; the maximum allowed by law for Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI).

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, the legislation also provided for an expansion of Traumatic Injury SGLI (TSGLI) coverage for the retroactive period of October 7, 2001 to November 30, 2005 provided by Public Law 109-233 for servicemembers incurring covered losses in Operations Iraqi Freedom and/or Enduring Freedom. Public Law 111-275 expanded TSGLI coverage for covered losses for the retroactive period for all such losses incurred on active duty, regardless of location. The effective date of this expansion was also October 1, 2011. The loss of a dominant hand is added to the TSGLI schedule of covered losses by this legislation.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Service Units

VA Insurance Center at Philadelphia, PA and St. Paul, MN DMC Center

The American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Staff at Philadelphia consists of a Chief of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative and a Pension Benefits Assistant Director/ Representative. An associated office at the St. Paul center has one Supervisor/VA&R Representative and a Pension Benefits Assistant Director/ Representative, plus a National Staff Pension Representative was added at the VA Regional Office in Milwaukee, WI, which also has a VA Pension Center along with Philadelphia and St. Paul.

Recent reviews by the VA Inspector General (VA IG) office of the Philadelphia Pension Center uncovered discrepancies and incorrect claims processing within the VA Center. These have been addressed by appropriate reorganization of activities and the replacement of certain managerial personnel. VA IG continues to review and oversee these solutions and perform on-site inspections. The VA Pension Centers have also moved to activate a centralized mail processing operation to facilitate processing of paper mail into the VA electronic systems.

The Chief of Insurance Activities / Insurance Representative must have a thorough knowledge of government life insurance laws, regulations, and transaction and adjudication procedures, and be able to analyze them correctly in order to properly represent insured veterans and their beneficiaries. The Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Director and other interested personnel are kept informed on policy matters, changes in VA administrative procedures and all related areas to include new legislative initiatives. NSLI re-open periods for service-disabled and non-service disabled veterans with increased face value coverages continues to be an American Legion legislative effort. Coordination has also been effected with the VA Pension Center management in both Philadelphia, St. Paul and Milwaukee for the creation of a system whereby the national VA&R staff personnel can process pension inquiries from Department and Veterans Service Officers as they may require.

Daily operations involve a full range of insurance services to include the representation of insured veterans and their beneficiaries, the review of insurance case files and supporting evidence and Claims files as required, the furnishing of status reports and account assistance to insureds, beneficiaries, accredited field representatives and VA adjudicative and accounts personnel, close liaison with Department Service Officers and

other field personnel to ensure prompt and complete service, and the input to, review of, and where necessary the correction of VA actions and records both on cases involving disability and death claims, and on those involving any of a wide variety of insurance accounting and financial transactions that occur on active and matured accounts. General insurance information and guidance is provided to field service officers across the United States, along with assistance in the preparation of insurance appeals and claims submittals. Coordination with VA executive and program management personnel is conducted on both individual cases and broad policy/administrative matters. A telephone fax capability added to the Philadelphia office has greatly expedited claims processing by enabling rapid receipt of documents needed to complete transactions and claims that would otherwise be significantly delayed due to mailing times, particularly in emergency cases. The Philadelphia office remains heavily involved in the large increase in SDVI applications beginning in 2004 and 2005, occasioned by the mass mailing of SDVI notifications to virtually all service-connected veterans mentioned earlier. Information, staff analysis, and testimony/comments for major legislative insurance benefit increases, is provided to the Director, National VA&R Commission for presentation to Congress as needed.

The St. Paul office provides similar operations, staff representation and nationwide veteran's service in the field of VA Debt Management nationally, and for Pension operations for the western third of the nation.

A major new addition to the Philadelphia National VA&R unit occurred effective January 2010 with the acquisition of an experienced service officer for the new role of Pension Benefits Representative, to include all necessary computer and high capacity Fax equipment. A new National Staff representative was also added to the VA Regional office and PMC in Milwaukee for the middle third of the nation as well. The mission of the PMC representatives is to assist in all VA pension, DIC, accrued benefits, burial and dual entitlement claims where The American Legion holds power of attorney.

New procedures are in the process of being implemented to enable the processing of incoming paper and faxed claims to be submitted electronically into the VA system to significantly reduce paper usage and related files storage.

All offices have obtained access to the new VA benefits online systems coming on board in 2013: the Stakeholders Entry Portal (SEP), the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) and e-Benefits.

As of July 2015, the VA Pension Management Centers had 92,529 pending cases (50,694 in Philadelphia, 20,728 in St. Paul, and 21,107 in Milwaukee). Of these, The American Legion represented 13,272 cases (7,033 – Philadelphia, 3,802 – Milwaukee, and 2,437 - St. Paul).

For the period July 1, 2014 to end of July 2015 the following activities of The American Legion's Philadelphia, St. Paul, and Milwaukee offices were reported:

Insurance, Pension & Debt Management:
(DMC = Debt Management Center)

Letters Received:	23,462
Letters Sent:	19,512
Disability Insurance Claims:	2,804
Death Insurance Claims:	447
In-Force Insurance Policy Accounts Reviewed:	6,765
New Insurance Accounts – SDVI:	5,791
Telephone Contacts:	9,136
Personal Contacts:	7,594
Submittal Memorandums & Reports:	5,549
DVA Case Responses Processed: Insurance,	20,578
Pension and Debt Management Cases:	
*Live Claims, Evidence and Other Submittals	71,336
Presented:	

*Excludes death claims and includes policy transactions such as dividend, loan and premium actions, plan conversions, cash surrenders, refunds, beneficiary changes, disability claims with related medical and legal evidence, Wills, estate documents, master record data changes, general inquiries, Debt Management and Pension case claims and supporting documents.

DMC Original Claims:	837
DMC & Pension Case Audits:	22,135
DMC Grants & Denials	3,033
New Pension Claims:	9,105

Other Insurance Transactions & Inquiries:	2,885
Pension Supporting Submittals (On-Going Cases)	16,329
Pension Appeals	273
Other Pension Transactions & Inquiries	17,113

Claims Service

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission provide assistance and representation to all veterans and their survivors in claims and appeals before the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as, Department of Defense Medical Evaluation Board and Physical Evaluation Board through a staff of thirty representatives.

Within the table of organization, the Deputy Director for Claims Service is responsible for the activities of the Board of Veterans Appeals and Special Claims Unit. Cases at the Board of Veterans Appeals Unit are reviewed and written briefs are submitted on the appellant's behalf or a personal hearing is conducted before a Veterans Law Judge of the Board of Veterans Appeals with the appellant. The Board of Veterans Appeals Unit consists of a senior medical consultant, three administration assistants and thirteen assistant directors.

The Deputy Director for Medical Evaluation Board/Physical Evaluation Board (MEB/PEB) & Department of Defense (DoD) is responsible for the activities of the MEB/PEB, DoD Boards, Benefits Delivery at Discharge, Pension Management Center, Life Insurance, Debt Management, and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

The MEB/PEB team works directly with military members. When military members have a medical condition that may not meet medical retention standards they are referred to the Medical Evaluation Board for further evaluation by DoD. The American Legion representatives assist Servicemembers by providing advocacy during the process in the form of counseling, education, writing written rebuttals in their behave and representation at the formal hearing. Depending on the outcome the Servicememember will be medically retired or separated with severance, the choices made during the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) process will impact them for the rest of their lives. The American Legion has two MEB/PEB representatives stationed at Joint Base Lewis McChord Washington and Washington, D.C.

Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) allows active duty service members to apply for disability compensation benefits from the VA prior to retirement or separation from military service. This program permits service members with at least 60 days but no more than 180 days remaining on active duty to file. The 60 days is to allow sufficient time to complete the medical examination process prior to separation from service. The American Legion has two BDD representatives that have offices inside VA Regional Offices; one stationed in Winston-Salem, NC and one stationed in Salt Lake City, UT.

The VA Pension Management Centers (PMC) process adjustments of benefits for individuals in receipt of non-service connected disability pension, death pension and dependency indemnity compensation. The VA has three PMC's and the American Legion has representation to assist all claimants and DSO's; one at Milwaukee, one at Philadelphia, and two at St. Paul. The St. Paul representatives also handle debt management services for claimants that have been notified of an overpayment.

The VA Life Insurance Agency offers security in the event of the insured's death and financial protection to survivors. The American Legion has one representative at the Philadelphia VARO to assist veterans and their survivors with life insurance.

Military Review Boards Unit

Title 10, United States Code, sections 1552 and 1553 provide statutory authority for the existence and operation of the Military Discharge Review Boards and the Boards for Correction of Military Records. The American Legion was instrumental in the creation of these boards shortly after World War II and has represented former service members petitioning them for relief since.

During the period 1 July 2014 through 30 June 2015 the three staff members of the Military Review Boards Unit provided counsel, guidance and representation to former service members seeking correction of their service record by the Army, Air Force, Navy / Marine Corps and Coast Guard discharge review and correction boards. These requests involved a wide variety issues including character of service upgrades, reason for discharge changes, entitlement or amendment of physical disability severance or retirement, issuance or reissuance of military awards and decorations, requests for military personnel files and service medical records, and administrative corrections to official military records.

The following breaks down the individual administrative actions taken by the staff of the Military Review Board Unit in assisting former service members prepare their cases for review by the respective boards.

Case Development / Office Tasks

<u>Communications</u>	<u>Volume</u>
Phone Calls.....	2196
Emails.....	2067
Mail/Fax	496
Appointments	238

Consultations

Applicant	2011
Petitioner	778
VSO/Agency	596
Veteran/Other	282

Administration

Correspondence	678
Tracking Actions	2656
Research/Training.....	837
Clerical Tasks	2397

The following classifies the types of reviews that were presented to the respective service boards.

Military Discharge Review Boards

	<u>Record Reviews</u>	<u>Hearing Reviews</u>	<u>Reconsiderations</u>
AIR FORCE	16	11	00
ARMY	31	29	00
NAVY	34	29	00
MARINE CORPS	30	21	00
COAST GUARD	00	00	00

Boards for Correction of Military Records

	<u>Record Reviews</u>	<u>Hearing Reviews</u>	<u>Reconsiderations</u>
AIR FORCE	17	00	02
ARMY	58	00	03
NAVY	24	00	04
MARINE CORPS	17	00	02
COAST GUARD	00	00	00

This final breakdown provides the total number of cases received back from the boards, the number of favorable decisions and the percentage of petitions that were corrected.

Military Discharge Review Boards

	Total Decided	Total Corrected	Relief Percentage
AIR FORCE	11	04	36
ARMY	42	17	40
NAVY	33	17	52
MARINE CORPS	19	12	63
COAST GUARD	00	00	00

Boards for Correction of Military Records

	Total Decided	Total Corrected	Relief Percentage
AIR FORCE	10	01	10
ARMY	46	06	13
NAVY	20	02	10
MARINE CORPS	12	01	08
COAST GUARD	00	00	00

Each of the discharge review and correction boards is under a congressional mandate to adjudicate cases within one year from the date of acceptance. Currently all are meeting or exceeding their requirements with timeframes ranging from 9 to 12 months.

The Military Review Board Unit also provides training material to our Department Service Officers, instructional guides for our applicants and counsel, on an as needed basis, to veterans petitioning the Combat Related Special Compensation Boards, Physical Disability Board of Review, Awards and Decorations Boards.

Benefits Delivery at Discharge

The American Legion currently has two BDD representatives one located in Salt Lake City, Utah and the other in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

BDD is a program designed to allow a service member to submit a claim for disability compensation 60 to 180 days prior to separation, retirement, or release from active duty or

demobilization. BDD can help you receive your disability benefits sooner, with a goal of within 60 days after release or discharge. (Titles 10 and 32)

Quick start allows a service member to submit a claim for disability compensation 1 to 59 days prior to separation, retirement, or release from active duty or demobilization (Title 10 or Title 32). According to VA, submitting a disability compensation claim before discharge makes it possible to receive VA disability benefits as soon as possible after separation, retirement, or demobilization. The chart below reflects the VA reported processing time and is current as of May 2014.

The American Legion representatives review on average 3900 claims annually. These claims typically contain five conditions each and are submitted from around the world by service members prior to separating from all branches of the Armed Forces. Additional research was required on some cases. The offices serve as a point of contact for Veterans and Accredited Service Officers wishing to inquire about a claim, question a rating or submit documents in support of a claim. Many of the calls from veterans result from their frustration with getting prompt and accurate information from the VA assistance line and wanting some advocacy from The American Legion. These offices strive to provide immediate answers to questions or concerns. In cases that require further research, answers are normally provided within 48 hours. These offices work with little fanfare, but the positive effect on veterans and their families is enormous. Between the BDD Offices in Winston Salem, NC and Salt Lake City, UT we reviewed 653 BDD Claims with 5224 issues. Each claim required reviewing the rating, C&P examination, and service treatment records. Additional research was required of some of the cases. The BDD offices also received 312 phone calls from Veterans and Department Service Officers throughout the country requesting the status of a claim or questions concerning a rating. The offices provided an update for the status of the claim and provided options concerning the rating. Additionally, 69 veterans visited the offices with general VA benefit questions. The offices received and reviewed 1520 pieces of correspondence and represented 8 veterans at the Rating Board Hearing.

Board of Veterans Appeals

Between October 1, 2014 and June 15, 2015, The American Legion represented 6,030 claimants seeking benefits. For the claims receiving dispositions, over 80% of the claims were either determined to have been inadequately developed and prematurely denied or were erroneously denied by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA).

As has been well documented in recent years, VA has stated that they will end the backlog of VA claims by the end of 2015. While VBA has taken great strides to adjudicate claims in a timelier fashion, the inventory of appealed claims has increased by over 55 percent since July 2010. As these appealed claims navigate through VA, it is anticipated that the BVA will be significantly increasing its inventory beginning next fiscal year. To prepare for this onslaught of cases, The American Legion has authorized for the expansion of personnel at the BVA to adequately address the needs of our claimants.

As recorded in previous years' reports, the two most significant challenges for the BVA continue to be to eliminate avoidable remands and to reduce the backlog of pending appeals. The Board has made a significant progress since 2013 ensuring its own staff and all VSO's are on-line with the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS); the system is designed to eliminate the paper processing of claims over the long-term. VBMS is intended to replace all VA legacy systems such as Virtual VA and allow for electronic adjudication of claims.

The American Legion's appellate specialists who work at The American Legion's Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) unit attend trainings presented by attorneys from the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP). NVLSP attorneys provide either one-on-one or group trainings on a weekly basis. One-on-one trainings allow The

American Legion's appellate specialists to receive feedback on briefs they have submitted to the BVA while group trainings cover various topics in veterans law including:

- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) claims based on military sexual trauma (MST)
- Presumption of soundness,
- Presumption of aggravation;
- Entitlement to total disability based on individual unemployability (TDIU)
- Evaluation of orthopedic disabilities
- Regular trainings on important U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) decisions.

The American Legion also holds biannual trainings for its accredited representatives. These biannual schools include comprehensive presentations from NVLSP attorneys. Accredited representatives from The American Legion also attend webinars presented by NVLSP. Since 2014, American Legion accredited representatives have attended nine NVLSP webinars on the following topics: Strategies for Winning TDIU Benefits; Secondary Service Connection; Common VA Errors; Agent Orange/Nehmer; Joint Evaluations; Earlier Effective Dates in Claims for Increase/the CAVC's Recent Decision in Swain; Claims Based on PTSD due to MST; the Presumption of Soundness and the Presumption of Aggravation; and Navigating the New VA Regulations Regarding Standard Claims and Appeals Forms. American Legion service officers plan to attend future NVLSP webinars on topics including: Clear and Unmistakable Error (CUE); Recent CAVC Decisions; the Ethics of Veterans Law; Heart Conditions – Service Connection and Evaluation; and Special Monthly Compensation.

In recent years, NVLSP attorneys have accompanied The American Legion to outreach events in response to the crisis in veterans' healthcare. The events allow local veterans to receive assistance with their VA claims on a walk-in basis. As a result of these trips, NVLSP attorneys working with The American Legion have helped numerous veterans obtain the VA disability benefits that they earned.

For example,

- In California the American Legion was able to help assist a female veteran who walked into the clinic in a desperate situation. She was homeless; suffering from PTSD caused by MST and had suicidal ideation. NVLSP attorneys acting as American Legion service officers were able to convince the local VA regional office (VARO) that this veteran was a survivor of MST. VA granted the veteran service connection for her mental condition; it was evaluated as 100% disabling. Today, this veteran has housing and is gainfully employed.
- At another American Legion event, a female veteran informed The American Legion that she was having trouble convincing her local VARO that she had experienced a PTSD stressor while in service. After American Legion and NVLSP staff noticed that her posture appeared to be irregular, they inquired about her service history and found out that while in service, she was in a severe motor vehicle collision that almost killed her. Medical staff attending the event linked this stressor to her PTSD and the VARO awarded her service connection at 100% disabling.

The American Legion has been conducting a series of VARO visits as part of its Regional Office Action Review (ROAR) program. As part of the ROAR program, VAROs in the following locations have been visited over the past five years: New York, NY; Roanoke, VA; St. Petersburg, FL; Winston-Salem, NC; Los Angeles, CA; Indianapolis, IN; Pittsburgh, PA; Oakland, CA; Togus, ME; Baltimore, MD; Denver, CO; Reno, NV; Seattle, WA; Phoenix, AZ; and Jackson, MS.

- During each visit, national and local American Legion staff meet with VARO leadership and staff to identify challenges facing the particular VARO, such as the claims backlog, implementation of new initiatives, and staffing concerns. In

addition, at each visit, American Legion and NVLSP staff (all accredited as American Legion service representatives) generally review 40-60 VA adjudications involving veterans represented by The American Legion. As a result of these reviews, a significant percentage of veterans are granted increased benefits due to VA adjudication errors, and many times these benefits are granted on the spot. The American Legion provides VA leadership with the results of these ROAR visits, including identified patterns of adjudication errors, which helps VA make systemic changes in the claims adjudication system.

The American Legion has arranged for NVLSP to review BVA denial of appeals where the Legion represented the appellant. In the past five years, The American Legion has arranged for NVLSP to represent 1,075 American Legion appellants before the CAVC and if necessary, before other federal courts. Of those cases, 116 cases are still pending before the Court. Of the 959 cases where the Court has reached a decision, the attorneys from NVLSP were victorious in 936 cases. The winning percentage was 97.6%. A table with the results from American Legion/NVLSP appeals over the past five years is provided below:

Year	# of Appeals	Wins	Losses	Pending
2010	199	185	14	0
2011	218	211	7	0
2012	179	177	2	0
2013	194	193	0	1
2014	285	170	0	115

NVLSP, acting as counsel for The American Legion, has filed amicus curiae (“friend of the Court”) briefs in significant cases involving VA benefits and related issues before Federal Courts, including Courts of Appeal and the United States Supreme Court. For example, NVLSP is counsel for amicus curiae The American Legion in *In Re: Prudential Insurance Company of America SGLI/VGLI Contract Litigation*, a pending case before United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, challenging Prudential’s life insurance policy program. NVLSP also served as counsel for The American Legion in a case before the United States Supreme Court, *Shinseki v. Sanders*, 556 U.S. 396 (2009). Finally, in 2012 NVLSP filed an amicus curiae brief in support of a petition for a writ of certiorari in *Veterans for Common Sense, et al. v. Shinseki, et al.*, 678 F.3d 1013 (9th Cir. 2012).

In April 2015, attorneys from Paul Hastings LLP and NVLSP representing Mr. McKinney, The American Legion and several other veterans service organizations sued the VA. The lawsuit hinges on the effective date used by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to determine eligibility for Agent Orange benefits for military veterans who served in the Korean DMZ. The lawsuit identifies a seven-year gap between 2004 and 2011 when the VA denied claims for disability benefits it should have paid.

In another case entitled *The American Legion v. McDonald*, attorneys from Wilmer Hale and NVLSP representing The American Legion and several other veterans organizations sued the VA to protect both the informal claims adjudication process for VA disability benefits and the obligation of the VA to infer claims from the evidence of record. The new VA rule leaves injured and disabled veterans at a serious disadvantage when applying for VA disability compensation.

Department Service Officers School

Beginning in 1985, The American Legion has authorized the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission to conduct Department Service Officer (DSO) schools bi-annually for accredited representatives of The American Legion. It represents the organization's ongoing commitment to developing a network of highly trained and experienced service officers responsible for effectively advocating for veterans and their families.

The purpose of these sessions is to provide current information about changes in veterans' law and VA adjudication policies. Through these efforts, American Legion service officers improve their advocacy skills. The program of instruction includes basic training for new service officers, and advanced training on issues relating to claims processing, disability ratings, personal hearings, development of appeals, and the interpretation and application of precedent decisions by the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans' Claims and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

Individual department participation remains high; 290 accredited representatives attended the trainings in 2015. During this reporting period, DSO School was held:

- February 18-20, 2015 (Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C.)
- August 6-8, 2015 (Columbia Club, Indianapolis, IN)

Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service

The National VAVS Deputy Representative attended the sixty-ninth meeting of the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) that was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico during April 22nd-24th, 2015. The American Legion's National VAVS Deputy National Representative, Edward Lilley, also serves as a member of the NAC Executive Committee. The goals and objectives of the sixty-ninth Annual Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) Meeting and Conference were to:

- Provide the VAVS NAC an opportunity to conduct its business in a manner that assures achievement of all responsibilities mandated by its charter.
- Provide NAC orientation to new local and national VAVS Representatives and Deputies and new VAVS staff.
- Present to all member organization representatives an overview of current and pending VAVS policies and procedures.
- Foster full and open communications among the member organizations, their representatives, and the Voluntary Service Central Office and field staff.
- Provide the NAC member organizations with the educational and training programs designed to share information geared towards improving volunteer programs with special emphasis on methods to recruit, retain, motivate, and recognize volunteers.
- Furnish the NAC member organizations the opportunity to hear from VA leadership concerning key issues within the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Arrange for the NAC review of, and action on, recommendations.
- Honor the national recipient of the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award, Sharadyanne Salomon, student volunteer at the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center, West Palm Beach, Florida.
- Recognize Lorna Hatch, Chief, Voluntary Service, at the VA Maine Healthcare System as the recipient of the Voluntary Service Award for Excellence.
- Recognize James Hogan, VAVS Representative, Blinded Veterans Association, VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, as the VAVS NAC Male Volunteer of the Year and Patti Williamson, VAVS Representative, American

Legion Auxiliary, VA Illiana Health Care System, Danville, Illinois, as the VAVS NAC Female Volunteer of the Year.

- Recognize the following award recipients for the American Spirit Awards: Todd Greenman, Battle Creek VA Medical Center, Battle Creek, Michigan, for Student Recruitment; Stephanie Burns, Washington DC VA Medical Center, for Military Recruitment; Beverly Lenesi, VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System, Ann Arbor, Michigan, for Faith-Based Recruitment; and Dax Allcorn, Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center, Muskogee, Oklahoma, for Corporate Recruitment.

During FY 2014, The American Legion had 7,857 members that volunteered 856,960 hours of service to hospitalized veterans and those in their communities. Based on the independent sector volunteer rate of \$23.07 per volunteer hours in 2014, this is a total cost saving of almost \$19.8 Million to VA.

Veteran Affairs & Rehabilitation Health Policy Unit

The Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation Health Policy Unit National staff includes: Roscoe Butler, Deputy Director for Health Care, Edward Lilley, Team Leader for Health Policy, Derrick Redd, Senior Assistant Director for Health Care, April Commander, Assistant Director for Health Care, Patti Senft, Assistant Director for Health Care, LaRanda Holt, Assistant Director for Women and Minority Veteran Outreach, Wanda Kennedy, Administrative Assistant and one vacancy for the Assistant Director for TBI/PTSD Programs.

Veterans Benefits Centers

Health Policy staff and VBC Committee members participated in two Veterans Crisis Command Centers visits: White City, OR, and Harlingen, TX; nine Veteran Benefits Centers: Baltimore, MD, Washington, DC, Bay Pines, FL, Philadelphia, PA, Los Angeles, CA, Tomah, WI, Memphis, TN, Honolulu, HI, and New Orleans, LA; six VA hospital site visits: Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center, Spokane, WA, James A. Haley, VA Medical Center, Bay Pines, FL, Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VAMC, Philadelphia, PA, Memphis VA Medical Center, Memphis, TN, Tomah VA Medical Center, Tomah, WI, Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care, New Orleans, LA; and four special purpose site visits: VA Caribbean Healthcare System, San Juan, PR, Los Angeles, CA, Health Eligibility Center, Atlanta, GA; and Martinsburg VA Medical Center, Martinsburg, WV.

Three additional VBCs and hospital site visits have been scheduled for other cities to include: Chicago, IL, Oct 26 -29, 2015; Morrisville, NC, Nov 11 – 14, 2015, and Phoenix, AZ, Dec 2015 (Dates have not been scheduled).

TBI and PTSD Programs

Members of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commissions' TBI and PTSD Committee held two meetings between –July 2014 – September 2015. On February 22, 2015, the TBI and PTSD Committee met during the Washington Conference at 8:30 am Cabinet ConCourse Level, Washington, Hilton.

The mission of the TBI and PTSD Committee is to ensure veterans with traumatic brain injuries or who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder receive the best care possible to assist with their transition back into their local communities. The committee conducted a strategic planning session for 2015, which considered discussing several topics of interest for the upcoming year that will be analyzed and researched further by the committee and health policy staff such as: Identifying any open issues from previous committee meetings such as are servicemembers serving in the Guard and Reserves who have TBI and PTSD receiving the care they need; mCare Project initiated by Dr. Ron Poropatich; researching how many veterans diagnosed with TBI and PTSD are experiencing issues with their relationships, reproduction and intimacy; reviewing the VA caregiver program (Note: There are 19,208 veterans that were enrolled in the VA's

caregiver program in which approximately 25% have a TBI diagnosis and approximately 80% have a PTSD diagnosis) to include inviting representatives from the VA Caregiver program office to address the concerns that the committee has as they relate for the caring and well-being of severely injured veterans. The committee stated that they were extremely interested in how the VA caregiver program is training their enrolled caregivers with the basic skills that are necessary for caring for severely injured veterans; the possibility of expanding on the TBI and PTSD veterans health care experiences survey for the purpose of collecting further information that the initial survey did not specifically highlight such as: types of medications veterans are being prescribed for their TBI and PTSD symptoms; (This will help with understanding the long-term health care effects medications have on veterans overall wellbeing) what types of CAM treatments are being offered and if their effectiveness is based upon the number of treatment/therapy sessions; and if current treatments and therapies for treating TBI and PTSD symptoms are practical, effective and whether veterans are benefiting from these treatments and/or therapies.

Ian DePlanque, Director of Legislation provided the committee updates on current TBI and PTSD legislation to include: “The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act”- This is a significant piece of new legislation that aims to help reduce military and veteran suicides and to improve access to quality mental health care. This legislation would create a third party evaluation of VA Mental health and suicide prevention programs, a pilot program that would repay education loans for mental health providers to make it easier for recruitment and employment within the VA, create programs to improve servicemembers going through the transition process, create additional peer to peer support and community outreach pilot programs, and to provide transitioning service members a website to access available resources.

HR 444: “Expanding Care for Veterans Act” — This legislation is sponsored by Congresswoman Julia Brownley (D-CA). This legislation is sponsored by Congresswoman Julia Brownley (D-CA) and would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop a plan to expand the scope of VA’s research and education on the delivery and integration of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) into the current models of care. The bill talks about how the VA needs to identify the best practices of where CAM is working and use those medical centers as best practices and to identify the gaps where it is not being fully implemented and integrated into current models of health care. This piece of legislation would also include the following: expanding a program on the integration of CAM within the Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare system that includes studying the barriers that veterans are experiencing in receiving CAM treatments from the medical centers; as well as establishing a program on the use of wellness programs as CAM approaches to mental health care for veterans and their families. “Veterans and Armed Forces Health Promotion Act of 2013” sponsored by Representative Tim Ryan (D-OH) This legislation is meant to improve the healthcare for veterans and members of the military through CAM treatments and therapies. “The Veterans’ and Armed Forces Protection Act of 2013” is the house companion bill of the “Veterans’ Health Promotion Act” (S-852) sponsored by Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Chairman Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee.

This bill would expand the scope of research and education on the delivery of integrative care for veterans that would include CAM; establish a pilot project to establish CAM centers within the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical centers (VAMCs); and transform community veteran’s service organization (VSO) facilities into Health and Wellness centers.

Speaker Presentations

There were three presentations that were made to the committee. They were as follows:

Sharyn J. Saunders, Director, Army Resiliency Directorate, discussed the Army's Ready and Resilient campaign efforts as well as shared some information regarding the

Army Suicide Prevention Program. The Army is currently examining the amount of sexual assaults that are occurring within the Army and to see if there is a correlation between the assaults and mental health disorders and substance abuse disorders. The Department of the Army has launched the Ready Resilient Campaign by looking at the servicemember in a holistic approach. The Ready and Resilient Campaign integrates and synchronizes multiple efforts and initiatives to improve the readiness and resilience of the Active Duty, Reserve, National Guard soldiers, Army Civilians and Families. Ready and Resilient will build upon mental, physical, emotional, behavioral and spiritual resilience in our Soldiers, Families and Civilians to enhance their ability to manage the rigors and challenges of a demanding profession.

Dr. Harold Kudler, Chief Consultant for Mental Health, Department of Veterans Affairs, presented on suicide prevention programs and initiatives within the Department of Veterans Affairs. Dr. Kudler explained the demographics of the veteran today which is 21.9 million veterans (males =19.7million and women= 2.2 million). Suicides are increasing among older veterans enrolled in the VA healthcare system and are slightly higher than the general population. Dr. Kudler also presented on the Veterans Crisis Line which has been in existence for 7 years. Since, the Crisis line was established in 2007, veterans can access the crisis line through many different avenues such as; online chat, calling, texting, and through mobile applications. As of September 2014, the crisis line has rescued over 42,000 people.

Dr. Chrisanne Gordon, Chairwoman Resurrecting Lives Foundation (RLF) presented on a pilot program through a partnership with Ft. Bragg and Cardinal Health titled *"From CO to CEO-An Employment Program to BRAGG about!"* Employment Initiatives for Veterans with TBI and PTSD. The RLF partners with other 501 (c) (3) organizations to coordinate programs and resources such as job placement, training and other career opportunities for veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). RLF is currently in collaboration with Ft. Bragg to develop a pilot program for servicemembers transitioning out of the military and into the workforce. The pilot program is called the *"Adopt a Veteran Plan"*. The mission of the employment initiative "Adopt a Veteran" program is to provide returning servicemembers who are suffering from the wounds of war such as TBI and PTSD with employers who are interested in long term commitments to the nations' heroes by matching their skill sets with their military experiences.

The TBI/PTSD Committee continues to pursue advancements in VA health care to include: Hyperbaric Oxygen treatments for TBI and PTSD; Complimentary Alternative Medicine treatments and therapies; the consequences of overprescribing medications and narcotics to service members and veterans; reviewing patient-centered care approaches for TBI and PTSD, and how service members and veterans who suffer from TBI and PTSD directly effects their caregiver.

TBI and PTSD Symposium

The National Adjutant authorized the TBI/PTSD Committee to host a second TBI/PTSD Symposium in 2015. The Symposium is tentatively scheduled to take place during the fall 2015. This year's theme is entitled "Transitioning of Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injuries and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder."

Prior to the Symposium, a TBI/PTSD Survey was posted online July 2015. The results of the 2015 survey are being compared against the 2014 survey results and the finding will be included in the TBI/PTSD annual survey report.

Accredited Representatives

In completing VA form 21-22 "Power of Attorney", the claimant appoints the American Legion as accredited representative in a claim for benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. It is the duty of the organization to provide assistance, advice, and counsel veterans, survivors and dependents so as to ensure their rights are

protected and they receive all benefits to which they may be entitled under the law. The American Legion, as a congressionally chartered organization since 1919, conducts this service program through the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. Accredited Representatives of The American Legion provide formal representation in claims before VA Regional Offices or the Board of Veterans Appeals. Their respective Departments have recommended these representatives for accreditation because of their knowledge, experience, and expertise in the field of federal benefit programs, especially those provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

To become an accredited representative of the American Legion, a formal application must be submitted to the director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, with an accompanying endorsement signed by the department adjutant. The director, as the national certifying officer, or the deputy director for claims service, as assistant national certifying officer, will review and forward the request to the general counsel of VA for action. This form is never sent directly to the general counsel, as accreditation will not be granted unless the request has been certified by the organization. Upon approval of the application, the individual is recognized by VA as an accredited representative of the American Legion and will receive official notification of this action from VA. The accreditation will remain in effect until such time as the direct of national veterans affairs and rehabilitation commission receives a written request from the department commander or department adjutant to revoke the individual's accreditation due to death, retirement, resignation, or on rare occasions for just cause. The director will then notify the general counsel that the accreditation should be cancelled.

New accreditations and cancellations are reported monthly on VA's general list of accredited representatives – VA information Bulletin IB 2-51. During the reporting period 488 requests for accreditation and 589 requests for cancellation were received from the Departments and submitted to VA for necessary action. As of June 30, 2015 there were 2,949 accredited representatives of the American Legion with 7 pending accreditation. Any questions concerning the proper procedure or regulations pertaining to accreditation of individuals or their activities should be submitted to the Director for the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission in the Washington office.

Staff Field Assignments

Staff from the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division, including the director, deputy directors, assistant directors, and representatives from the Health Policy Unit and Board of Veterans Appeals attended various American Legion functions around the country such as: the National Convention, Fall and Spring National Executive Committee (NEC) meetings, the Annual Mid-Winter Conference in Washington, D.C., Department Conventions, Department Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) trainings, Department Seminars, Department Service Officer Schools, Department Claims training, fully developed claims assessment and training at seven VA Regional Offices, fact-finding trips, and various conferences.

Personnel and Organization

As of August 1, 2015, VA&R staffing is reported as follows;

Director.....	1
Secretary	3
Deputy Director for Health Care.....	1
Team Lead for Health Policy.....	1
Assistant Director for Health Care.....	3
Assistant Director for Women and Minority Veteran Outreach	1
Assistant Director for TBI/PTSD.....	0

Deputy Director for Claims	1

Deputy Director for MEB/PEB/DOD	1
Assistant Director for Claims	1
Assistant Director for DOD Military Review Boards	2
Team Leader, Board of Vets Appeals.....	4
Assistant Directors for Appeals	10
Secretaries.....	3
Medical Consultant.....	1
Total Personnel – Washington Office	31

Satellite Offices

Insurance Field Office: Philadelphia, PA	
Chief of Insurance Activities	1
Pension Management Center: Philadelphia, PA	1
Debt Management Center/PMC St. Paul, MN	
Assistant Director	1
PMC Representative	1
Pension Management Center Milwaukee	
Benefits Delivery at Discharge Winston Salem	1
Benefits Delivery at Discharge Salt Lake City	1
IDES Representative Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington	1
VA&R Total	40

Certificates Of Appreciation

Under authority of May 1958 NEC Resolution, we have continued the program of awarding a Certificate of Appreciation to officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs, upon their retirement or resignation, For Services Rendered and Cooperation Extended in Connection with The American Legion's Rehabilitation Program. Under criteria established in line with the enabling resolution, nominations for the award are submitted by Department or National officials of The American Legion twice a year. The nominations are considered by a committee of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission at meetings preceding the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference, and the National Convention. The Committee recommends to the Commission the names of those considered deserving of the Certificate.

One Certificate of Appreciation has been awarded during the period July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2015, for an overall total of 1,330 since the program was initiated

Citations for Meritorious Service

This Citation, authorized by the National Executive Committee in May 1956, seeks to recognize the long and faithful service of Post Service Officers and others. Nominations for the Citation are submitted by Department officials to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Director at any time; the Director, acting for the Chairman and members of the Commission, issues the award.

Thirty Citations For Meritorious Service And Loyal Cooperation In The American Legion's Veterans Affairs And Rehabilitation Program Were Presented During The Period July 1, 2014 To June 30, 2015. Since This Type Of Recognition And Appreciation Began, 5,093 Citations For Meritorious Service Have Been Presented.

**American Legion Auxiliary
Janet Jefford, National President**

"To honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of our veterans..." is one small part of the American Legion Auxiliary's mission. Historically, individuals and communities provided support to our military members when they returned from war. Thanks in part to The American Legion, the federal government eventually established the Department of Veterans Affairs to help on the national level, but it can only do what its resources support. Members of the American Legion Auxiliary are dedicated to filling in the gaps of needed services for veterans in our local communities. To this end, unit members across the nation have fulfilled this mission as demonstrated by the ongoing services they provide local veterans.

All across America, department Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services (VAVS) representatives attended informational meetings, supplemented services at VA hospitals or clinics, and recruited new volunteers. Additionally, local unit members reinforced the work of the VAVS representatives by donating canteen books, preparing tray favors, sewing passage quilts, crocheting lap blankets, providing cookies and coffee, holding birthday parties, and providing gifts to hospitalized veterans and many more activities. At the VA Medical Centers' local Creative Arts Festivals, whether providing supplies for the artist, making financial donations, setting up the festival, or judging, our American Legion Auxiliary members were there providing support. And, during that very special time of the year, much anticipated and popular Christmas Gift Shops were held at VA medical facilities and state veterans homes all across the nation.

Many of our members also took part in local stand downs for homeless veterans. In Indiana, they donated money for shelters, for new clothes and socks, food, and daily care products. Junior members even got involved with one unit donating money they had raised for socks and toiletries. Texas Unit 521 in Pasadena contributed to a project to adopt female veterans and their children for Christmas. This was a different type of project coordinated by the local VA Medical Center to help homeless female veterans.

Auxiliary units in Arizona joined with The American Legion to assist homeless veterans through helping at stand downs, contributing to the HUD-VASH program and Honor Flights. A highlight of their success was when they helped a homeless veteran find a job and housing for his family.

Maine Auxiliary units not only supported the VAVS program, but also provided Christmas gifts, ditty bags containing comfort items to housebound veterans, mental health outpatients, a veteran dementia ward, and homeless veterans.

In Illinois, children of homeless veterans were given Christmas gifts and Easter baskets. And, "Blessing Bags" were distributed to homeless veterans. Each bag contained dry socks, a first aid kit, snacks, rain poncho, and even some change for special needs.

Departments throughout the nation have found many new and creative ways to volunteer under the umbrella of the Service to Veterans program. They have made life better for veterans in their communities through activities such as driving veterans to their doctor visits, helping at hospice facilities, baking cookies for veterans holiday celebrations or birthday cakes for veterans, and helping veterans in their local nursing homes. Some members make and donate "Final Salute" patriotic quilts to terminally ill veterans, hold fish fry events, and take veterans on field trips to local fishing holes. Others donate magazines, serve veterans breakfasts on holidays, or deliver meals on wheels to housebound veterans. Most importantly, when our members found veterans and their families in need, they found ways to help.

We worked together this year: as family, within our units, partnered with The American Legion, or working within the VA service community. We reached out to our veterans, and we helped provide faith and support to those who have given years of their lives defending America so that we might celebrate our freedom every day.

American Legion Auxiliary's Impact Made Serving America's Veterans:

Hours volunteered	5,766,535
Dollars spent.....	\$8,481,163
Value of in-kind donations received.....	\$6,006,196
Number of veterans assisted	1,592,109
Number of Veterans in the Classroom presentations facilitated	12,109
Number of new Service to Veterans volunteers recruited (previously known as Home Service and Field Service, now combined into one category "Service to Veterans")	50,411
Number of poppies or poppy items distributed.....	12,683,848
Dollars raised from the poppies or poppy items distributed	\$5,501,696
Number of veterans who made the poppies or poppy items for distribution.....	15,233
Total amount paid to veterans who made poppies	\$729,902

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin, Chairman

Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Director

This report covers the programs, activities and accomplishments of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, its two standing committees (Employment and Veterans Preference and Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness), and the staff from July, 2014, through June 30, 2015. Since the commission and the committees always meet concurrently, all future references to the commission in this report will automatically indicate the inclusion of the committees.

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission is chaired by Denise H. Rohan (WI). The division consists of Director Joseph Sharpe, Jr., Deputy Director Mark Walker, Assistant Director Steve Gonzalez, Assistant Director Davy Leghorn, Assistant Director Daniel Smith, and Administrative Assistant Jasmine Davis.

National Veterans Employment & Education Commission

*Employment & Veterans Preference Committee

*Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness Committee

*Veterans Employment & Education Council

*Awards Subcommittee

*Small Business Task Force Advisory Board

*Homeless Veteran Task Force Advisory Board

2014-2015 Meetings

During the period this report covers, the commission met for four regularly scheduled executive sessions. A list of those meetings follows:

- (1) Members and guests of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission met on Saturday, August 23, 2014, in the Westin Charlotte, Providence Ballroom, Section 3, Lobby Level, Charlotte, North Carolina, in conjunction with the Ninety-sixth Annual National Convention. A report on that meeting was made to the National Executive Committee on Monday, August 25, 2014. The complete text of that report appears in the Proceedings of the National Executive Committee's Pre- and Post-Convention Meetings.
- (2) An executive session of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission was held in the headquarters of The American Legion in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 15-16, 2014. A complete report on that

meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, October 2014.

- (3) At the 55th Washington Conference, on Monday, February 23, which was held in the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, DC; commission members and guests met to hear the latest on subjects of concern to them.
- (4) The chairman of the commission met May 5, 2015, in the headquarters office of The American Legion, in Indianapolis, Indiana. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, May 6-7, 2015.

Legislative Appearances

A very important part of the work of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission is the preparation and presentation of congressional testimony on issues affecting the economic well-being of America's veterans. During the period covered by this report, the commission staff testified before Congress, and also participated in the preparation of testimony presented by other members of the Legion staff on several occasions.

The following is a synopsis of the congressional hearings and correspondence held from August 1, 2014 to July 31, 2015, on matters pertaining to the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission:

- On January 27, 2015, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "A Review of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)."
- On February 12, 2015, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "A Review of the President's Fiscal year 2016 Budget Request for the Department of Labor's Veteran Employment and Training Services (VETS)."
- On March 19, 2015, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce, House Committee on Small Business on "The Challenges facing Veteran-Owned Small Businesses Seeking Federal Contracts."
- On March 24, 2015, the Assistant Director testified before the subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on various pieces of legislation regarding "Education Issues."
- On June 2, 2015, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on various pieces of legislation regarding "Employment and Education Issues."

Administrative Activities

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission and its two standing subcommittees on Employment and Veterans Preference and Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness are responsible for ensuring that America's veterans have the opportunity to provide, with honor and dignity, the economic necessities of life for themselves and their families. In order to achieve this goal, the commission and its committees work closely with governmental agencies and liaison to assist the organization's members.

A staff responsibility is answering the large volume of mail and electronic mail that is received annually from veterans seeking information or assistance on issues which come under the commission's jurisdiction. While the staff can neither place individual veterans in jobs nor represent them in labor disputes, the staff does provide information, guidance and, when appropriate, referral. Besides correspondence from individuals, the staff also

receives and answers frequent requests and inquiries from government agencies, members of Congress, congressional committees, private organizations, and other groups regarding veterans' economic issues.

Employer of the Year Awards

One of the commission's major programs is its awards program, which is administered by the staff. Through this program The American Legion pays tribute to those employers across the country who has established outstanding records in the employment and retention of veterans, workers with disabilities and older workers, and to outstanding members of the state employment security agencies.

Each year since 1969, the Legion's National Veterans Employment & Education Commission has sponsored an Employer of the Year Awards Program. This program seeks to honor those employers across the country that has established an outstanding record in the employment and retention of veterans. Prior to this year's Washington Conference, the chairman of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, Denise H. Rohan (WI), appointed a seven-person subcommittee to review all of the nominations that had been received during 2014 in the Employer of Veterans Awards Program.

The Commission's Awards Subcommittee met to select the following National winners:

- **Large Employer:** The Home Depot, Georgia
- **Medium Size Employer:** Frito-Lay, Texas
- **Small Employer:** Veteran Energy, Texas

Employment Service Awards

Beginning in 1993, three awards have been presented to the Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year, and the Employment Service Office of the Year. These awards are given in cooperation with local Job Service offices across the country, to recognize truly outstanding veteran-dedicated staff members.

National winners are as follows:

- **LVER of the Year:** Frankie Billingsley, Indiana
- **DVOP of the Year:** Linda "Michele" Scuito, Texas
- **Employment Local Office:** OhioMeansJobs Columbus-Franklin County Center, Ohio

Other Awards:

- **Enhance the Lives of the Disabled:** Bobby Dodd Institute. Georgia
- **Employer of Older Workers:** Sturdevants Auto Parts, South Dakota
- **Homeless Veterans Outreach Award:** The American Legion Department of New Jersey

Employment & Veterans Preference Committee

James Fratolillo, Massachusetts, Chairman

Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Director

The mission of the committee is to promote employment and training opportunities for veterans. To accomplish this, the committee works at the national level with Congress and various federal agencies. The committee does not place veterans in jobs, but rather, relies on its network of employment chairpersons to assist individual veterans in finding employment. Their Posts and Departments appoint these employment chairpersons. Occasionally, Departments also appoint them at the County and District levels.

Additionally, this committee is charged with promoting veterans' preference throughout the federal government and ensuring that agencies continue to observe all veterans' preference laws.

Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness Committee

John B. Sampson, New York, Chairman

Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Director

This committee is charged with ensuring that veterans' educational benefits provided by the federal government are sufficient and that every generation of veterans has substantially the same as, or better benefits than, the previous generation. In addition, this committee is to ensure that all veterans receive the benefits to which they are entitled as recompense for their military service on behalf of a grateful nation while continuing to push for federal and local governments to allocate adequate resources to combat and ultimately eliminate veteran homelessness.

Federal Veterans' Economic Programs

The following is a brief overview of the Commission's interactions with those federal agencies, and their veterans' programs, with which the commission works regularly.

Education

The Post-9/11 GI Bill passed by Congress in 2008 was an effective upgrade for 21st century veterans using their college education benefits. It was not, nor can it be, a law so static that it cannot continue evolving to best meet the needs of student-veterans in an ever-shifting landscape of higher education and career training. The American Legion supports educational institutions that provide student-veterans with valuable education and support. Grants to establish or strengthen veteran centers on campuses can go a long way toward helping students succeed.

American Legion posts have been chartered on campuses nationwide to help meet the needs of veterans, which can include VA benefits assistance, understanding of PTSD and networking. The Legion is concerned about dropout rates and their relationship to the effectiveness, or presence, of campus veteran programs. The Legion supports legislation to fund programs to start, restart or expand student-veterans centers.

Licensing & Certification

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission hosted our second National Credentialing Summit on Tuesday, April 28 - Wednesday, April 29. The invited speakers and panelists explored ways to make connections between military experience and credentials required for civilian careers. The Summit participants looked for ways in which the Armed Forces can help facilitate the credentialing process and how business can better accommodate the credentialing need of military spouses. Outdated regulations should not prevent veterans and their spouses from entering the job market. Military experience and training are valuable assets to businesses in the private sector, and should not be dismissed during the licensing, credentialing or certification process. The Credentialing Summit educated and fostered collaboration among attendees, so they could return to their respective communities, companies or state legislatures, and work to remove the barriers that impede America's veterans as they embark on a civilian career.

The Summit had several panels that consisted of the following topics:

- Credentialing of Service Members and Veterans
- Approaches to Credentialing by the Armed Services

- Assessing the Quality and Value of Credentials
- Closing the Skills Gap
- Military Spouse Credentialing
- Tracking Credentialing Outcome
- Credentialing Best Practices in Transportation
- Stakeholder Innovations
- Best Credentialing Practices in Health Care

The panels' listed above were moderated and staffed by individuals from, but not limited to the following organizations:

- International Brotherhood of Teamsters
- Departments of Defense, Education, Energy, Health & Human Services, Labor, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs
- U.S. Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, , Marine Corps, and Navy personnel
- State Approving Agencies
- Institutions of Higher Education
- Microsoft
- RAND Corporation
- Pearson VUE
- Manufacturing Skill Standards Council

Speakers included the following individuals:

- Mr. Tom Perez, Secretary, United States Department of Labor
- Mr. Tim Orr, Major General, Adjutant General, State of Iowa
- Mr. Rex Spitler, Major General, Deputy Chief of Staff, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC)
- Mr. James Hoffa, President, International Brotherhood of Teamsters
- Mr. Chris Cortez (USMC Major General Ret.), Vice President of Military Affairs, Microsoft
- Mr. Tim Kaine, Senator, State of Virginia (Video Message and Letter in the program - Member of the Senate Committees on Armed Services, Foreign Relations, and Budget)
- Mr. Jeff Denham, House of Representatives, State of California (Letter in the program - Member of the House Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure, Agriculture, and Natural Resources, and former member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee)

The Sponsors of the Summit were as follows:

- Microsoft
- Colorado State University - Global Campus
- International Brotherhood of Teamsters
- CompTIA
- CBS Corporation
- Pearson VUE

The Summit, while unique in terms of topic and visibility, it's not a first for The American Legion. In 2012, The American Legion and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce collaborated to host a Credentialing Summit, setting the standard and introducing this pivotal issue by spotlighting the adversities faced by military members and their families. The American Legion was very instrumental in first drawing attention to the credentialing of service members and veterans. In 1997, The American Legion commissioned the report "Study of Civilian Licensure and Certification for Veterans," which detailed the problem

while focusing on the areas of aircraft maintenance and healthcare. Since then, there has been a tremendous amount of momentum and success in recognizing military experience for credentials at the federal and state levels.

Cooperation among The American Legion, state governments, private sector employers, institutions of higher learning and the federal government have been crucial to effect the necessary changes in policies and practices to fully recognize the education, training, and experience provided to transitioning veterans. The American Legion will continue to work with the White House, National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, government agencies such as the Departments of Defense, Energy, Labor, Transportation and others, as well as congressional representatives, military training commands, credentialing boards and the private sectors.

Veterans Preference

The American Legion is deeply concerned with the protection of the veteran and the prevention of illegal hiring practices. Currently, veterans are filing claims after the non-compliance employment event occurred and may become financially disadvantaged while waiting for results of the claim. Proactive measures and continuous oversight must be exercised to protect veterans from unfair hiring practices, not just reactionary investigations.

The following steps taken by the federal government to protect veterans' employment and demonstrates reactionary measures to assist veterans which may take months to resolve. Many veterans give up or do not file complaints because they must seek employment elsewhere or face serious financial difficulties. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administers entitlement to veterans' preference in employment. The Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) provides assistance to all persons having claims under USERRA. DOL is the enforcement authority for USERRA, and it processes all formal complaints of violations of the law. The veteran may then request that the Department of Justice (DOJ) litigate on their behalf but only after a certain period has passed.

Veterans' preference is authorized by the Veterans' Preference Act (VPA) of 1944; it only applies to federal government employment. It provides that most veterans are to receive an extra five points (ten points for disabled veterans) in receiving and keeping federal jobs. The Veterans' Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA) of 1998 extended certain rights and remedies to recently separated veterans. VETS were given the responsibility to investigate complaints filed by veterans who believe their veterans' preference rights have been violated and to conduct an extensive compliance assistance program. Veterans' preference is being ignored by numerous agencies. Figures show a decline in claims by newer veterans compared to Gulf War I. In reality employment opportunities are not being broadcast. Federal agencies as well as subcontractors are required by law to notify OPM of job opportunities but these vacancies are rarely made available to the public.

The American Legion reiterates its position that protection of veterans' employment rights should be proactive and continuous oversight must be emplaced to protect veterans from unfair hiring practices. Reactionary investigations and lawsuits are not sufficient. We further believe that the veteran must be protected at the onset of the hiring process, corrective actions to remedy the veteran's situation in the veteran's favor are not guaranteed. We recommend that DOJ provide a detailed description of their veterans' employment activities.

A grateful nation created veterans' preference to ensure fair treatment for those citizens who served this country in the Armed Forces. Veterans' preference should play a large role in employing veterans and their spouses. Federal agencies need to make sure that their Human Resource personnel are properly trained to effectively implement veterans' preference. The federal government has scores of employment opportunities that educated,

well-trained, and motivated veterans can fill given a fair and equitable chance to compete. Working together, all federal agencies should identify those vocational fields, especially those with high turnover rates, for transitioning veterans who are trying to continue their service within the federal government.

Employment and Career Fairs

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission hosted an Employment & Empowerment Summit at Washington Conference on Thursday, February 19 - Friday, February 20. The two-day Summit provided workshops and educational sessions that included opportunities for one-on-one career coaching and resume review, corporate panels and benefits discussions. Each day began with a free networking breakfast, and then segued into employment workshops where industry leaders in the public and private sectors offered guidance on how to find employment in their respective industries and organizations. Women veterans and military spouses were the focus of two panel discussions during the Summit. The panels featured experts from the public and private sectors; the first focused on employment opportunities, while a second covered emotional and physical health. A common theme of the panel was that women do not self-identify as veterans. A panelist stated that women veterans are physically, mentally, and emotionally built different. Also, women are one of the fastest growing sub-populations of veterans. In so many ways, their skills, talents and requirements for wellness differ from those of male veterans. Women veterans are wives, mothers, caretakers, and other things they need to be for the family; consequently, whenever life settles down, that is when they call the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to search for benefits.

It was also mentioned that VA facilities like the DC VA Medical Center have improved their women veteran facilities to make those patients feel comfortable when they seek out medical care. Furthermore, Humana created its own veteran and military spouse talent portal. Once job seekers place a resume in the portal -- it goes directly to the veteran talent initiative staff -- then the applicant receives an actual phone call explaining the employment process and the company's culture. Panelists speakers included: Dr. Betty Moseley Brown, Associate Director, Center for Women, Department of Veterans Affairs; LTC Paula Smith, Health Director, Soldiers for Life, U.S. Army; Dr. Nancy Glowacki, Women Veteran Program Manager, Department of Labor; John DiPiero, Military Advocacy Director, USAA; James Tongate, Veteran Talent Initiative, Program Manager, Humana; and Verna Jones, Executive Director, Washington, DC Office. Officials from USAA, IBM, Humana, Time Warner Cable, Citi, Lockheed Martin, BAE Systems Inc., Easter Seals, Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Labor participated in the Summit. The culmination of the Summit was the Career Fair. In addition to the Career Fair, 24 veterans attended the Easter Seals Resume Workshop. The resume workshop provided one-on-one tutoring on writing an effective resume and counseling sessions that focused on interviewing skills. The American Legion will continue to sponsor these types of events at the Washington Conference.

Additionally, in a 2015 VA economic report, it noted that veterans as a whole are faring well -- employment and earnings are generally comparable to non-veteran population, or even better among some groups. However, there is room for improvement. In recent years, about half of all service members transitioning into civilian life have faced a period of unemployment within 15 months of separation. In addition, certain groups within the veteran population must surmount barriers that make it more difficult for them to reach their education and employment goals (i.e., veterans under 35), and some groups lag behind the non-veteran population in economic outcomes (i.e., veterans over 55). Among this report's key findings: (1) Approximately 1 out of 2 (53 percent) separating Post-9/11 veterans will face a period of unemployment. While national unemployment rates have declined, the on-the-ground reality is that half of our veterans enter a period of unemployment upon transition; (2) Veterans want to work and are not relying on the full-

term of their unemployment benefits. 95 percent of veterans will connect to employment before using the full 26 weeks of unemployment benefits. However, the average duration of unemployment is on the rise from 18 weeks in the last 6 years to 22 weeks in 2013; (3) Post-9/11 Era veterans are doing better than their non-veteran peers in earnings. Post-9/11 veterans attain 11 percent higher median earnings than non-veterans with similar demographic characteristics. However, veterans of all eras attain 3 percent lower median earnings than non-veterans with similar demographic characteristics; (4) The Post-9/11 GI Bill is a key strategy to improve veterans and their family's economic opportunity. Veterans under 25 constitute 58 percent of the Post-9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries, while 8 percent of all veterans transferred it to a family member who used the benefit; and (5) Female veterans are doing well compared to their non-veteran female and veteran male peers in both career earnings and education. Female veterans attain 14 percent higher median earnings than the non-veteran female population with similar demographic characteristics. Female veterans participating in the GI Bill had a 10 percent higher completion rate compared to male veterans for all ages combined, an 8 percent higher completion rate across all individual age groups, and a 5 percent higher completion rate when compared to female students in the general population cohort.

The current rate of unemployment in the United States is 5.3 percent. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans is 6.7 percent. The total number of unemployed veterans from the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is approximately 190,000, with a total of 501,000 unemployed veterans from all eras. The American Legion has collaborated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (USCC), Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS), Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), various State Workforce Agencies and various corporate sponsors, in hosting numerous veteran specific Job Fairs across the nation. The 'Hiring our Heroes' Initiative seeks to lower the unemployment rate amongst our nation's veterans by bringing Job Fairs to many of the nation's underserved communities.

Since January 2013, The American Legion has hosted and participated in 118 Job Fairs with RecruitMilitary and USCC under the 'Hiring our Heroes' Initiative. In less than three years, Hiring Our Heroes -- a joint initiative of The American Legion and USCC -- has helped more than 24,000 veterans, service members, and military spouses nationwide find jobs. USCC has hosted over 90 hiring events at Legion Posts and partnered with the Legion on nearly 200 others. The main purpose of our participation in these Job Fairs is to educate veterans of their benefits, provide veterans outlets for employment and promote The American Legion. The American Legion participates in 100 Job Fairs a year through our national partnerships.

The American Legion's National Veterans Employment & Education Division, through its relationships, continues to play a vital role in assisting American Legion Posts to produce successful Job Fairs, small business development workshops, and employment training services throughout America and, in turn, will change the tide of the high unemployment rate among veterans. In addition, the staff of the National Veterans Employment & Education Division is also involved in a number of advisory committees. Assistant Director Steve Gonzalez is a member of the Department of Veterans Affairs Education Advisory Committee as well as the Office of Personnel Management's Hispanic Council on Federal Employment, Assistant Director Davy Leghorn is a member of the Small Business Administration's Advisory Committee, and Deputy Director Mark Walker is a member of the Department of Veterans Affairs Homeless Veterans Advisory Committee.

Aside from advisory committees, The American Legion is also a stakeholder and active participant in numerous government agencies and private businesses' veteran initiatives, where our input into their programs is highly valued. The American Legion has a representative on the Department of Labor's Advisory Committee Veterans' Employment, Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO) and Interagency Task Force

on Veterans Small Business Development. Lastly, The American Legion participates in the Veterans' Entrepreneurship's Task Force (VET-FORCE) business forums and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Service Member's Affairs meetings.

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission encourages Departments to urge members to volunteer for any employment events in their respective departments. We ask that volunteer staff include Service Officers, Employment and Homeless Chairpersons, Children and Youth representatives, as well as members from The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion.

National Veterans Employment & Education Commission Forum

On Monday, March 23, the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission assembled in Jefferson West, Concourse Level, Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington D.C., to address sequestration impact on readiness/quality of life for the troops and military families. Major General Gary Cheek, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, U.S. Army; Colonel Larry Reeves, Army Resiliency Directorate, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, U.S. Army; and Carla Coulson, Director of Installation Services, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, discussed the realities of the budget crunch and how it could negatively affect readiness, as well as how the U.S. Army is forecasting missions and other potential threats over the next several years. Also, there was discussion around then - Department of Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel issuing of two directives to each of the military services that would allow for greater access to military installations for nonprofit organizations and veterans service organizations (VSOs), such as The American Legion. With better access, Secretary Hagel is hoping that the Legion and other organizations can properly assist service members transitioning out of the military be more prepared for that transition. One way that was specifically mentioned in the meeting was the need for financial counseling. The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission have been aggressively pushing DOD and other stakeholders to open up opportunities for Legionnaires to be on military installations to share our programs/services that can assist those transitioning service members to obtain gainful employment and financial stability.

Veteran Entrepreneurship

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission (along with the Legion's Small Business Task Force) conducted a two-day Veterans Small Business Workshop on Tuesday, February 24 and Wednesday February 25, at the Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. Approximately 132 veterans and military spouses participated in this event. Participants traveled from as far away as Florida, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, as well as Maryland and Virginia.

The two-day workshop was specifically designed for service members, veterans and spouses who own their own businesses or thinking of starting one. The intensive entrepreneurship course was created by the Legion in collaboration with local small businesses such as Vets GSA LLC, the Millennium Group International and the DC VA Medical Center. The workshop consisted of best practices' seminar, VA Opportunity Showcase, and multiple business networking sessions during breakfast, lunch and an evening reception. The event welcomed industry experts and successful veteran entrepreneurs from the public and private sectors to discuss best practices in working with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and bidding for contracts from VA. Topics at the workshop included federal procurement, business opportunities with VA and the federal government, and the technical qualifications a firm needs to work with the federal government. Presentations were given by Scott Sands, Network Contracts Manager, VA, and representatives from the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA), along with the Legion Small Business Task Force members.

Lastly, there was discussion by the Small Business Task Force on our continued support for Representative Michael Fitzpatrick's bill, the Fairness to Veterans for Infrastructure Act. If enacted, this bill would amend current legislation to add veteran-owned small businesses (VOSBs) to the list of entities eligible for the Department of Transportation's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program. Such an addition would not presume that veterans are "socially and economically disadvantaged." Instead, VOSBs would become independently eligible for participation in the DBE program. By law, the federal agencies are mandated to award no less than 3 percent of all federal contracts to service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSBs). For a number of reasons a few agencies have not met this goal. One of the most noteworthy exclusions of VOSBs occurs in the Department of Transportation's DBE program. Current legislation requires that states receiving federal dollars for infrastructure repairs have to set aside 10 percent for "preferred goods" of small businesses. However, VOSBs are excluded from participation. It is a misconception that this 10 percent is solely relegated to road and infrastructure construction firms. There are in fact a variety of industries involved, such as personnel, administration, engineering, landscaping, utilities and IT -- so this is an issue that affects all VOSBs. The Fairness to Veterans for Infrastructure Act is a bipartisan, common sense, and 'no cost to taxpayer' update of existing legislation, that redresses the exclusion of veteran small businesses when the framework of the DBE program was originally drafted. Lastly, shortly after American Legion National Commander Michael Helm testified before Congress on the Legion's legislative priorities in February, Representative Fitzpatrick successfully added an amendment to rail infrastructure legislation. The amendment directed the Secretary of Transportation to conduct "a nationwide disparity and availability study on the availability and use of certain classes of small businesses -- including veteran-owned businesses."

The American Legion's Small Business Task Force is a consortium of accomplished veteran business owners who have volunteered to advise the Legion on legislative matters that pertain to veteran businesses. The group of 30 members shares their experiences -- ranging from the public and private sectors -- to help inform the National Veterans Employment & Education Division on matters relating to federal contracting for veterans, procurement and other areas that affect veteran business owners.

Home Loan Guaranty Program

VA's Home Loan Guaranty program has been in effect since 1944 and has afforded approximately 20 million veterans the opportunity to purchase homes. The Home Loan programs offer veterans a centralized, affordable and accessible method of purchasing homes in return for their service to this nation. The program has been so successful over past years that not only has the program paid for itself, but has also shown a profit in recent years. Administrative costs constitute a relatively small portion - less than 10 percent - of the total capital and operating costs. The predominant costs are claims costs and other costs associated with foreclosure and alternatives taken to avoid foreclosure. Each claim costs the federal government about \$20,000. However, revenues that VA collects from different sources, including the funding fee that borrowers pay, property sales, and proceeds from acquired loans and vendee loans, offset this cost.

In 1982, PL 97-253 was enacted and imposed a ½ percent funding fee (1/2 percent of the loan amount) on all veterans using the loan program, with the exception of those veterans in receipt of compensation for a service connected disability. This was considered to be a temporary measure to help reduce the national debt. Unfortunately, this fee has become a fixture of the home loan program and, even more unfortunately, it has been raised numerous times by Congress since 1982. Presently, veterans using the program for the first time pay 1.40 percent of the loan amount and those using it for a second time subsequently pay 2.15 percent.

Although veterans are permitted to include the fee in the loan amount, it constitutes an added financial burden. For example, a veteran using the program for the first time obtaining a \$200,000 loan will pay \$2,800. For a second time user the fee on this loan amount would be \$4,300. While this is substantial in and of itself, it is even more significant when you consider the amount of interest the veteran will pay on these amounts as a 30 year mortgage is amortized.

The following persons are exempt from paying the funding fee:

- Veterans receiving VA compensation for service-connected disabilities.
- Veterans who would be entitled to receive compensation for service-connected disabilities if they did not receive retirement pay.
- Surviving spouses of veterans who died in service or from service-connected disabilities (whether or not such surviving spouses are veterans with their own entitlement and whether or not they are using their own entitlement on the loan).

The American Legion strongly urges Congress to consider either eliminating this fee or significantly reducing it. Veterans should not have to make such a significant financial sacrifice in order to use a benefit that they have earned as a result of their service to America.

Veteran Homelessness

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission hosted a transitional roundtable at Washington Conference that dealt with the benefits, programs and services that are available for transitioning service members and veterans. During the roundtable it was noted that VA and HUD reported 50,000 homeless veterans on a single night in January 2014 (2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress). VA is taking decisive action toward its goal of ending homelessness among our nation's veterans. To achieve this goal, VA has developed a five-year plan to assist every homeless veteran willing to accept services retain or acquire: safe housing; needed treatment services; opportunities to retain or return to employment; and benefits assistance. VA has implemented a prevention initiative - the Supportive Services for Veterans and Families (SSVF), which is VA's primary prevention program designed to help veterans and their families rapidly exit homelessness, or avoid entering homelessness.

Also, mentioned was the successful Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) within the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Services (DOL-VETS). HVRP is the only nationwide program focused on assisting homeless veterans to reintegrate into the workforce. This program is a highly successful grant program that needs to be fully funded at \$50 million. Currently, HVRP is funded at \$38 million. The roundtable panelists included: Rickey Hopkins, Transition Assistant Advisor, Andrews Air Force Base; Timothy Green, Director of Strategic Outreach, Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS); Belinda Fadlilmola, Senior Management Analyst, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); and Christine Jenkins, Director of Public Housing, HUD District of Columbia Field Office.

In order to fully implement VA's pledge to end homelessness among veterans by 2015, Congress must continue making responsible investments in affordable housing and supportive services programs that move veterans and their families off the streets and into stable housing. These homeless assistance programs should be intended to serve all groups of low-income veterans – veterans at risk of becoming homeless, veterans who are homeless for a short time, and veterans and their families who have spent years without a place to call home.

With the effects of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is widely known the psychological stress, such as PTSD, TBI and other mental illnesses play a significant role in pushing a certain population of veterans into homelessness. Funding, along with grants that goes to homeless veterans programs and organizations that assist this vulnerable

demographic are needed more than ever. Due to our work with homeless veterans and their families, The American Legion understands that homeless veterans need a sustained coordinated effort that provides secure housing and nutritious meals; essential physical healthcare, substance abuse aftercare and mental health counseling; as well as personal development and empowerment. Veterans also need job assessment, training and placement assistance. The American Legion believes all programs to assist homeless veterans must focus on helping veterans reach their highest level of self-management.

Lastly, The American Legion has continued to provide housing for homeless veterans and their families (i.e., Departments of Connecticut and Pennsylvania). One of the goals of The American Legion is to help bring federal agencies, Non-Profit and Faith-Based organizations, and other stakeholders to the table to discuss best practices, along with funding opportunities, so homeless veterans and their families can obtain the necessary care and help in order for them to properly transition from the streets and or shelters into gainful employment and or independent living.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

National President

Janet L. Jefford, Connecticut

It has truly been an honor and a privilege to serve with you this year as national president. I will always treasure the friends I have met and the memories we have made together. Thank you for a year I will never forget.

“Celebrating Faith, Family, and Freedom” – these words are more than my theme. For me, they are the foundation of the American Legion Auxiliary and what we stand for. Over the years, and especially this year, I have thought a lot about our freedom, where it comes from, and why it is important. God has placed in each one of us a desire to be free, and I believe now more than ever, that faith and family are forever linked with freedom and the principles of democracy.

Freedom to openly express our faith in God; freedom to work together as a Legion Family toward a common mission; and freedom to be who we want to be, say what we want, and worship how we want are privileges we should not take for granted. They are enjoyed largely due to the selfless men and women who have fought for these freedoms.

As American Legion Auxiliary members, we honor the service and sacrifice of our own family members who served their country and whose service allows us the privilege of belonging to the Legion Family. But more than that, as a Legion Family we work to educate our own families, families in our communities, and millions of schoolchildren each year about our country’s history, respect for our flag, honoring our veterans, and supporting our military. The American Legion Family is an important teacher and a wonderful example of service.

I saw examples of this as I represented the Legion Family across the United States this year:

I saw it in Duane Dewey, a Medal of Honor recipient from Florida, who served as a 19-year-old Marine in Korea.

I saw it in North Dakota at a moving memorial service honoring those who gave all since 9/11. I saw it while paying respect at Tomari Foreign Cemetery in Okinawa, and in the caring Auxiliary volunteers who placed millions of flags on veterans’ graves to honor their service on Memorial Day.

I saw it serving alongside The American Legion National Commander Michael Helm and National Sons of The American Commander Mike Moss – delivering Josh Dogs at St. John’s Children Hospital, serving Thanksgiving dinner to our troops in South Korea, and honoring World War II heroes at Pearl Harbor and in Normandy.

What strengthens our family strengthens our country. Strengthening our Legion Family is what the Auxiliary’s 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan is all about. Our numbers may have diminished, but our commitment to service has remained strong. By continuing

to make a difference in the lives of our veterans and in our communities, we can stop the continued decline. During last year's NEC, the Auxiliary adopted five key goals to help us reach the million-member mark by 2019, the 100th anniversary of our organization. We all want to see our children and grandchildren continue the American Legion Auxiliary mission, and the choices we make and actions we take in the next five years – in our units, our departments, and national committees – will determine whether that happens.

Each generation of Auxiliary members has contributed to the greatness of our organization. Each has “stepped up” to the plate when needed. I am convinced that we, the current generation of members, will do the same. Together, we can turn this “plan” into “practice” as we serve, advocate for, and honor America's veterans and military families through our faith, our Legion family, and an appreciation for the price of freedom.

May God keep you and your family safe, may God bless our men and women in uniform, and may He continue to bless this great country that we are privileged to call our home – the United States of America!

**Vice President
Sharon Conatser, Illinois**

It has been wonderful working with President Janet as we lived Faith, Family, and Freedom! The 2014 National Convention in Charlotte was memorable and exciting for me as I began the amazing journey of national vice president. I want to thank my eligibility for my membership: my dad, Clay Lofton, a WWII and Korean War veteran; my husband, Marty Conatser, Vietnam Era veteran; and my son, Rick Malloch, a Gulf War Era Veteran.

The national vice president's year is one of planning and continuing to learn. By attending Finance Committee meetings, Long Range Strategic Planning meetings, the Washington DC Conference, the Department Leadership National Conference, ALA Foundation meetings, and more, I gained knowledge to prepare for the most amazing year in the American Legion Auxiliary!

I was honored to represent our national American Legion Auxiliary at the Indianapolis Veterans Day Festivities and the U.S. Naval Academy in May to present an award to one of the midshipmen. Both activities showed me that patriotism and love of our veterans and our country is alive and well!

I attended the National Commander's Homecoming in Indianapolis, the National Commander's Testimony in Washington, D.C., and taught a department training event in Delaware. I met lots of wonderful members of The American Legion Family.

Planning for my administrative year took most of my time. In November, I spent time with our wonderful National Headquarters staff planning and giving them insight into my plans and ideas. In January, I attended the membership planning meeting, and then National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Chairman Mary Davis and National Children & Youth Chairman Diane Duscheck spent many hours poring over the applications and resumes for appointments. After the Washington DC Conference, leadership stayed and attended briefings with The American Legion to see how we could help with their legislative priorities and other programs housed at the Washington, D.C., office of The American Legion! They were very informative and upbeat!

In May, members across the country joined in Indy for Department Leadership National Conference where we shared membership ideas and leadership ideas for the 2015-2016 administrative year. They left filled with enthusiasm and love for our organization. The national chairmen appointees met in April to make their plans for the 2015-2016 Plan of Action.

All of the planning and fun times are only made possible because of you, the unit members. We are all unit members first, and we need to all be working our mission of taking care of our veterans, their families, and promoting our communities.

The passion of our members is there; we just need to encourage it and share with others. We must grow and change in order to be here for our veterans in the future! Our

organization offers many opportunities to everyone. Give others a chance to share in our rewarding work!

Our eligibility is the reason we joined. Make it the reason we change and grow together! It can be done, as President Janet has said throughout her travels!

Thank you for all of your support!

**Secretary
Mary “Dubbie” Buckler, Indiana**

The American Legion Auxiliary 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan is mission critical. Everything at ALA National Headquarters (NHQ) is geared toward achieving the five goals adopted last year by the NEC. Staff members are volunteering their time alongside goal and strategy team members to ensure the ALA’s future. The Plan’s 200 initiatives require A LOT of time and effort as they move from idea to some stage of implementation, and all in addition to the daily whirlwind of business and supporting our membership.

We’re a big corporation. Our external audits again earned us the highest marks on our national finances, NHQ financial processes, federal grant compliance, ALA Foundation finances, benefits, and Auxiliary magazine. Proudly, your NHQ received stellar findings, and no criticism from regulatory or watchdog groups.

Big multiyear project achievements this year include the Members Only section on the national website, www.ALAforVeterans.org, which now has more than 2,000 resource documents! The most popular content includes membership and scholarship applications, and specific resources such as the ALA Department Operations Guide, PR Toolkit, ALA Branding Guide, the new ALA Poppy Program Guide, new ALA Military Family Readiness Action Guide, updated VA&R Guide, expanded ALA Foundation resources, and many new ALA-branded marketing resources such as banner and signage templates that can be downloaded and customized for local printing. All help to achieve Goal 5 – With The American Legion, Build Brand Loyalty – which requires increasing awareness.

A big “tah-dah” was the launching of www.ALAforVeterans.org as a responsive website. Better than an app, the full website can now be accessed by simply tapping an ALA icon on your tablet or smartphone! Now, nearly 25 percent of our website access comes via smartphone or tablet mobile devices. ALA NHQ now has twice the number of members’ email addresses as last year, more than 99,000, and nearly 840 units are online, a 33 percent increase over last year. We thrive in a digital world, and will be showcasing at convention that members can now pay their membership renewal dues online. It’s all about empowerment and convenience!

Our ALA Call to Service Corps AmeriCorps/VISTA Consortium, now in its sixth year, has eclipsed \$4.3 million in grants to ALA NHQ from the Corporation for National Community Service, resulting in 250 VISTAs placed at ALA NHQ, 12 departments, a unit, a Legion department, plus 41 external Consortium organizations. One organization we helped, Americans for the Arts, presented the ALA its prestigious AFTA Award recognizing our sustaining support of art therapy for veterans. As the broker of these resources, we’ve greatly expanded national awareness about the ALA – who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

ALA NHQ is fully committed, soulfully and professionally, to ensuring the success of the Centennial Strategic Plan; resourcing the Plan’s strategies requires investing in ourselves from our reserve funds and looking at the adequacy of our dues structure. Attaining Goal 1 of a million members by 2020 will happen if we succeed with the other four goals. We must improve organizational effectiveness by strengthening the ALA and developing leadership at all levels (Goals 4 and 3); presentations on “Bylaws as the Framework for Civility” and “Fiduciary Stewardship,” plus the first-ever Department Secretary Organizational Effectiveness Training at ALA NHQ, were goal-centered successes.

We must foster an internal culture of goodwill (Goal 2) if we are to be around for future generations. Members will renew only if they find personal fulfillment in belonging or because they are so proud of what they see the organization doing that they want to financially support it. Goodwill is the key to success.

Treasurer
Marta Hedding, Indiana

It's now been four years since the \$4 senior member (adult) dues increase was adopted, and three years since it took effect. The organization's FY13 and FY14 budgets were the first truly balanced budgets in a decade. But, as our external auditor predicted, the dues increase was just a temporary fix; both the FY15 adopted budget and FY16 budget proposal project deficits.

In FY12, dues covered just 53 percent of member and program services. In FY13, after the increase went into effect, dues still covered only 66 percent of member and program services. In FY14, dues covered 63 percent of member services. In FY15, dues represented just 68 percent of total income; for FY16, they are projected to be just 58 percent. Over the decades, membership steadily declined, and dues amounts have not been a factor.

The minimum cost to operate and deliver current NHQ services will be the same whether we serve 250,000 or a million members. So, looking ahead, we need to do one of two things pretty quickly:

Immediately reverse the membership decline: Membership is 22,000 behind this time last year. We can cover the projected FY16 deficit with dues from 54,000 additional adult members.

Begin raising dues in smaller increments to keep ahead of increased costs and the trend of declining membership: Our external auditor has advised we need to do just that. We cannot allow ourselves to get into the same situation as four years ago – going 17 years without adjusting dues. We need to fulfill our fiduciary responsibility and adjust our dues structure so that each year we can sufficiently fund our budgets annually adopted.

The ALA Centennial Strategic Plan is all about where we must be by 2020 to sustain our mission. With the cost of national meetings and events rising some 15 percent per year, nearing \$2 million annually, and more members wanting “online, on-demand resources,” we must look at more cost-effective ways to engage and support members.

National events are costly. Junior member dues hardly cover the cost of a national Juniors meeting, let alone the cost of other Junior activities. Fewer than 60 girls participate; that's nearly \$1,000 per girl attending. Reallocating that expense to present five divisional meetings will engage and benefit more Junior members, and growing Junior membership is a good and doable way to attain a million members! The Washington DC Conference costs the national organization more than \$1,000 per the fewer than 200 attending. As our growth in website traffic attests, we can utilize online resources and learning tools to engage and inform more members from all generations.

Everything in the Centennial Plan requires technology in some way. We have vastly improved technical capabilities the past five years and continue our digital drive in ways that benefit more members. The ALA Management Information System (ALAMIS) serves an ever-growing number of users at the department, district, and unit level, now more than 800 unit users. The new Members Only section on the website, tied to ALAMIS, launched last year, along with the responsive website for smartphone and tablet users. The latest: Members can now pay their renewal dues online! (Yes, our goal is that eventually new members will be able to join online too...down the road!) ALAMIS is supported by a 2.5-person NHQ information technology team, and the website is a one-person shop – pretty remarkable.

This leap in technical functionality has enabled us to be more efficient and cost-effective in many ways. We can do more with technology to save time and resources for the entire organization, and provide an improved experience for our members!

American Legion Auxiliary Foundation
Linda Boone, Oregon, Board of Directors President

The American Legion Auxiliary mission is great, and after more than a decade into the War on Terror, the needs of those we serve have never been greater. Auxiliary members selflessly donate more than 8 million volunteer hours each year. That is amazing devotion. Unfortunately, our good deeds alone do not fund the programs needed to serve our veterans and their families. The Auxiliary needs money too. While member dues are critically important, they do not cover the day-to-day expenses, let alone provide for our future. Investing in our future is essential for the organization to be here for another generation. Now in its eighth year, the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation is ensuring the Auxiliary's mission of service endures.

It has been a busy year kicking off some new fundraising efforts as well as continuing to enhance and support some of our old ones:

The ALAF Veteran Projects Fund grants were highlighted by our national president during her travels to departments.

The beautiful wall calendar direct mail piece was sent to known donors.

Information about our matching gifts program is now online.

By shopping on AmazonSmile, your purchases will now generate a 0.5 percent donation to the ALA Foundation.

Planned giving opportunities continue to be promoted via Auxiliary magazine, eNewsletters, websites, and national meetings.

Grants provided this year, made possible by our generous donors, supported varying needs of our veterans and military.

The ALAF Veteran Projects Fund was generously supported by our donors, allowing us to award the following grants:

Department of South Carolina – computer stations for the Veterans Reintegration House: \$1,841

Department of Kansas - Laptop for music therapy for veterans at Colmery-O'Neil VA Medical Center: \$450

Billy Peterson Unit 165 in Connecticut – Amazon gifts cards for 2014-2015 National President Janet Jefford to distribute to troops in Far East and Europe: \$2,700

The ALA Foundation was also able to award the following Veterans Creative Arts Festival grant:

Department of New York - Syracuse VA Medical Center: \$850

By using the Foundation's 501(c)(3) status, we were able to aid the following departments with a sub-grant:

Department of Rhode Island – ALA Little Rhody Girls State: \$3,000

Department of Montana – ALA Montana Girls State: \$250

While we continue to award grants for emergent needs, we also are fundraising to build our endowment fund. The endowment fund continues to earn interest, allowing us to grant the earned monies back to the programs supported by the ALA. During FY14, we were able to grant approximately \$9,000 to put toward the education and experience of the young women who attended ALA Girls Nation.

This year has been busy with the continued development of the ALA Foundation's Board of Directors, progression of our grants, and growth of the endowment fund. We have made significant strides, and, with your help, we can continue to mature and ultimately ensure the American Legion Auxiliary's mission of service endures.

Check out www.ALAFoundation.org to learn how you can contribute, apply for a grant, or read about those we serve.

Chaplain
Karen Boehler, Colorado

God is good! It was a pleasure to receive reports from 40 department chaplains, who shared significant work being done to the glory of God and on behalf of our mission. Working with TAL and SAL, we have embraced “Operation: Back to God.” From one department report: “We must... be firm in support of our beliefs... or we will lose our freedoms.” Only through faith in Him will our country prosper and we be saved. Highlights of the year:

FAITH

Prayed without ceasing! Prayers were offered at meetings, conferences, and conventions, Memorial Day/Veterans Day/POW and MIA remembrances. The ALA’s memorial service was used at funerals of members. Chaplains conducted memorial services for members, draping the charter in their honor. Reflections was used frequently by our chaplains.

Reminded pastors/congregants to keep the military in their prayers. Photos of military projected on screen during patriotic weeks.

Four Chaplains service frequently presented.

Actively taught and served within faith communities, units/departments, cities.

FAMILY

Sent thousands of Grace cards, notes, letters, made phone calls, visited at nursing homes, veterans homes, hospitals, Fisher Houses, national cemeteries. Handmade wooden crosses were distributed.

Prepared prayer books for department presidents and sent submissions for the National President’s Prayer Book.

Met and cared for Gold Star families.

Developed genuine friendships while ministering to others.

Department chaplains trained unit chaplains at conference/convention.

Presented at local schools.

FREEDOM

Eight department chaplains attended the Chaplains Conference in Indianapolis in October 2014.

Six new department chaplain Facebook sites went online; the American Legion Auxiliary Chaplains Facebook group now has more than 1,000 members.

Contributed financially to ALA Girls State, Child Welfare Foundation, Auxiliary Emergency Fund.

Scholarship funds, Chapel of the Four Chaplains, Wreaths Across America, national cemeteries.

Chaplains officiated at multiple patriotic celebrations, as well as placing wreaths/flags on veterans’ graves for patriotic holidays and Christmas, 9/11 candlelight ceremonies, POW/MIA services.

Bibles/devotionals/prayers from children included in care packages mailed to troops.

Data

Reports received from department chaplains 40

Deaths reported (from 11 departments!) 2,359

Cards mailed 7994

Hospital/nursing home visits 4701

Dollars donated.....\$108,801

Hours 35,038

Funeral attendance 5,955

Prayers/phone conversations.....Countless

Thank you for allowing me this life-changing opportunity to serve as national chaplain. I received far more than I gave. The relationships formed, and the genuine admiration I have for our chaplains at all levels, will remain with me always. Writing

Reflections has been a great joy. I utilized the goals of our national Centennial Strategic Plan to focus on God's work in our lives and our organization. I wrote from the heart, prayerfully reflecting on my words and with the hope that many members would be touched by those God-inspired messages. Stephanie Holloway, thank you for being such a wonderful resource! Yes, indeed...God is good, all the time!

Historian
Lorraine "Rani" Gray, Vermont

National President Janet Jefford's theme, Celebrating Faith, Family, and Freedom, truly states who we are, what we do, why we do it, and why we continue to do it. National President Janet has had the opportunity to spread the goodwill of our American Legion Family with National Commander Michael D. Helm and National Sons of The American Legion Mike Moss throughout our great nation. She traveled from sea to shining sea, sharing what it's like to be a member of this great organization.

National Vice President Sharon Conatser has been hard at work preparing for her term. The five national division vice presidents have traveled to many states and represented our organization well by creating a closer cooperation with all departments.

Our 2014-2019 Centennial Strategic Plan was put into effect with the expected outcome that by 2019, the American Legion Auxiliary's million members will be making a difference for veterans and their families in every neighborhood. Many states have developed and implemented a five-year strategic plan.

In October 2014, the American Legion Auxiliary was honored by the Americans for the Arts with the Outstanding Contribution to the Arts Award for the Auxiliary's important work in helping veterans heal through the arts, most notably through the ALA's co-sponsorship of the annual National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

Mission Trainings were held in Massachusetts, Ohio, and Nevada. In-depth training on key topics such as governance, leadership development, membership and fostering goodwill, team-building and more were offered in many states with training by national chairmen.

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival received 3,208 local entries from 129 VA facilities. More than 150 gold medal winners were invited to the NVCAF in Milwaukee to showcase their entries.

We joined fellow members of The American Legion Family at the Washington DC Conference, where we learned about veterans' needs and the legislative priorities of The American Legion. We visited Capitol Hill to encourage our country's lawmakers to pass legislation that protects veterans' rights and provides for their needs. National President Janet honored The Home Depot Foundation with the Auxiliary's Public Spirit Award for positively impacting communities through service to our military.

Junior members held conferences, conventions, and training workshops. The Juniors in Nebraska supported their Honorary Junior President's Taylor Made for Veterans project by collecting items for Victory Apartments, which serve 80 homeless veterans. Juniors in Puerto Rico helped organize and clean beaches. Juniors in New Hampshire made headbands and hair ornaments with the Auxiliary emblem. Several states said their Juniors were working on the Veterans History Project. Wisconsin holds a Junior Boot Camp where Juniors have to earn boot camp shirts, dog tags, and MREs for their lunch.

Many states picked up on Delaware's "Buddy Basket" program and Florida's "Project Suds." Many departments have other programs such as Washington's "Teddy Bears for Retsil" and Virginia's "Wrapped in Love." ALA Christmas Gift Shops, Veterans in the Classroom, stand downs, bowl-a-thons, Hometown Heroes, Education Week, Wreaths Across America, parades of checks, flash mobs, and Poppy Days took place in large numbers.

Our members have met the American Legion Auxiliary mission to honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of our veterans, military, and their families, both

at home and abroad. For God and Country, we have advocated for veterans, educated our citizens, mentored youth, and promoted patriotism, good citizenship, peace, and security.

**Central Division National Vice President
Laura Mosby, Missouri**

Central Division, you rock!

The people who make up The American Legion Family's Central Division are truly working our mission. During my travels to different states, I saw firsthand the dedication and love our Auxiliary members have for the veterans we serve. Thank you to everyone for your wonderful hospitality during my visits.

In Wisconsin, while more than 30 Junior members were busy with a "boot camp" during the Fall Information Forum, senior members attended mini-workshops on each of the programs. In March, District 9 Leadership held a Report Writing Workshop, which was well attended by members of different districts as well. There should be no shortage of reports from Wisconsin this year!

West Virginia members had more than 1,450 volunteer hours as of May 1, 2015. The department raised \$3,240 for President Paula's special project, "Operation Comfort Warriors." A new member kit was designed by the department secretary and was given to all units that attended the membership workshop in the fall. Special prayers to President Paula for a speedy recovery.

Freedom Unit 183 in District 1, Ohio, took six busloads of sixth-graders to the local cemeteries on Memorial Day. The children placed a flower and the appropriate flag on each of the deceased members of The American Legion Family. They enjoyed pizza and ice cream at Post 183 after visiting more than 300 graves -- a great way to promote Americanism and honor our veterans!

The American Legion Family in Missouri is working hand in hand to promote and obtain new membership. The department American Legion offered President Anita the use of half-page in the center of four issues of their state paper to help promote membership through the spouses or daughters of Legion members.

Michigan is busy working membership and making a difference for veterans. Detroit honored 16 Vietnam veterans during a parade in November. The seven VA hospital gift shops were well attended by smiling veterans and full of great items donated by Auxiliary members or purchased with donations.

Kansas held a leadership workshop attended by many members. President Tonia attended the "Turkey Run" at Fort Riley and assisted in giving the fixings for a Thanksgiving dinner to wounded active-duty, veterans, and their families.

President Diana has been busy promoting The American Legion Family in Iowa. The mid-winter conference had many new quilters attending "Basic Quilting 101." President Diana was able to participate in three Quilts of Valor ceremonies, one of which was presented to a World War II POW.

President Lisa of Indiana had homeless veterans as one of her special projects this year. The department was able to collect more than \$12,000 for the project! Way to go!

President Ann has been busy traveling throughout Illinois, raising money for her projects: the Auxiliary Emergency Fund and the Fisher Houses at Hines and Jefferson Barracks. Between her projects and attending the various functions, she has been one busy president!

**Eastern Division National Vice President
Sandra Neylon, New Hampshire**

American Legion Auxiliary members throughout the Eastern Division made a difference in the lives of our veterans, military, and their families.

Departments across the division reported that work continues on their Centennial Plans. Many units have developed long-range strategic plan and started on their implementation.

Mission Training was held in Springfield, Mass., in November 2014. More than 100 members attended. The women of the Eastern Division are enthusiastic and supportive of the training and have expressed the feeling that the weekend of learning and networking with other members is a worthwhile activity.

Mission-related activities enriching the lives of our veterans and military families stood out in reports. I'm proud to share the following information with you:

Maine supported activities at all six of its veterans homes, donating enough gifts for 96 veterans to give 240 gifts to family members. Operation: Military Kids camps were given games, medical supplies, and pillowcases, and 100 toiletry bags were prepared for its annual stand-down.

District of Columbia volunteers greeted Honor Flights and veterans at the WWII and Korean War Memorials. They also joined with the Vietnam Veterans of America to wash the Vietnam Memorial Wall.

Massachusetts started its own Project Suds to get clean clothes for homeless veterans. Department President Linda Ward presented a check for \$10,000 to a Massachusetts veteran who was setting up an art program to assist veterans with PTSD.

New Hampshire members donated hundreds of hours to bingo, job fairs, 9/11 memorial services, POW/MIA vigils, holiday dinners and gift shops. The long, cold winter allows for clipping coupons and making quilts and lap robes for veterans at VAMCs and veterans homes.

For the 11th year, Delaware's "Stockings for Soldiers" project sent socks and gifts to deployed soldiers. In addition, units sponsored stand downs and job fairs, clipped coupons, made pocket flags, and supported Toys for Tots.

Maryland members visited patients at four VA facilities in the department. Included in the many visits: luncheons and ice cream socials at the Maryland Center for Veterans and Education Center.

New York members increased their volunteer time with VAMC visits, job fairs, Buddy Baskets, and gift shop programs. One unit donated \$5,000 to the Wounded Warrior project.

New Jersey members hosted weekly coffee hours, bingo, movie nights, and ice cream socials at six veteran facilities. The department also supported the Veterans Creative Arts Festival at Lyons VAMC.

Pennsylvania's American Legion Family toured their veterans home and hospitals and got to see firsthand the joy their visits bring to patients.

Rhode Island joined The American Legion Riders and Combat Riders to sponsor a bike run/pig roast benefiting "Homes for Our Troops." Members honored those who made the ultimate sacrifice at the "Wreaths Across America" tribute.

Vermont members helped buy new mattresses for a transitional housing unit for homeless veterans and members of the Auxiliary's VA&R Committee helped White River Junction VAMC host their Creative Arts Festival.

Connecticut members provide support for activities at Rocky Hill VAMC and Domicile as well as West Haven VA and the Newington VA facility.

It has been a privilege to serve as Eastern Division national vice president this year. Your dedication to the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary touches so many lives.

**Northwestern Division National Vice President
Lori Skallerud, Minnesota**

As I visited the departments of the division, I was so impressed by members' enthusiasm. Each of the departments worked diligently on the Centennial Strategic Plan

and membership. It also was obvious that they were keeping the national president's theme of Faith, Family, and Freedom in their programs and activities.

I first visited Wyoming in mid-September for its fall meeting held at Buffalo. It was an honor to be among four of their past Northwestern Division national vice presidents. All of Wyoming's poppies are made by six veterans in the state.

Minnesota invited me as a special guest to its fall conference held at Shooting Star Casino in Mahanomen. I addressed the conference session on the strategic plan and offered them information on planned giving and the ALA Foundation. I was invited to participate in the state's Friday night reception and Grand March as a distinguished guest.

Colorado Springs, Colo., was the setting for my January visit to members of Colorado. While there, I spoke to their joint sessions about our strategic plan. Later, the Auxiliary had breakout sessions to cover specific parts of the strategic plan. The Auxiliary hosted a luncheon honoring their past presidents, past Northwestern Division national vice presidents, and made it an exciting celebration including their membership accomplishments. During my visit there, I attended a troop induction ceremony and a "USO Show and Dance."

February took me to South Dakota for its department mid-winter conference. It was impressive to see the program fair displayed in the main hallway of the facility. I spoke about the strategic plan and the ALA Foundation. Their program was jam-packed with speakers, joint sessions, and a banquet.

The end of February was the Washington DC conference and NEC meeting. We gave our mid-year reports and did our part on Capitol Hill.

In June, I visited Nebraska. While there, I was honored to visit the beautiful and historic VA clinic in Lincoln. I also took part in ALA Girls State at the University of Nebraska. I addressed the Girls State citizens and took part in their visit to the state capitol for inauguration.

I did not have the opportunity to visit Montana, but I know they are working hard on their programs and membership.

North Dakota invited me to its department convention; however, I was unable to attend. They have been working hard and reported to me more than 94,000 hours of volunteering.

This is only a snippet of a wonderful experience. I am so proud of our Northwestern Division for the dedication they have shown in keeping the American Legion Auxiliary in the public eye by showing in the spirit of goodwill who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

Thank you for hospitalities shown to me during my travels, and keep up the good work. Together, we have helped National President Janet celebrate Faith, Family, and Freedom.

Southern Division National Vice President Susan Heil, Oklahoma

This year, departments across the Southern Division displayed their southern spirit as they celebrated faith, family, and freedom. I used a megaphone as my logo for this year, and the theme was Serving Our Veterans with Southern Spirit! The original intent of the megaphone was to make our voices louder — to broadcast and share what we are doing for our veterans.

Members were urged to be visible — to ring their bell — to share their stories in newspapers, bulletins, newsletters, and in social media. The Southern Division Facebook Group allowed members to share information and accomplishments with each other. The six membership "Virtual Happy Hours" provided an opportunity for members to post pictures and messages during a specified hour about their membership progress. Each Virtual Happy Hour had a different theme. Through pictures of members in red, white, and

blue or decked out in green or in their Easter egg finery, they celebrated recruiting new members, starting new units, and sending in renewals.

Using the megaphone for inspiration, several departments showed their southern spirit by writing chants to liven up their conferences. And the appearance of M&Ms at conventions helped remind members of the goal of attaining a million members. If each member recruited just one member — one in a million — we would exceed our goal in a big way!

With great enthusiasm, Southern Division members prepared themselves so they could better work the Auxiliary's mission. They attended national training workshops as well as prepared and presented training sessions in their own departments. One department even held a "family workshop" for members of The American Legion and Sons of The American Legion to inform them about the programs in the Auxiliary. This helped create a better-informed Legion Family.

As I visited with departments, I reminded our members what National President Janet said in Charlotte at the 2014 National Convention: "We know that membership is an exclusive privilege based on our personal family relationship to a wartime veteran." As members, we do share a common feeling — the love of veterans — and that is what makes us a family. And as a family, we enjoy the camaraderie and fun as we serve these veterans.

Throughout the year, I enjoyed camaraderie with departments in the Southern Division. In one department, I participated in its Faith, Family, and Freedom 5K Walk to raise funds for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. In another, I helped fold pocket flags for deploying National Guard troops. I also had the pleasure of talking with many Past Department Presidents at luncheons and breakfasts. It is important that past leaders remain involved so they can help train future leaders. I was "arrested and put in jail" in one department for being blond. I didn't mind, though, since my friends paid bail, and the funds went to support their programs.

As I reflect on the past year, I am so proud of the work done in these 14 departments. I am thankful for the opportunity to meet so many dedicated members devoted to serving our heroes — our veterans!

Western Division National Vice President Susan Diaz, Alaska

It has been a great honor serving as Western Division national vice president and a privilege to visit those states and see examples of their devotion to our veterans, their families, communities, and our children. Each department has a unique way of carrying out American Legion Auxiliary programs with monumental success.

Alaska continued to serve veterans in a variety of ways such as community service through two Honor Flights, volunteering at the domiciliaries' Christmas gift shops, and providing transportation to veterans. Gift baskets were given to veterans who became new moms, and Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets were given to veterans who did not have a place to eat. Members were a strong voice in the legislature, promoting veterans' rights at all levels.

Arizona was asked to promote a new pilot program called the Women's Homeless Veterans Back Pack Program. We are watching, Arizona, and upon successful completion of the program, we hope to see it spread throughout the United States. In addition, Arizona put in countless hours in women's veterans homeless shelters, participating in Honor Flights, Operation: Military Kids, the Creative Arts Festival, and clipping coupons.

California honored four Rosie the Riveters for their exemplary dedication to our country during a time of war, leaving their homes and going to factories to help our veterans in time of need. It was a gift to watch them be honored. California has been running No. 1 in recruitment of women veterans in the 2015 membership year. Congratulations, California! Unit members donated to Operation Comfort Warriors and the Creative Arts Festival, and they hosted stand downs and continued to work in homeless outreach. They

also visited VA hospitals and nursing homes. Christmas parties were held, and veterans and deployed servicemembers were given pocket flags.

Hawaii's members were very dedicated in supporting our great organization by promoting Service Not Self and providing services to all veterans.

I will be visiting Idaho in the next few weeks, but I am aware of their strong commitment to The American Legion Family and Auxiliary and our programs.

With great enthusiasm and devotion, Nevada continued to work Auxiliary programs as well as membership.

New Mexico was dedicated to continuing its work throughout the state, providing services to veterans in promoting Service Not Self.

Oregon was highly involved with the Portland VA Medical Center Kidney Transplant Unit. Members worked diligently with the center to provide items needed by the sponsors staying with a veteran. Oregon opened a VA Assisted Living Facility for veterans. Members assisted in providing supplies to veterans and their spouses in the neighborhood setting. Oregon promoted the mission, working hand in hand with the Department of Oregon Legion Family. Teamwork!

Utah invited me to attend its ALA Girls State Program at Weber State University. More than 300 girls attended. The university provided more than \$1 million in scholarships for the girls should they choose to attend Weber State University. What an awe-inspiring sight to see so many young people enthusiastic about our government, veterans, and our organization. Congratulations, Utah, for inspiring the next generation of up-and-coming Auxiliary members.

Washington is working hard to keep the interest and participation of their members.

It has been a productive year for the Western Division. I appreciate the dedication and devotion I have seen across the division. My heartfelt thanks go to all of you for the memories and friendships that I will hold dear for the rest of my life. You are all phenomenal women. God bless you all, and God bless America.

Americanism Committee
Kathy Daudistel, Kentucky, Chairman

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America!

A simple pledge, yet a powerful oath, that reminds every American citizen of the duties and obligations to our country. As children, we recited these words in school, and as we grew up, we learned the value of the words. Today, our children are not learning this in school, so it is Auxiliary members' responsibility to educate them. This mission fits right in to our Americanism Program, and members have fully embraced the mission.

The most reported project is flag education. Units worked with local schools to present programs for students. They used coloring sheets, flag education DVDs and even comic books designed specifically for the purpose. One member in Louisiana designed a coloring book on flag etiquette in memory of her father, a WWII veteran. The coloring books were used throughout the department and are very popular with the children. Several units engaged the children by dressing up like historical figures such as Betsy Ross and Uncle Sam. In the Department of Maine, puppets were used to teach the younger children.

Flag Education doesn't stop at the schools. Units also educated the community by distributing flag etiquette brochures, hosting flag disposal ceremonies, presenting certificates to businesses that display flags and replacing worn-out flags with new flags. Smaller flags were purchased by units, and members passed them out to children in the schools and people on parade routes. Members also realized that sometimes disrespect of a flag might be a lack of knowledge of flag etiquette. To address this, they designed banners to remind people to remove their hats and to salute the flag when it passes by. During parades, they carried the banners in front of the flags and reported that communities responded favorably.

Units also supported the Get Out to Vote initiative by hosting candidate nights, working the polls, and offering rides to those who needed them. Members were very good at contacting state and local representatives on important issues such as the flag amendment.

The Departments of Maryland and California partnered with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service to welcome more than 500 new citizens from 63 different countries. Each new citizen was presented with a poppy corsage or welcome bag, flag, and brochure that included flag etiquette.

The Pocket Flag Project is still going strong. Units reported assembling more than 45,000 pocket flags and distributing them to military personnel. They found this to be an easy project, especially for children. It helps to teach proper flag folding and is a way to open up a conversation, not only about the flag and its origin, but also about our military personnel and what the flag means to them.

Another way of opening a conversation with children is the Americanism Essay Contest. The theme this year was What does freedom mean to my family? Units used school contacts to encourage participation in the contest. Some teachers used the essay topic as a lesson plan and discussed the price of freedom in their classes. Units awarded certificates, scholarships, gift cards and even cash prizes for the winning entries. Some units hosted events to honor winners, and the children read their essays to the attendees. Other units attended local honor night ceremonies to present awards to winners. Members reported the essays they received were all outstanding and very hard to judge. They were confident that our children are learning from this contest and that our future is in capable hands.

The Departments of Indiana and Virginia promoted patriotic coloring contests for children in preschool through second grade since they were not eligible to participate in the Essay Contest.

Members do take the pledge to our flag and country seriously and are committed to the mission. This is evidenced by 100 percent of departments reporting and by the fantastic things accomplished.

Auxiliary Emergency Fund Committee Brenda Collins, South Carolina, Chairman

The American Legion Auxiliary Emergency Fund (AEF) was established in 1969 with a bequest from the estate of Auxiliary member Helen Colby Small of Burlington, Wis. It continues today solely through generous donations from Auxiliary members.

The AEF, a grant assistance program, provides temporary emergency assistance to eligible members of the Auxiliary who have suffered a financial setback as the result of an act of nature or other personal crisis.

This year, devastating storms hit many areas of our country. The Northeast had record-breaking snowstorms that lasted much longer than the regular winter season. Residents of the South and Midwest were deluged with rain, flooding, hail, and tornadoes. Meanwhile, the Western region encountered droughts and fires. As a result, many Auxiliary members experienced or witnessed property damage and lives lost.

Other Auxiliary members have suffered through the deaths of their spouse or divorce. Some have had to return to school to enhance their education to re-enter the workforce.

Auxiliary members have stepped up to give back. Texas, which was hit by devastating floods in May, gave back over \$12,000 to the AEF. To help in raising funds, the state's department raffled off a guitar clock.

The Minnesota Department held its annual silent auction at the fall conference this year, raising more than \$11,900 to donate to the program.

Pennsylvania's Department Chairman Kim challenged members to donate \$1 each. She also sold candy bars to bring state's total up to more than \$10,000 donated to AEF.

This year, we were able to start an AEF Facebook page to help raise awareness about the program and to keep members informed about weather alerts in different areas of our great country. We would love to have our members join the AEF Facebook page, and stay informed about the many ways our organization is helping members.

We want to make sure all members know that, along with the regular long form, which is the American Legion Auxiliary Emergency Fund Application for Assistance, a short form may be used to apply for a disaster grant. It is the American Legion Auxiliary Emergency Fund Expedited Application for Disaster Victims Seeking Temporary Shelter Assistance.

As stated on the Auxiliary website, “No matter the size of any individual donation, collectively, every gift adds up to helping ensure the Auxiliary is here for generations to come. You can establish your legacy of belief in the Auxiliary when you include the Auxiliary in your estate plans and other financial preparations — otherwise known as planned giving.”

Please consider adding a legacy gift to the AEF to your Last Will and Testament. If every Auxiliary member were to leave \$100, the AEF would receive more than \$7 million. Additional information about donating to the fund may be found at www.ALAforVeterans.org.

One of our jobs as Auxiliary members is to stay informed of the help that is available to us through the ALA.

We may not have a need for the Auxiliary Emergency Fund at this time, but we should donate – and donate often – to make certain the fund is still there if we should find ourselves in need.

Cavalcade Of Memories Committee Cathi Taylor, Indiana, Chairman

Roman philosopher and statesman Marcus Cicero once wrote, “History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illumines reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life and brings us tidings of antiquity.” The same can be said of the Auxiliary’s history. Through a collection of documents, books, photos, and artifacts, it tells the story of our work for our nation’s military, veterans, and their families, and reveals how we celebrate Faith, Family, and Freedom while serving our members as a resource upon which to build.

Our units understand the importance of collecting their history. The Departments of Missouri and North Carolina both reported that a handful of units recently started collecting items from members so they may create their own Cavalcade of Memories. While our members are our main source of items, units are learning that items may be found in the most unlikely places. The Brown Mabry Unit 153 of Missouri displays a photo of the department’s 1953 convention, a gem donated by the family of a deceased veteran. North Carolina’s Harold B. Jarrett Unit 342 was able to save unit scrapbooks from the 1970s, which were discovered at an estate sale. So, leave no stone unturned!

We found that some units took action in sharing their histories with everyone. Department of Idaho Unit 82 found a good spot – in the post hall, which just happens to also serve as a restaurant. Hayesville Unit 532 of North Carolina has placed its Cavalcade in the town’s Veterans Room located in a building dedicated to all veterans’ organizations. A number of Wisconsin’s units have partnered with local libraries, museums, and historical societies to display their collections. Ashton Unit 89 of Idaho made a display for a local store front, commemorating the 100th anniversary of WWI. The Department of Maine went a slightly different route, borrowing Auxiliary capes and hats from its members which were then donned by department officers during their department convention.

Hours upon hours have been poured into preserving our history. Some units do not have a Cavalcade chairman, so the work is completed by all of their members. Display cases have been purchased, as in Texas, and others donated. While most of the work goes

into preserving the items, arranging displays or finding items, time must also be used to raise funds. Department of Kansas came up with its own poppy bracelets that helped raise \$234 for its Cavalcade!

While the year is coming to an end, our work never ends because the history continues to be made. Whether it is the annual Memorial Day service, a patriotic quilt, an annual vegetable soup supper, or providing the community Thanksgiving Dinner, it is history – the American Legion Auxiliary's history. It is the history of a community based organization that brings faith, hope, and healing to everyone.

Last September, a Princeton University doctoral student came to ALA National Headquarters to research the acceptance of WWII veterans and their families into the Legion and Auxiliary. Upon his departure, Olivier reminded me that the Auxiliary has a very long and fascinating history that needs to be told. He is absolutely correct. Will you join us in collecting, preserving, and sharing that history so we may continue to celebrate?

Liaison To Child Welfare Foundation Committee
Linda Newsome, Maryland, Chairman

In 1954, The American Legion endorsed the separate incorporation of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation (CWF). Since then, the foundation has granted more than \$13.7 million to nonprofit youth-oriented organizations.

At its annual meeting in October 2014, the board of directors approved \$566,691 in grants to 18 nonprofit organizations for projects to be completed in calendar year 2015:

Angel Flight West of Santa Monica, Calif., was awarded \$10,000 for their project, "Promoting Fly-Anthropy – the charitable use of aviation to help children in need."

Beads of Courage Inc. of Tucson was awarded \$40,000 for their project, "Beads of Courage." The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion sponsor this grant.

Birth Defect Research for Children of Orlando was awarded \$22,650 to redesign the organizational website and advertise available resources to families and medical professionals. The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors this grant.

Children's Cardiomyopathy Foundation of Tenafly, N.J., was awarded \$25,400 to produce a 7-minute video to answer genetic testing questions as it relates to Pediatric Cardiomyopathy." The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors this grant.

Children's Craniofacial Association of Dallas was awarded \$10,000 to provide educators with resources to teach children anti-bullying and kind behavior toward those afflicted with craniofacial issues. The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors this grant.

Children's Institute Inc. of Rochester, N.Y., was awarded \$7,580 to produce an instructional DVD to educate Boys and Girls Club staff on the needs of military children. The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion sponsor this grant.

Children's Organ Transplant Association of Bloomington, Ind., was awarded \$43,595 to fund an informational campaign to connect Reserve and National Guard COTA families to Legion posts that support COTA. The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion sponsor this grant.

CureSearch for Children's Cancer of Bethesda, Md., was awarded \$31,500 to produce and distribute videos on staying healthy while receiving medical treatment. The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion sponsor this grant.

Diabetes Education & Camping Association of Florence, Ala., was awarded \$39,640 to fund a mobile application and software for health data management. The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors this grant.

JAYC Foundation Inc. of Santa Rosa, Calif., was awarded \$50,540 for their project, "Creating Protected Spaces." This grant will provide comprehensive education between families, mental health professionals, and law enforcement agencies through booklets and videos.

Marfan Foundation of Port Washington, N.Y., was awarded \$30,000 to develop an informational toolkits for parents of children with Marfan Syndrome. The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion sponsor this grant.

Mercy Flight Southeast of Leesburg, Fla., was awarded \$21,761 to advertise medical transportation services offered by the organization for public awareness and pilot recruitment.

Mercy Medical Angels of Virginia Beach, Va., was awarded \$44,000 to update and disseminate information on the organization's child health program. The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion sponsor this grant.

National Autism Association of Attleboro Falls, Mass., was awarded \$58,075 to continue their Big Red Safety Box program that addresses dangerous wandering incidents. The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion sponsor this grant.

Our Military Kids of McLean, Va., was awarded \$31,350 to enhance outreach and marketing efforts of the organization. The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion sponsor this grant.

Spina Bifida Association of Arlington, Va., was awarded \$25,000 to underwrite the printing of "Another Way to Go," a publication that teaches children about catheter care. The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors this grant.

The American Legion of Indianapolis was awarded \$55,500 to provide academic scholarships to the top youth participants of the organization's national youth programs. The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors this grant.

United States Association of Blind Athletes of Colorado Springs was awarded \$20,000 to expand the number of sports offered on Mobile Coach to assist blind youth athletes compete. The Sons of The American Legion sponsor this grant.

Members of The American Legion Family are the primary contributors to the success and growth of the Child Welfare Foundation. Your support allows CWF to continue funding projects that improve the quality of life for our nation's children.

Children & Youth Committee **Diane Duscheck, Wisconsin, Chairman**

Children and youth have felt the embrace of the American Legion Auxiliary as members recognized outstanding youth, worked to meet the needs of children and keep them safe, and gave them an appreciation of our great country through the Children & Youth Program.

There are many outstanding, selfless youth in our communities who were recognized with Good Deed Awards and Youth Hero Awards. Good Deed Award recognitions were presented to youngsters who went out of their way to shovel snow for elderly community members who were complete strangers, to a young lady who formed a foundation providing iPod Touches to hospitalized children battling severe diseases so they can use the technology during treatments and hospital stays, and to a group of seven young men who organized the relocation of seniors and disabled persons from a government housing project that was being renovated. Youth Heroes have saved children from drowning and helped neighbors escape home fires. To all the Youth Heroes and Good Deed Award champions, thank you for a job well done. The example you set in your communities is priceless.

Both grade school and high school children learned the history of the United States through "Star Spangled Kids." The values of patriotism and Americanism inspired servicemembers to defend the ideals of the U.S. Constitution for countless generations. Auxiliary members and veterans teamed together to share what it actually means to be a veteran, how a veteran's service to our country is related to the Constitution, and that through their dedicated patriotism, students can show their gratitude and respect for servicemembers who protected our freedoms and made living conditions better for people

in many countries. Auxiliary members taught the National Anthem to third-graders, helped kindergarten children practice the Pledge of Allegiance, and chanted the Bill of Rights Rap.

The long-reaching arms of the American Legion Auxiliary embraced military families and their special needs. Young children with deploying parents were comforted by GI Josh. The Josh dog moved into individual homes and daycares and traveled overseas to wherever children needed to be uplifted. “Kids of Deployed Are Heroes 2” buttons and gatherings also recognized the sacrifice of military children.

Auxiliary members were busy with the needs of children in their own neighborhoods. Child safety is so important that members partnered with local police to fingerprint children and create identification kits for parents. Stuffed animals were collected for police departments so the soft toys could be given to children encountered on police calls. Safety in schools was addressed as members helped spread the word on bullying, suicide prevention, and drug education.

At the holidays, members are especially cognizant of the activities that bring smiles to children’s faces: baskets of nutritious foods and desserts, filled Christmas stockings and Easter eggs, and presents, of course. Many other items were also collected for youth: coats, mittens, and scarves; pajamas and blankets; prom dresses, suits and tuxedos; and toys and shoes. In today’s economy, there are many hungry children in the schools. Partnering with United Way or Weekend Buddy Program, groceries and snacks were collected for children who otherwise would not have sufficient food for the weekend when they were not able to enjoy the free meals served in the school cafeteria.

Special community situations called for special solutions. An alternative school received donated items to help set up a nursery so young mothers who were still in school could be closer to their babies. Fifty-dollar Kmart gift cards were donated to children who needed new backpacks and school supplies after a disastrous fire burned 43 homes. Yet in another department, six autistic children received rescued and trained dogs to help them cope with their autism.

Through the ALA’s Children & Youth program, members reached into their communities to touch children and families, making neighborhoods better and keeping children safer.

Community Service Committee Coral May Grout, Massachusetts, Chairman

The 2014-2015 Auxiliary year began with several changes to the Community Service Program. Our units responded to the changes with much enthusiasm! While we continued our efforts toward community services to our veterans, military, and families, we also provided services to our communities as a whole. The American Legion Family has always been a focal point within each of our communities, and this year, members of The American Legion Family helped inform people in towns and cities across our land about who we are, what we do, and why it matters.

Community Service activities and projects related to our veterans and military were reported by every department. Thirty-two departments reported that units participated in Veterans Day programs, and 36 departments participated in Memorial Day activities. Reports also showed participation in Pearl Harbor Day, Make a Difference Day, 9/11, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Gold Star Mothers Day, and the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.

National President Janet asked units and departments to sponsor a Walk, Run & Roll for local veterans. Various types of Walks were conducted in 20 departments for different purposes. For example, in Virginia, the department organized a Walk-a-Thon to raise funds for the Creative Arts Festival. Members elsewhere participated in Relay for Life events, always wearing their ALA shirts.

A unit in Minnesota reported that they adopted a homeless female veteran and her 5-year-old daughter. They provided clothing, food, helped with setting up an apartment,

transportation, and gave lots of advice. This was one of 32 departments reporting on activities for homeless veterans. In Wyoming, a unit member provided free notary services to veterans on a weekly basis at the local senior center. Department reports indicated that 10 departments participated in stand downs. In Alaska, a unit provided one year of free snow removal for a veteran confined to his home. A few units also reported that they helped veterans and their families by paying various bills or helping with funeral costs.

Our members visited veterans hospitals, nursing homes, and shelters in 33 departments. They brought gifts to veterans and their families. But, visitors often just spent time visiting and talking with the patients.

Forty-five departments reported that they became involved with numerous community activities. Depending upon the activity, veterans, military, and their families were included. Members wore their Auxiliary hats, pins, and shirts as they participated in local projects and activities. Nevada took this one step further: For the Las Vegas Fall Festival, prize winners received an American Legion Auxiliary T-shirt. Members, dressed in their ALA shirts, planted flowers in front of the local post office in Illinois. Units raised funds and provided volunteers to support Wreaths Across America in national cemeteries. This project has really taken hold and is a lovely annual tribute to our veterans in those communities with a national cemetery.

Our members sewed and sewed this year for their communities. They created quilts and lap robes for veterans and elderly residents in nursing homes, as well as VA hospitals. Hundreds of mittens, hats, and scarves were made, as well, for military families, veterans, and their families, schools, low-income facilities, and children overseas in foreign lands. A unit member in Tennessee made 327 teddy bears that were delivered to the local VAMC to be distributed to families of hospitalized veterans.

Our Junior members were a huge part of Community Service. In Alabama, Juniors delivered handmade Valentine cards to a nursing home. They then dyed more than 1,000 eggs for the annual Easter egg hunt at a local park, where they also served more than 350 hot dogs, chips, and drinks to those in attendance. The Juniors also handed out Christmas gift bags at the Birmingham VA hospital.

Our ALA Family has strengthened our communities as a result of its involvement with the Community Service program.

Constitution & Bylaws Committee **Lisa Williamson, Alaska, Chairman**

You will recall that two years ago, delegates to National Convention adopted a clearly written, streamlined National Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules. The largest accomplishment was putting “process” provisions into the Standing Rules.

Many departments are in the process of revising their Constitution & Bylaws to match our national governing documents. Last administrative year, 13 departments reported having revised their governing documents. This year, another 17 departments were added to that number and 13 more have proposed revisions before their convention bodies this summer. The remaining nine plan to present revisions next year. In other words, 100 percent participation is in sight!

Those of you who know me also know that I’ve been actively promoting the use of technology in all aspects of our organization. So if I failed to mention it here, you would be shocked. Let me not disappoint: Many departments have governing documents posted on their websites for members to access. The techy nerd in me loves the use of technology in our organization, but I’m more thrilled about the transparency we’ve taken great strides in accomplishing. Gone are the days of only a select few knowing the rules and policies, and how we operate, allowing for greater openness in the workings of the American Legion Auxiliary.

The Department of Iowa has a form on its website that any member can use to suggest changes to the state’s governing documents. Those suggestions are then compiled and

discussed by the Governing Documents Committee, and then brought to the DEC and convention body for their action.

Providing our governing documents online to all members furthers our commitment to the ALA Centennial Plan, particularly Goal 2, which allows good will to develop and grow. By providing guidance and support, ensuring properly written governing documents that clarify roles and responsibilities at all levels, our Departments and Units will only become stronger, the crux of Goal 4.

As much as I am a proponent of technology, I also realize that not all of us are computer savvy. If you're not proficient with a computer, don't let that slow you down! Department of Indiana Chairman Sally Wilhelm states that she is "from the old school – no computer, just my trusty manual typewriter." However, she has kept in good contact with the committee members via the phone and snail mail. She has also kept me apprised of the happenings in her Department and has provided a Mid-Year Report when one wasn't required! A perfect example of old and new meshing and working together!

Constitution & Bylaws isn't an easy committee. It requires much dedication, something that the Constitution & Bylaws Committee in North Carolina is not short on. Throughout the year, they met every two months; one meeting was held at their Department Headquarters over a weekend. Chairman Anne Morris stated they slept either on the floor or on cots, and "it was not a pretty sight to see five women, all over 68, trying to get up and down and in and out of sleeping bags for bathroom breaks." #ALARockStars

As you can guess, our committee has been quite busy this year with questions regarding governing documents revisions. It is heartwarming to know that departments are working hard at modifying their governing documents so that they conform to the National organization's documents. But our work doesn't stop there!

Once each department's revision is completed, it then filters down to the districts, counties, and units to revise theirs. Yes, it's ongoing and may seem never-ending, but very important all the same.

With more than 8,800 Units across the nation, the work of the Constitution & Bylaws committee continues to be an ongoing task. But we are all very much up to the challenge!

Education Committee **Marie Goede, Minnesota, Chairman**

The prime concerns of the Education Program were to promote the American Legion Auxiliary's role in education for children and adults through classroom activities, literacy programs, scholarship promotion, and support of education beyond high school, especially for military and veterans' children.

National President Janet theme, Celebrating Faith, Family and Freedom, was strongly supported in our scholarship program, as the title of the essay for national scholarships was "How has Faith, Family, and Freedom played a role in my life?" A total of 1,338 scholarships were given by units and departments with an overall value of \$544,041.

Units participated in Give 10 to Education and presented certificates to members for their contributions. In Indiana, 34 units participated and reported that \$6,063.15 was given in school supplies for elementary and secondary schools as well as clothing and monetary donations for schools to purchase the supplies they needed.

The Veterans in the Classroom program was one of the major programs the units participated in, with Illinois giving 211 presentations, followed by New Hampshire with 174 presentations. One unit in Minnesota took this a step further, as each Monday the K-3 school has a morning meeting where different topics are covered with the children; several of the Mondays involved veterans. Veterans were introduced along with their branch of service. Some shared flag etiquette and the importance of respecting the flag. They also shared their military experiences. They were both young and old from different periods of war.

During American Education Week, Auxiliary members followed this year's theme of "Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility." They visited classrooms, presented apples to all staff, provided refreshments in staff lounges, held brunches, used the week to present veterans in the classroom, and spent many hours volunteering in schools doing with the Auxiliary does best – putting others before themselves.

Numerous units shared that they assisted needy children with such items as clothing, meals, transportation, milk money, sports fees, school supplies, and just took time out of their busy schedules to treat them to an outing, be it a movie, swimming, or also to tutor them.

Education Committee members helped The American Legion to manage exhibition booths at three National Education Conferences. Some members helped with the selection of The American Legion National Samsung Scholarship winners and the Legacy scholarship winners.

Finance Committee **Nicole Clapp, Iowa, Chairman**

Your National Finance Committee is comprised of five-appointed members, each serving a five-year term. The primary role of the Committee is to develop the annual proposed budget and review the national financial reports.

National Finance Committee members review the draft budget and make any adjustments that may be necessary to reflect new or changing goals. The Committee recommends a budget for the National Executive Committee's consideration and adoption. Additionally, the National Finance Committee oversees the financial policies of the organization, reviews the annual audit of the Auxiliary and ALA Foundation, and makes fiscal policy recommendations to the National Executive Committee for action to ensure that the ALA National organization is meeting nonprofit benchmarks and governmental mandates.

One member of the National Finance Committee is also designated to serve as liaison to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Board, and another committee member is designated as liaison to the American Legion Auxiliary National Audit Committee. The fiscal performance of the national organization for the 2014-2015 fiscal year has been positive. With sufficient revenue stemming from the dues increase adopted at the 2011 national convention that became effective with the 2013 membership year, and the positive performance of our investments, we were able to enhance the Department Leadership National Conference by continuing to underwrite the costs for three department representatives to attend, maintain department visits by the national division vice presidents, and resource Phase I of the ALA Centennial Strategic Plan. By resourcing Phase I of the Strategic Plan we were able to provide professional guidance, such as the first ever Department Secretary Training at ALA National Headquarters, and issue 17 ALA Centennial Plan Department Achievement Awards as of May 31, 2015. The successful fundraising efforts by our direct mail vendor continued this fiscal year with three appeals designated for the American Legion Auxiliary and one for the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation. Fiscal year donations as of May 31, 2015, totaled a net \$558,000. The analysis of 2014 direct mail donations indicated 220,000 gifts were received; of those gifts, 117,000 came from ALA members and 101,000 came from non-ALA members. In a continued trend, almost as many gifts came from donors outside the ALA, demonstrating a tremendous source of external support for our organization!

In fiscal year 2015, the number of people applying for Auxiliary USAA Credit Cards continued to increase. As of May 2015, 6,201 Auxiliary USAA Credit Cards had been issued, and \$19.7M had been charged by Auxiliary USAA Credit Card cardholders. Based on the growth in the number of cards issued and cardholder usage, the Auxiliary USAA Credit Card Program royalty revenue shared with departments in fiscal year 2015 is

expected to be \$12,500. Please consider obtaining an Auxiliary USAA Credit Card and charge (...responsibly, of course!).

Your National Finance Committee continues to believe in the value and knowledge gained by members through ALA mission trainings. During this fiscal year more than 850 members attended ALA mission trainings and 12 department specific trainings. On behalf of the National Finance Committee, thank you for your dedication, commitment, and generous financial support of the American Legion Auxiliary's tireless efforts to fulfill our mission.

ALA Girls Nation Committee
Martha Lee Thatcher, Ohio, Chairman

Most members of the American Legion Auxiliary will admit to having a favorite program, but everyone will readily agree that ALA Girls State is the premier program of the ALA.

Operating a department's American Legion Auxiliary Girls State program is a year-round job. As soon as one session ends, it's time to critique the successes and disappointments of that year's program to determine what needs to be changed or fine-tuned. Advances in the area of technology will make your program run smoother with less time-consuming involvement, so technology needs to be incorporated into operating the program. For example, a website was developed in the Department of Arkansas, and now their ALA Girls State registration can be done online.

The structure of ALA Girls State programs is consistent among the states. Students arrive and are arbitrarily assigned to a mock city, equally divided into either the Federalist or the Nationalist party. Soon the delegates find themselves immersed in the political process, learning by doing under the direction and guidance of dedicated volunteers. Through vigorous debate and discussion, the two parties choose the planks that make up their party's platform. The caucus continues, and finally the slate of candidates for each party is decided and ballots are created.

The Department of Delaware holds Legion Boys State/ALA Girls State together, as does the Department of Rhode Island. Location can prove to be very important; holding ALA Girls State near your state capital allows delegates to meet with state legislators in their chambers. The Department of Florida is unique as they spend three days at their capital during legislative session, sitting in the chambers of their House and Senate counterparts.

The Department of North Carolina proudly claims they are the only department in the nation to have conducted 76 consecutive sessions of ALA Girls State since 1940.

In the Department of Indiana's opening session, the department president read the Flanders Field poem and told the poppy story. The citizens were taught how to make poppies, and they created beautiful poppy centerpieces to be used as table decorations on the night of graduation. In the Department of Arizona, the poppy story was also told and the delegates were given information about ALA programs and how to become a member.

The 49 reports received at year-end 2015, which equates to 100 percent reporting across all five divisions, show a significant increase in funding of ALA Girls State costs from sources outside the Legion Family. The Department of New Jersey reported that 20 percent of its 400 delegates were funded by outside sources; the Department of West Virginia reported that 50 percent of its delegates were funded from outside sources; and in Louisiana, 86 percent of all delegates were funded by individuals or businesses outside of The American Legion Family.

Each year, two outstanding citizens are chosen to represent their state at American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation in Washington, D.C., where the focus shifts to federal government. ALA Girls Nation participants are known as senators. A key component of the program involves mock U.S. Senate sessions complete with caucusing and debate. It is a program like no other. For many ALA Girls Nation senators, the experience ignites a

passion for the political process that leads to a life-changing career path. Writing and defending your bill in debate develops strong character. Yes, these 98 senators are competitive, but they all come from an ALA Girls State program where the emphasis is on leadership, patriotism, and a commitment to honor and serve veterans. In this culture of goodwill, ALA Girls Nation and ALA Girls State programs are changing lives in a positive way, through the values of, faith, family, and freedom.

Junior Activities Committee
Nancy Hansen, Connecticut, Chairman

Junior members of the American Legion Auxiliary are strong, patriotic young women. They have hearts of gold, truly believe, and live up to our national president's theme of Celebrating Faith, Family, and Freedom.

Junior members are the future of our organization, and to keep them interested and engaged in our programs, we must give them a purpose. Let them see the results of their volunteerism and actions. There is no better way than to include them in unit activities, and many units have done so this year.

Juniors are attending unit, district, and department meetings to shadow and learn from their senior counterparts. Not only does this give the Junior a very valuable lesson, but it also allows the senior member to learn from the younger generation.

This year, Juniors stepped up to the plate for our military, veterans, and community. They volunteered at VAMCs, held POW/MIA ceremonies, made blankets for veterans, and participated in welcome-home and send-off ceremonies for military. In their communities, Juniors participated in Halloween safety programs and Make a Difference Day events, and made food baskets at Thanksgiving and Christmas for the less fortunate.

Juniors helped distribute poppies and have been the Poppy Queen. They clipped coupons for the National Security Program and marched in their Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and Fourth of July parades.

Many Juniors worked on the Patch program, earning more than 1,000 patches in the past year!

The Department of Iowa held a weeklong Junior Auxiliary Camp where Juniors learned all about Auxiliary programs. They learned about what we do and why it matters and made new friends. It's always better to work toward a goal when you are doing it with friends.

The Department of Texas Juniors helped senior citizens at a nursing home learn how to use their iPhones and tablets. Department of Georgia Juniors participated in a tea party for women veterans and presented the veterans with framed pictures.

Juniors in North Carolina donated \$1,000 worth of blue jeans for veterans at the VAMC. Juniors assisted with packing back to school, backpacks, and one Junior planted a poppy field.

A 5-year-old Junior in South Carolina had the privilege of singing "God Bless America" at a statehouse event honoring fallen soldiers.

Juniors in the Department of California participated in a flag retirement ceremony.

Department of New Hampshire Juniors raised money for Christmas stockings for our troops and sent more than 200 Christmas cards.

Three new Junior units were started in the Department of Michigan where they collected personal care items and attended a stand down.

Our Juniors have been very busy this year working American Legion Auxiliary programs and demonstrating our mission of Service Not Self in serving our veterans, military, and their families.

We should all continue to encourage our Juniors and let them know how proud we are of them.

Leadership Committee
Kathy Dungan, Mississippi, Chairman

John Quincy Adams said, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader." Department Leadership chairmen took their duties seriously this year and exhibited great leadership skills. I received reports from all 52 departments; that's 100 percent reporting! Their goal was to educate our members about our organization and Auxiliary programs and develop future leaders.

Recognizing the importance of developing future leaders at all levels of the ALA, department chairmen used available resources and tools from the national website. Most departments held workshops, boot camps, and/or training sessions, at department, district, or unit levels. The national organization provided national leaders to departments who requested them to hold additional training sessions.

Successful department training sessions are evident in the reports. Workshops were held on how to be a good leader, how to grow leadership capacity, how to hold a meeting, how to complete reports, parliamentary procedure, mentoring, promoting goodwill, and numerous other topics. To enhance members' knowledge of ALA's history and programs, members were encouraged to take the Auxiliary Basic Course for seniors and the Junior Leadership Course. Many articles were published in department newsletters and bulletins. As a result, many departments reported an increase in unit reporting.

At least 30 departments promoted the Auxiliary Basics Course and the Junior Leadership Course. Indiana held mini-workshops on various topics each month. Iowa held a program fair, and Ohio developed its own online leadership course and encouraged members to take that, along with the national course. Wisconsin had more than 400 members participate in 13 leadership training sessions.

Maine held member development workshops throughout their state and encouraged members to share knowledge and celebrate accomplishments. New Jersey held a "Member-up ALA FUNDamental Rally" where members could learn about the organization and have fun through crafts, skits, music, and presentations. New York held 137 training sessions throughout the state. Minnesota promoted the Mission Training Leadership PowerPoint presentations. Florida, Mississippi, Texas, and North Carolina held boot camps for officers and chairmen. In California, 668 members attended 29 unit workshops, 16 district workshops, and department workshops.

A leader is held accountable for her actions, not only personally, but also on behalf of the national organization. What she does and says ultimately affects the entire ALA. Therefore, a leader must build a trusting relationship with her members. Our department leadership chairmen began building that trust this year by holding workshops on promoting goodwill. Promoting a culture of goodwill at all levels is a leadership objective. Members were asked to be open to the ideas of others, to refrain from being judgmental, and to have positive attitudes. South Dakota held "Auxiliary 101" training sessions and promoted "the Spirit of Goodwill." In North Dakota, 20 units held leadership training sessions emphasizing creating a culture of goodwill; and Colorado held a workshop called "Accentuate the Positive." Georgia and Tennessee also held workshops on creating a culture of goodwill, and Washington held a session on Conflict Resolution.

Another large part of the Leadership program is mentoring. Members were asked to assist in developing leaders by being assigned to and mentoring new members. Train the trainer workshops were held so knowledge could be shared and other members could be mentored. Newer and younger members were encouraged to step up to leadership roles. Leaders were encouraged to lead by example. The departments of Oregon, Nevada, Montana, Nebraska, Vermont, and New Mexico held workshops on mentoring and/or encouraged mentoring at all levels.

Knowledgeable leaders are vital to our organization if we are to grow and accomplish our mission. Departments are encouraged to continue developing future leaders at all levels.

Legislative Committee
Trish Ward, Kansas, Chairman

The Legislative Program of the American Legion Auxiliary provides information and assistance to American Legion Auxiliary members to advocate for the legislative agenda of The American Legion. In support of this primary goal, assuring information was accurate, messages were timely, and members were well versed on action steps provided the basics for advancing the mission to affect positive change for those we serve. Urging distribution of the American Legion Auxiliary Legislative Advocacy Guide was the first step to informing members about appropriate communication methods and best practices for engagement and conduct. The guide outlines how every member can make a difference and play a role in maximizing the impact necessary to capture the attention of elected officials and urge their support of critical legislation.

The American Legion Auxiliary's Legislative Council exhibited significant growth in both participation and awareness and created a 750 percent positive surge during the 2014-2015 administrative year. Thanks to the "I'm On It" campaign and consistent communication, membership grew from 14 members and 6 departments represented in September 2014 to more than 105 members with 30 departments and all divisions actively represented. Urging members to align with their elected officials and accept responsibility to initiate a conversation in response to an American Legion Action Alert allowed members' voices to be heard in support of veterans and their families. A survey to capture member engagement, interests, and activism was initiated and distributed through the ALA eNews and eBulletin circulation and divisional newsletters. Questions were designed to identify action items occurring at the department level and to gain knowledge about specific activities occurring among grassroots membership.

Social media continued to have a positive impact on ensuring all members had access to information and the ability to connect with each other for the common good. The national American Legion Auxiliary legislative Facebook group was renamed "ALA National Legislative Group Page" and proudly boasts a 44 percent increase from the previous year to more than 550 members. The site served as a reservoir and resource for information related to legislative priorities and allowed members to offer opinions and insight for non-partisan discussion, spirited dialogue, and a venue to share ideas and success stories.

Communication is key, and assuring members are informed remained integral to growing the team in support of a favorable outcome. The Department of Oklahoma set the stage for excellence by developing and utilizing their own "Legislative Power Link" to educate and inform. This link, an email, and telephone system for grassroots communication was developed to notify members of upcoming legislation and issues that required immediate action. It also served to align members toward a common goal, highlight attention to established priorities, and keep members up to date with tasks and action items.

Finding common ground, mobilizing around key priorities, and building relationships found members and departments getting creative to help build awareness and gain visibility through legislative activism. Using both traditional methods and those requiring technology, members nationwide reached through the ranks to connect one on one with individuals whose votes define direction and change policy. Whether it was hosting legislative rallies or town hall meetings, such as those in Minnesota, opening the State Senate in Maine, or donating countless hours organizing a grassroots letter writing campaign in Missouri and Arizona, members used innovation, enthusiasm, and dedication to advocate for greater care and attention for our veterans and their families through the legislative process.

As we aspire to create a more promising future for our veterans and their families, American Legion Auxiliary members stand ready to serve, influence, and encourage on behalf of America's heroes. Together, with The American Legion Family, we provide a

compelling and compassionate voice that resonates strongly and soundly in every community, raising awareness, defending policy, and building alliances to enhance the lives, health, and spirit of those we serve.

Membership Committee
Anita Biggs, California, Chairman

First and foremost, thank you to all unit members and unit chairmen who do what is necessary every day to keep this organization strong. By honoring National President Janet's theme of Celebrating Faith, Family, and Freedom, you ensure that members' dues are transmitted timely and cards are distributed. You also possess firsthand knowledge of the wellbeing or needs of our members. All division and 100 percent reporting department chairmen have submitted excellent reports detailing all the efforts, celebrations, and successes of the year.

As the national organization recognizes that we must secure our future, unit members are making the effort to attain one million members in time for our centennial year. The Department of Missouri made postcards that simply said "We Miss You" to mail to non-renewed members. This postcard makes the right statement and we were thrilled to share it electronically with division and department chairmen to pass along to their units. One unit in Missouri was losing their charter and had not held meetings in several years. A Legionnaire was actually the custodian of their charter and had been paying dues for the members. The department chairman stepped in with a massive community revitalization effort, including asking the Legionnaires to bring their female relatives to meetings, and now this unit is operational once again with new members and newly elected officers.

In North Dakota, the department chairman gave each unit a small box to decorate and use at each unit meeting. The project was called "Saved for Service" and asked members to drop in their change and collect enough donations to pay for deserving members' dues. This effort resulted in 18 members paid. The Department of Washington recommended sending renewal notices to Juniors to remind them of the importance of their membership. Also in Washington, Auxiliary Unit 53, the Legion post, and Sons all achieved their membership goal this year through visible community involvement; making use of businesses, using the community hall to hold events, and holding fundraising breakfasts and golf tournaments. The unit recruited an Elizabeth Dole Fellow, her husband and two children to join this active group. During November, Arizona had an electronic billboard on the highway with a message blazing, "Be One In A Million in Service to Veterans," and as you can tell by their standing at this report, this publicity effort worked! A unit in Mississippi reached 100 percent of their goal by recruiting 14 new members, visiting local schools, and publicizing activities in the local media.

Many departments shared their monetary winnings; New Hampshire won the first two awards and shared the winnings equally with all their districts, and Mississippi passed on their winnings to a deserving unit. Challenges and M&M sightings were plenty among many departments: New Hampshire, with a seahorse theme, gave the winning district a beautiful pin, and gave a smelly fishnet to the last place district to carry around and catch more fish. North Carolina had a "Heat Is On" competition and the division president with the lowest membership numbers must sing the song at convention. Tennessee units received special embroidered tote bags for making their membership goal. Texas and Arkansas had a friendly "showdown" at the state line in Texarkana.

The "Honor Female Veterans" incentive has been well received by all departments with many waiving their portion of dues and unit dues as well. As of June 1, the numbers speak for themselves with 668 new female veterans; California leading the way with 154. As the Texas Membership chairman stated, "A brilliant gift to provide to female veterans."

If the concept of one million members is not fully embraced by all, we are all at least fully aware of its importance to our survival and the necessity to provide excellent service to the nation's veterans in the future. The question was asked at the beginning of the year,

“Are you One in a Million”? Well the number may not be there yet, but with the dedication reported this year, we are certainly on our way.

**National Security Committee
Susan Britton, New York, Chairman**

With a spirit of Faith, Family, and Freedom, The American Legion Auxiliary has left an impressionable mark this year while working the program of the National Security Committee. Following an urgent request from the Department of Kansas, hundreds of boxes of supplies were sent to troops deployed from Fort Riley to Iraq, including 200 boxes alone from Georgia Unit 233. Maine Unit 39 sent thank-you care packages to 10 of their own active-duty Madison American Legion Post 39 members, and units participated in the Holiday Mail for Heroes to our troops. Several members joined the ranks of eMentor and were added to the list of those who are willing to advise and mentor military spouses as they embark on new careers and educational paths. Current military and spouse job fairs across the country have been extremely successful with units tallying hundreds of hours of assistance including the Department of New Mexico hosting 600 participants at its Hiring our Heroes event.

Emergency preparedness and CERT training were highlighted in many departments. Donations to both the USO and Operation Comfort Warriors have provided our troops with necessities. Unit 624 in Texas raised \$7,000 for OCW, Wisconsin Unit 166 knit 100 helmet liners for active-duty soldiers, and Connecticut Unit 45 donated refurbished computers, laptops, and tablets to a community college valued at \$8,000 for veterans going back to school.

The new ALA Military Family Readiness Action Guide was launched and provides our members with a valuable online resource at www.ALAforVeterans.org to assist in locating services for active-duty, reservists, and National Guard members. It is crucial that we become familiar with the services available to our military community. In addition, an instructional package is now available on our website to train our members on how to use the guide.

Heightened awareness of The American Legion’s Empty Chair Resolution 288 has increased POW/MIA recognition at all official meetings. Memorial services were held for many POW/MIA servicemembers whose remains were identified and returned home. Iowa Post 280 served as Color Guard and Firing Squad, and Unit 280 hosted a luncheon following the burial of ashes of Staff Sgt. Robert Howard, a POW/MIA from WWII. Sgt. Cameron Flack was honored at the North Carolina’s mid-winter conference, and a video and Gold Star Banners were sent to his two surviving sisters. Arizona and Georgia respectively recognized 25 and 35 servicemembers’ remains returned to the United States.

Welcome-home and send-off events were held for troops, and yellow ribbons were shared. Two units in Texas alone welcomed home 800 servicemembers. By working together and sharing a mutual goal with Operation Homefront, members helping our military and veterans were reported within several departments, including Georgia, where 900 boxes were shipped to the troops.

Members of Unit 108 in Michigan along with many others held recognition dinners to honor policemen and firefighters in local communities. Emergency preparedness, CPR training and CERT training have been highlighted in numerous departments, and many Auxiliary members serve as first responders within their communities. Blood and platelet donations were reported, and blood drives were hosted nationwide, including Iowa Unit 250 which hosts a quarterly drive. Ohio units alone reported more than 2,000 hours worked on blood drives and 2,318 units of blood collected that will help more than 6,000 people.

Our members continue to remain dedicated to providing support to our troops and their families in a multitude of ways. Their example of “service to others” shines brightly as a model for others to duplicate, and efforts have resulted in 100 percent outstanding reporting for 2014-2015.

2014-2015 NATIONAL SECURITY QUICK STATS (as reported):

Number of care packages sent to troops:	4,918
Number of volunteer hours:	439,678
Spent for care packages/postage:	\$857,627
Number of volunteers:	101,207
Value of coupons sent to troops:	\$20,438,297

Past Presidents Parley Committee
Nancy Brown-Park, California, Chairman

The Past Presidents Parley recognizes and honors women veterans, women currently serving in the military, and Unit Members of the Year.

The committee is a forum that brings together the experience of our former presidents and utilizes their expertise in active service to the American Legion Auxiliary.

The outstanding unit members are the unsung heroes of our units who don't seek recognition. They are the heart and soul of our membership. This is a very special award which recognizes the contributions made by a valued unit member who has never held an office higher than unit president. It celebrates and recognizes those members who quietly work the American Legion Auxiliary's mission.

Each year, we recognize women veterans from each branch of the Armed Forces for their military and community service. This year, we will recognize a woman from the Coast Guard and the U.S. Army.

In addition, past presidents seek our woman veterans in their communities who need assistance. One unit in California recruited 31 volunteers who sought out 52 women veterans and 41 homeless women veterans, bringing them into their post home and providing them food, personal items, and clothing.

Past President Parleys across the country have worked all facets of the Plan of Action. As no report is required for this committee, many departments did not report, and the actual monetary value of scholarships provided and direct aid to veterans is unknown.

After reading the submitted reports, this chairman knows that the money raised and the time spent by Past Presidents answered the call of our national president to Celebrate Faith, Family and Freedom.

Poppy Committee
Monique Batiste, Louisiana, Chairman

The red poppy. A beautiful symbol and reminder. It reminds us of the sacrifices our veterans have made for us. It reminds us of the responsibility we have to our veterans by continuing to support them and bring awareness to our communities.

This year, the national Poppy Committee made sure we gave members of the American Legion Auxiliary new ways to make the poppy visible and creative ways to tell and share the poppy story and promote the Poppy Program. Members held their regular poppy drives and Poppy Day events where funds were donated to assist with the needs of our veterans. In addition to Poppy Days, members planted poppies in memory of veterans and learned how to make poppies to share and wear.

Our Junior members and the youth in our communities participated in many poppy activities and events promoting the program and sharing with others the importance of the poppy. Junior members of Speedway Unit 500 made poppy cookies and shared the poppy story with veterans and their families.

Junior members of Ricard Stewart Unit 505 planted poppies in memory of their eligible veterans and promised to continue the project by making it annual. In addition to the new projects, many Junior members participated in the Little Miss Poppy and Miss Poppy programs, attended Veterans Day parades and events with the Legion Family.

The Poppy Lady book was presented to many children this year. Little Miss Poppy and Miss Poppy participants received copies for their work in promoting the Poppy Program by representing the American Legion Auxiliary, and grandchildren of veterans received copies of the book as well. More than 400 school-age children received a Poppy Lady bookmark from the book's author, Barbara Walsh, and an American Legion Auxiliary poppy bookmark with the poppy story and the poem "In Flanders Field."

If we continue to share something as small as a bookmark with the children, we accomplish many things. The poppy story will be told, and children will know the sacrifices made for their freedom. And the American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Program is promoted and shared with many people.

In November, in acknowledgement of the Veterans Day holiday, members of the Poppy Committee organized events and programs that honored veterans at senior centers. There are many veterans and wives of veterans who attend these centers weekly. The poppy story was shared, and the wives of veterans received a felt poppy corsage. All veterans in attendance received a certificate of honor for service to our country. The great appreciation from the veterans and their families encouraged us to continue this project and honor those veterans each year.

There are so many wonderful ways to promote the Poppy Program. We will continue to have Poppy Days and collect donations for the care and needs of our veterans, while remembering we can host a small ceremony for those who served and share the poppy story with them.

Planting poppies in honor of veterans and sharing the story of Moina Michael, the Poppy Lady, and her promise to her soldiers, are just a few ways to keep the poppy visible, promote the Poppy Program, and always remember those who gave.

Public Relations Committee **Beth McGinn, Delaware, Chairman**

The purpose of public relations is to share with the world who we are, what we do, and why we matter. Units were challenged this year to "Ring Your Bell" for Faith, Family, and Freedom and they certainly took the challenge seriously. Sixteen departments reporting holding "Ring Your Bell" contests and recognized the units who participated.

Daily postings of stories and pictures of events and activities on social media groups reached not only ALA members but also the public who could read and interact with their stories.

An example of how far a post on Facebook can reach is the Project Suds America project from the Department of Florida. Auxiliary volunteers started to meet weekly at a local laundry facility to assist homeless veterans with laundering their clothes, and now they are placing veterans in housing thanks to the support of their community who learned about the project because of social media and other good public relations.

They have also used social media to raise money to help with medical needs for a homeless veteran's dog, Rosie. Thanks to postings to Facebook, we were able to follow Rosie's progress after her surgery.

Juniors held successful drives for their projects using electronic and paper campaigns. Juniors in the Department of Louisiana sponsored a project entitled "Paws and Stripes" which provides a special dog to a veteran with PTSD or TBI and helps the veteran deal with everyday stresses. They raised \$1,000 by distributing poppy puppies, military bears and holding quilt and pillow raffles. Also, a Junior member of Unit 505 in Yadkinville, N.C., collected 500 pairs of jeans for "Jeans for GIs" and distributed them at a stand down.

Because PR is part of every ALA program, unit members highlighted how they worked the mission and shared it with others. To increase awareness of what we do, units and departments used the Public Relations Guide and PR Toolkit available at the ALA website to prepare news releases, letters to the editor, flyers, posters, brochures, and banners.

It was reported that 10,756 newspaper articles were published and 2,180 public service announcements were distributed. Media contact lists were updated in departments and units reported using radio and TV 269 times to advertise their activities and events. Several unit members are regular guests on their local radio segments. Facebook groups and websites were created using how-to sheets in the Plan of Action.

Units publicized many different ways to make a poppy, Americanism essay contest winners, Junior's helping veterans, community service outreach events, Welcome Home events and send-offs, new units being chartered and numerous VA&R activities through the use of both traditional and social media PR efforts.

A unit in Missouri held a memorial service for a veteran who lost his life in Libya. Three television stations filmed the service and broadcast it live on Live TV in three different states. The service was published in five different newspapers. The public relations effort for this event not only honored this veteran, but also emphasized what we do and why we matter.

Arizona Districts 11 and 12 went BIG with their public relations efforts to promote membership by purchasing a billboard on a highway for one week honoring veterans on Veterans Day and asking the public to "Join Us." The billboard featured the ALA logo, a memorial poppy and their website address.

The Department of New Mexico mails a hard copy of their monthly newsletter, The Blue Star, to their members that is similar to a mini-Plan of Action. And Department of Ohio started a newsletter, "Ohio News in a Nutshell" to feature those units participating in the "Ring Your Bell" contest with helpful hints for other units.

Good public relations is the job of all Auxiliary members and helps an organization tell its story and build a reputation. By continuing to ring our bells across this great nation, members will build mutually beneficial relationships with other members and the public.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee **Mary Davis, Washington, Chairman**

"To honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of our veterans..." is one small part of the American Legion Auxiliary's mission. Historically, individuals and communities provided support to our military members when they returned from war. Thanks in part to The American Legion, the federal government eventually established the Department of Veterans Affairs to help on the national level, but it can only do what its resources support. Members of the American Legion Auxiliary are dedicated to filling in the gaps of needed services for veterans in our local communities. To this end, unit members across the nation have fulfilled this mission as demonstrated by the ongoing services they provide local veterans.

All across America, department Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services (VAVS) representatives attended informational meetings, supplemented services at VA hospitals or clinics, and recruited new volunteers. Additionally, local unit members reinforced the work of the VAVS representatives by donating canteen books, preparing tray favors, sewing passage quilts, crocheting lap blankets, providing cookies and coffee, holding birthday parties, and providing gifts to hospitalized veterans and many more activities. At the VA Medical Centers' local Creative Arts Festivals, whether providing supplies for the artist, making financial donations, setting up the festival, or judging, our American Legion Auxiliary members were there providing support. And, during that very special time of the year, much anticipated and popular Christmas Gift Shops were held at VA medical facilities and state veterans homes all across the nation.

Many of our members also took part in local stand downs for homeless veterans. In Indiana, they donated money for shelters, for new clothes and socks, food, and daily care products. Junior members even got involved with one unit donating money they had raised for socks and toiletries. Texas Unit 521 in Pasadena contributed to a project to adopt female

veterans and their children for Christmas. This was a different type of project coordinated by the local VA Medical Center to help homeless female veterans.

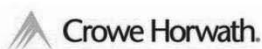
Auxiliary units in Arizona joined with The American Legion to assist homeless veterans through helping at stand downs, contributing to the HUD-VASH program and Honor Flights. A highlight of their success was when they helped a homeless veteran find a job and housing for his family.

Maine Auxiliary units not only supported the VAVS program, but also provided Christmas gifts, ditty bags containing comfort items to housebound veterans, mental health outpatients, a veteran dementia ward, and homeless veterans.

In Illinois, children of homeless veterans were given Christmas gifts and Easter baskets. And, "Blessing Bags" were distributed to homeless veterans. Each bag contained dry socks, a first aid kit, snacks, rain poncho, and even some change for special needs.

Departments throughout the nation have found many new and creative ways to volunteer under the umbrella of the Service to Veterans program. They have made life better for veterans in their communities through activities such as driving veterans to their doctor visits, helping at hospice facilities, baking cookies for veterans holiday celebrations or birthday cakes for veterans, and helping veterans in their local nursing homes. Some members make and donate "Final Salute" patriotic quilts to terminally ill veterans, hold fish fry events, and take veterans on field trips to local fishing holes. Others donate magazines, serve veterans breakfasts on holidays, or deliver meals on wheels to housebound veterans. Most importantly, when our members found veterans and their families in need, they found ways to help.

We worked together this year: as family, within our units, partnered with The American Legion, or working within the VA service community. We reached out to our veterans, and we helped provide faith and support to those who have given years of their lives defending America so that we might celebrate our freedom every day.



Crowe Horwath LLP
Independent Member Crowe Horwath International

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Members of the National Finance Commission
The American Legion National Headquarters
Indianapolis, Indiana

Report on Financial Statements

We have audited the accompanying consolidated financial statements of The American Legion National Headquarters ("Legion"), which comprise the consolidated statements of financial position as of December 31, 2014 and 2013, and the related consolidated statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these consolidated financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of consolidated financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these consolidated financial statements based on our audits. We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the consolidated financial statements are free of material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the consolidated financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the consolidated financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the consolidated financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the consolidated financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the consolidated financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters as of December 31, 2014 and 2013, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Other Matter

Our audits were conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the consolidated financial statements as a whole. The consolidating statements of financial position and activities are presented for purposes of additional analysis of the consolidated financial statements rather than to present the financial position and results of operations of the individual companies, and are not a required part of the consolidated financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the consolidated financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the consolidated financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the consolidated financial statements or to the consolidated financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the information is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the consolidated financial statements as a whole.

Crowe Horwath LLP

Crowe Horwath LLP
Indianapolis, Indiana
April 30, 2015

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Financial Position
December 31, 2014 and 2013

	2014	2013
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,271,659	\$ 1,671,772
Accounts receivable	5,388,048	2,676,580
Interest receivable	701,237	658,669
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,580,318	1,113,149
Deferred membership expense	5,619,594	4,243,253
Inventory	2,704,357	2,528,224
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	16,590	19,185
Beneficial interest in trust	217,900	255,127
	<u>18,499,703</u>	<u>13,165,959</u>
Investments		
General	15,377,229	16,672,525
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved Funds	32,618,517	29,994,122
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	23,801,938	19,375,836
Samsung scholarship fund	7,934,482	8,155,301
Building funds	5,532,253	5,041,826
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	9,583,418	7,317,762
Special account – Endowment Fund	2,267,776	2,249,177
General account – Endowment Fund	7,439,635	6,991,793
National Emergency Fund	3,738,562	2,578,343
Other	5,245,813	4,940,809
	<u>113,539,623</u>	<u>103,317,494</u>
Property, plant and equipment, net	5,662,843	5,892,107
	<u>\$ 137,702,169</u>	<u>\$ 122,375,560</u>
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	\$ 1,384,549	\$ 2,261,174
Scholarships payable	1,041,586	1,045,025
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	229,037	216,386
Deferred income	624,823	671,849
Deferred dues income	21,357,070	22,118,520
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	4,621,989	5,601,353
Accrued vacation benefits	1,037,790	1,038,409
Accrued pension expense	12,644,291	3,686,558
Other liabilities	1,183,321	718,132
Notes payable	1,211,949	1,394,749
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life membership	21,204,292	18,571,364
Life memberships due to state and local posts	22,487,809	18,709,473
	<u>89,028,506</u>	<u>76,032,992</u>
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	16,295,124	17,919,546
Temporarily restricted	19,390,704	15,774,508
Permanently restricted	12,987,835	12,648,514
Total net assets	<u>48,673,663</u>	<u>46,342,568</u>
	<u>\$ 137,702,169</u>	<u>\$ 122,375,560</u>

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Activities
Year ended December 31, 2014

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Revenue, gains and other support				
National member dues	\$ 26,208,428	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 26,208,428
Direct membership solicitations	8,126,608	-	-	8,126,608
Member service fees income	726,969	-	-	726,969
Affinity income	3,150,729	-	-	3,150,729
Sales of emblem items	12,243,214	-	-	12,243,214
Advertising	10,490,471	-	-	10,490,471
Contributions	8,029,121	2,489,835	319,639	10,838,595
Label and printing fees	1,826,994	-	-	1,826,994
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of \$301,974	1,812,516	819,811	-	2,632,327
Net realized gains (losses)	(20,542)	9,623	(15,733)	(26,652)
Other	2,302,340	11,500	-	2,313,840
	<u>74,896,848</u>	<u>3,330,769</u>	<u>303,906</u>	<u>78,531,523</u>
Net assets released from restriction	762,976	(762,976)	-	-
Total revenues, gains, and other support	<u>75,659,824</u>	<u>2,567,793</u>	<u>303,906</u>	<u>78,531,523</u>
Expenses				
Salaries	15,928,906	-	-	15,928,906
Employee benefits	3,423,205	-	-	3,423,205
Cost of sales – Legion	6,683,745	-	-	6,683,745
Department and magazine costs	3,063,870	-	-	3,063,870
Direct publications	11,920,926	-	-	11,920,926
Executive and staff travel	3,374,710	-	-	3,374,710
Commission and committee	1,637,849	-	-	1,637,849
Printing and postage	10,020,891	-	-	10,020,891
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,596,073	-	-	1,596,073
Office and other operating	11,337,219	-	-	11,337,219
Occupancy and usage	2,077,524	-	-	2,077,524
Special projects and programs	1,722,985	-	-	1,722,985
	<u>72,787,903</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>72,787,903</u>
Change in net assets from operations	2,871,921	2,567,793	303,906	5,743,620
Net unrealized gains - investments	3,018,380	1,048,403	35,415	4,102,198
Net change in PUFL	2,402,816	-	-	2,402,816
Amortization of pension loss	(1,245,309)	-	-	(1,245,309)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	(8,672,230)	-	-	(8,672,230)
Change in net assets	(1,624,422)	3,616,196	339,321	2,331,095
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>17,919,546</u>	<u>15,774,508</u>	<u>12,648,514</u>	<u>46,342,568</u>
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ 16,295,124</u>	<u>\$ 19,390,704</u>	<u>\$ 12,987,835</u>	<u>\$ 48,673,663</u>

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Activities
Year ended December 31, 2013

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Revenue, gains and other support				
National member dues	\$ 26,654,751	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 26,654,751
Direct membership solicitations	9,883,114	-	-	9,883,114
Member service fees income	888,211	-	-	888,211
Affinity income	3,183,472	-	-	3,183,472
Sales of emblem items	11,705,925	-	-	11,705,925
Advertising	10,745,474	-	-	10,745,474
Contributions	4,969,619	2,489,869	156,188	7,615,676
Label and printing fees	1,562,454	-	-	1,562,454
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of \$276,172	1,891,381	828,237	-	2,719,618
Net realized gains (losses)	140,048	(6,850)	(206)	132,992
Other	2,437,632	-	-	2,437,632
	<u>74,062,081</u>	<u>3,311,256</u>	<u>155,982</u>	<u>77,529,319</u>
Net assets released from restriction	1,548,723	(1,548,723)	-	-
Total revenues, gains, and other support	<u>75,610,804</u>	<u>1,762,533</u>	<u>155,982</u>	<u>77,529,319</u>
Expenses				
Salaries	15,589,187	-	-	15,589,187
Employee benefits	3,487,348	-	-	3,487,348
Cost of sales – Legion	6,252,946	-	-	6,252,946
Department and magazine costs	2,581,581	-	-	2,581,581
Direct publications	12,279,710	-	-	12,279,710
Executive and staff travel	3,238,110	-	-	3,238,110
Commission and committee	1,864,766	-	-	1,864,766
Printing and postage	8,228,511	-	-	8,228,511
Scholarships, grants and awards	2,681,906	-	-	2,681,906
Office and other operating	14,742,128	-	-	14,742,128
Occupancy and usage	2,136,461	-	-	2,136,461
Special projects and programs	1,702,425	-	-	1,702,425
	<u>74,785,079</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>74,785,079</u>
Change in net assets from operations	825,725	1,762,533	155,982	2,744,240
Net unrealized losses - investments	(4,798,832)	(1,606,284)	(281,350)	(6,686,466)
Net change in PUFL	(2,846,311)	-	-	(2,846,311)
Amortization of pension loss	(1,707,475)	-	-	(1,707,475)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	5,129,395	-	-	5,129,395
Change in net assets	<u>(3,397,498)</u>	<u>156,249</u>	<u>(125,368)</u>	<u>(3,366,617)</u>
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>21,317,044</u>	<u>15,618,259</u>	<u>12,773,882</u>	<u>49,709,185</u>
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ 17,919,546</u>	<u>\$ 15,774,508</u>	<u>\$ 12,648,514</u>	<u>\$ 46,342,568</u>

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows
Years ended December 31, 2014 and 2013

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>
Cash flows from operating activities		
Change in net assets	\$ 2,331,095	\$ (3,366,617)
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash from operating activities		
Depreciation expense	866,783	925,255
Loss on disposal of property and equipment	-	840
Bad debt expense	-	1,166
Realized (gain) loss on sale of investments	26,652	(132,992)
Unrealized (gain) loss on investments	(4,102,198)	6,686,466
Net change in Paid-Up-For-Life annuity	(2,402,816)	2,846,311
Amortization of pension loss	1,245,309	1,707,475
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	8,672,230	(5,129,395)
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	(319,639)	(156,188)
Accounts receivable	(2,711,468)	315,872
Interest receivable	(42,568)	(45,766)
Prepaid expenses and deposits	(467,169)	292,581
Deferred membership expense	(1,376,341)	4,557,641
Inventories	(176,133)	(178,657)
Beneficial interest in trust	37,227	30,151
Accounts and scholarships payable	(880,064)	456,134
Deferred income	7,038,891	(7,454,541)
Accrued pension expense	(959,806)	(878,370)
Other accrued liabilities	464,570	142,053
Net cash from operating activities	<u>7,244,555</u>	<u>619,419</u>
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of property and equipment	(637,519)	(395,514)
Purchase of investments	(66,413,668)	(57,085,066)
Sales and maturities of investments	60,267,085	57,396,754
Investments in affiliate (CFA)	2,595	11,633
Net cash from investing activities	<u>(6,781,507)</u>	<u>(72,193)</u>
Cash flows from financing activities		
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	319,639	156,188
Repayment on notes payable	(182,800)	(1,459,498)
Proceeds on notes payable	-	1,394,749
Net cash from financing activities	<u>136,839</u>	<u>91,439</u>
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	599,887	638,665
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	<u>1,671,772</u>	<u>1,033,107</u>
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	<u>\$ 2,271,659</u>	<u>\$ 1,671,772</u>
Supplemental cash flows information		
Interest paid	\$ 39,500	\$ 204,054
Donated stock	24,730	-

NOTE 1 – NATURE OF OPERATIONS AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Nature of Organization: The American Legion National Headquarters ("Legion") is a national veterans organization which was declared to be a corporate body by an Act of the United States Congress on September 16, 1919. According to the Original Act and Subsequent Amendments, the purpose of the Legion is "To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to promote peace and goodwill among the peoples of the United States and all the nations of the earth; to preserve the memories and incidents of the two World Wars and the other great hostilities fought to uphold democracy; to cement the ties and comradeship born of service; and to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual helpfulness and service to their country."

Nearly 50% of the Legion's income is derived from membership dues (including amounts allocated for magazine subscriptions). An additional 13-14% is generated through advertising for *The American Legion Magazine*. Another significant source of income is Emblem sales, which includes the sale of apparel, jewelry, and other items bearing the American Legion Emblem. Income is expended by the Legion on several different programs including *The American Legion Magazine*, Emblem Sales, veterans' assistance and rehabilitation, youth programs and others. The Legion's youth programs include American Legion Baseball, oratorical contests and Boy's Nation.

Principles of Consolidation: The consolidated financial statements include the accounts of The American Legion National Headquarters, The American Legion Charities ("ALC"), The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation ("ALEF"), and the National Emergency Fund ("NEF") (collectively, "the Legion"). All material inter-organizational accounts and transactions have been eliminated in consolidation.

The American Legion Charities is a tax-exempt trust established to solicit funds from individuals, organizations and corporations and to disburse said funds as may be directed to various Legion programs and charities.

The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation, a tax-exempt Indiana corporation, was created to provide permanent funding for the rehabilitation of American veterans and assistance to orphans of veterans.

The National Emergency Fund is a tax-exempt trust established to provide gifts and grants to relieve suffering and ameliorate financial hardship incurred by American Legion members, families and Posts.

Basis of Accounting: The financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America ("GAAP").

Use of Estimates in Preparation of Financial Statements: The preparation of financial statements in conformity with GAAP requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues, expenses, gains, losses and other changes in net assets during the reported period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Financial Statement Presentation: The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with GAAP, which requires, among other things, that the financial statements report the changes in and total of each of the net asset classes, based upon donor restrictions, as applicable. Net assets are to be classified as unrestricted, temporarily restricted and permanently restricted. The following classes of net assets are maintained:

Unrestricted Net Assets – The unrestricted net asset class includes general assets and liabilities of the Legion, as well as assets and liabilities designated by the National Executive Committee, the governing body of the Legion. The unrestricted net assets of the Legion may be used at the discretion of management to support the Legion's purposes and operations.

Temporarily Restricted Net Assets – The temporarily restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion related to gifts with explicit donor-imposed restrictions that have not been met as to specified purpose, or to later periods of time or after specified dates. Unconditional promises to give that are due in future periods and are not permanently restricted are classified as temporarily restricted net assets. As the restrictions are met, the net assets are released from restrictions and included in unrestricted net assets. Contributions for which the restrictions

are met in the same period in which the contribution is received are also recorded as temporarily restricted revenue and releases from restrictions.

Permanently Restricted Net Assets – The permanently restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion for which the donor has stipulated that the contribution be maintained in perpetuity. Donor-imposed restrictions limiting the use of the assets or its economic benefit neither expire with the passage of time nor can be removed by satisfying a specific purpose.

Cash and Cash Equivalents: Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand and less than 90 day deposit balances with banks. The Legion maintains all of its cash deposits in banks and brokerage firms. This may result in a concentration of credit risk in the case of a severe regional financial failure. The maximum amount at risk is the excess of the deposit liabilities reported by the banks over the amounts that would have been covered by federal insurance. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation ("FDIC") insures deposits up to \$250,000 per financial institution.

Accounts Receivable and Allowance for Uncollectible Accounts: The Legion bills members, posts, and departments for dues and bills agencies for advertising in the Legion magazine. Interest is not normally charged on receivables.

Management establishes a reserve for losses on its accounts based on historic loss experience and current economic conditions. Losses are charged off to the reserve when management deems further collection efforts will not produce additional recoveries. Management estimated that no allowance was necessary for the years ended December 31, 2014 and 2013.

Inventory: Inventory consists of Emblem items held for sale, magazine paper and publication rights and is stated at the lower of cost or market using the first-in, first-out ("FIFO") method. Supplies which are not intended for sale are expensed when purchased.

Investments: Investments are carried at fair value. The fair values of investments are based on quoted market prices, where available. If quoted market prices are not available, fair values are based on quoted market prices of comparable instruments. Realized and unrealized gains and losses are reflected in the consolidated statements of activities. Premiums or discounts on investments are generally recognized at the time of disposal or maturity.

Property and Equipment: Expenditures for property and equipment and items which substantially increase the useful lives of existing assets and are greater than \$1,500 are capitalized at cost. The Legion records depreciation on the straight-line method at rates designated to depreciate the costs of assets over their estimated useful lives. Buildings are depreciated on the straight-line method using a thirty year life. All other capital assets are depreciated over lives ranging from three to seven years.

Impairment of Long-Lived Assets: In accordance with GAAP, the Legion reviews its property and equipment for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of an asset may not be recoverable. If the fair value is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognized for the difference. No impairment loss has been recognized during the years ended December 31, 2014 and 2013.

Collections: The Legion owns many collectible military related items and historical documents which were not recorded as they were acquired. It is often impracticable to determine a value for collections and accordingly, the Legion has concluded that they need not be capitalized. Some of these items have been appraised for insurance purposes.

Support and Revenue: The Legion reports gifts of cash and other assets as restricted support if they are received with donor stipulations that limit the use of the donated assets. When a donor restriction expires, that is, when a stipulated time restriction ends or purpose restriction is accomplished, temporarily restricted net assets are reclassified to unrestricted net assets and reported in the statement of activities as net assets released from restrictions.

Dues Income and Expense: Dues are recognized as income over the applicable membership period, which is on a calendar-year basis. In addition to other methods of obtaining new members, the Legion uses direct mail and other direct marketing approaches. The income generated from direct membership solicitation is recognized over the applicable membership period (calendar year). The direct-response expenses incurred in obtaining new members are deferred and recognized in the subsequent membership year.

Income Taxes: The Legion is exempt from federal income taxes under section

501(c)(19) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. ALC, ALEF and NEF are exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. None of the entities are considered to be a private foundation. The Legion is subject to income tax on unrelated business income. In 2014 and 2013, the Legion incurred no tax expense.

Current accounting standards require the Legion to disclose the amount of potential benefit or obligation to be realized as a result of an examination performed by a taxing authority. For the years ended December 31, 2014 and 2013, management has determined that the Legion does not have any tax positions that result in any uncertainties regarding the possible impact on the Legion's financial statements. The Legion does not expect the total amount of unrecognized tax benefits to significantly change in the next 12 months. The Legion recognizes interest and/or penalties related to income tax matters in income tax expense. The Legion did not have any amounts accrued for interest and penalties at December 31, 2014 and 2013.

Fair Value of Financial Instruments: The carrying amount of all financial instruments of the Legion, which include cash and cash equivalents, accounts receivable, beneficial interest in trust, investments, accounts payable, and notes payable, approximate fair value.

Expense Allocation: As disclosed in Note 16, expenses have been classified as program services, management and general, member development and fund raising based on actual direct expenditures. Additionally, some expenses are allocated among departments based upon estimates of the amount of time spent by Legion employees performing services for these departments.

Reclassifications: Certain reclassifications have been made to present last year's financial statements on a basis comparable to the current year's financial statements. These reclassifications had no effect on the change in net assets or total net assets.

Subsequent Events: Management has performed an analysis of the activities and transactions subsequent to December 31, 2014, to determine the need for any adjustments or disclosures to the financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2014. Management has performed their analysis through April 30, 2015, the date the financial statements were available to be issued.

NOTE 2 – COLLECTIONS

The Legion owns many collectible military related items and historical documents which were not recorded as they were acquired. It is often impracticable to determine a value for collections and accordingly, the Legion has concluded that they need not be capitalized. These items have been appraised, or are in the process of being appraised for insurance purposes and are as follows:

	Appraisal date	Replacement value
World War I Posters	2/10/2005	\$ 461,769
World War II Posters	3/11/2005	472,919
Military Unit Histories	3/18/2005	112,410
Fine Art Collection	10/14/2005	695,600
Firearms and Uniforms Collection	3/24/2006	99,950
Original GI Bill	not applicable	-
Other Collections	not applicable	-

NOTE 3 – INVESTMENT IN AFFILIATE

The Legion, in conjunction with approximately 120 other organizations, has created a nonprofit corporation known as The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. ("CFA") for the purpose of aiding in the campaign to secure a constitutional amendment empowering the Congress and the States to enact legislation to protect the Flag of the United States of America from physical desecration.

CFA recognized a change in net assets of \$(2,595) and \$(11,633) in 2014 and 2013, respectively. Accordingly, the Legion's investment in CFA has been changed by these amounts and corresponding adjustments have been reflected in unrestricted designated net assets for 2014 and 2013.

NOTE 4 – BENEFICIAL INTEREST IN CHARITABLE LEAD TRUST

The ALEF has been named a beneficiary of a charitable lead trust. Under the

charitable trust, the ALEF is to receive quarterly distributions in the amount of \$9,919 until December 2020, or until the funds of the trust are exhausted. Based on the terms of the trust and a 2.88% discount rate in 2014 and a 2.38% discount rate in 2013, the present value of future benefits expected to be received by the ALEF is estimated to be \$217,900 and \$255,127 at December 31, 2014 and 2013, respectively.

NOTE 5 – FAIR VALUE OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

Fair value is defined as the price that would be received for an asset or paid to transfer a liability (an exit price) in the Legion's principal or most advantageous market for the asset or liability in an orderly transaction between market participants on the measurement date.

GAAP establishes a fair value hierarchy which requires an entity to maximize the use of observable inputs and minimize the use of unobservable inputs when measuring fair value. GAAP describes three levels of inputs that may be used to measure fair value:

Level 1: Quoted prices for identical assets or liabilities in active markets that the entity has the ability to access as of the measurement date.

Level 2: Significant other observable inputs other than Level 1 prices such as quoted prices for similar assets or liabilities; quoted prices in markets that are not active; or other inputs that are observable or can be corroborated by observable market data.

Level 3: Significant unobservable inputs that reflect a reporting entity's own assumptions about the assumptions that market participants would use in pricing an asset or liability.

In many cases, a valuation technique used to measure fair value includes inputs from multiple levels of the fair value hierarchy. The lowest level of significant input determines the placement of the entire fair value measurement in the hierarchy.

The fair value of money markets and common stock are based on quoted prices in active markets. (Level 1 inputs) The fair value of U.S. Government and agency obligations, asset backed securities, corporate bonds, and state and municipal bonds are based on quoted market prices of similar securities with similar due dates using the market approach. (Level 2 inputs) Common stock and asset backed securities are not held by the Legion, but are held in the defined benefit plan assets which are disclosed in Note 16.

The fair value of beneficial interest in trust assets is determined using the income approach and is based on a valuation model that calculates the present value of estimated distributed income. The valuation model incorporates assumptions that market participants would use in estimating future distributed income.

The Legion is able to compare the valuation model inputs and results to widely available published industry data for reasonableness; however, the Legion is unable to redeem the assets of the trust and only receives distributions. (Level 3 inputs)

Assets and Liabilities Measured on a Recurring Basis: Assets and liabilities measured at fair value on a recurring basis are summarized below:

Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2014 using			
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Assets:			
Beneficial interest in trust	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 217,900
Money market accounts	12,589,094	-	-
U.S. Government obligations	-	47,838,137	-
State and municipal bonds	-	20,701,351	-
Corporate bonds	-	32,411,041	-
	<u>\$ 12,589,094</u>	<u>\$ 100,950,529</u>	<u>\$ 217,900</u>

Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2013, using

	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Assets:			
Beneficial interest in trust	\$ -	\$ -	\$255,127
Money market accounts	14,917,708	-	-
U.S. Government obligations	-	47,095,058	-
State and municipal bonds	-	14,183,223	-
Corporate bonds	-	27,121,505	-
	\$14,917,708	\$88,399,786	\$255,127

The tables below present a reconciliation and statement of activities classification of gains and losses for all assets measured at fair value on a recurring basis using significant unobservable inputs (Level 3) for the years ended December 31, 2014 and 2013:

	Beneficial Interest in Trust
Beginning balance, Jan. 1, 2014	\$ 255,127
Change in value of split-interest agreements	2,449
Distributions from trust	(39,676)
Ending balance, Dec. 31, 2014	\$ 217,900

	Beneficial Interest in Trust
Beginning balance, Jan. 1, 2013	\$ 285,278
Change in value of split-interest agreements	9,525
Distributions from trust	(39,676)
Ending balance, Dec. 31, 2013	\$ 255,127

NOTE 6 – PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

The Legion's property and equipment, and the related accumulated depreciation at December 31, 2014 and 2013 are as follows:

	2014	2013
Washington, D.C., real estate		
Land	80,000	80,000
Building	5,603,402	5,603,402
Indianapolis real estate		
Land	389,264	389,264
Building	4,052,201	3,999,495
Construction in progress	87,260	55,454
Furniture, fixtures and equipment		
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	7,077,023	6,853,277
Washington, D.C.	770,525	765,627
	18,059,675	17,746,519
Less accumulated depreciation	(12,396,832)	(11,854,412)
	\$ 5,662,843	\$ 5,892,107

Depreciation expense for the years ended, December 31, 2014 and 2013 was \$866,783 and \$925,255, respectively.

NOTE 7 – LONG-TERM DEBT

In 2013, the Legion refinanced its long-term debt. Principal and interest is payable in monthly installment, beginning January 1, 2014 with final payment due December 3, 2020. The stated interest rate is 1.35% plus the 30-day London Inter Bank Offered Rate ("LIBOR"). The outstanding balance on long-term debt is \$1,211,949 and \$1,394,749 as of December 31, 2014 and 2013.

The future maturities of the long-term debt are as follows:

2015	187,200
2016	193,200
2017	199,200
2018	205,200
2019	211,200
Thereafter	215,949
Total	\$1,211,949

Interest expense was \$39,500 and \$204,054 for the years ended December 31, 2014 and 2013, respectively.

As a strategy to mitigate exposure to the risk of interest rate fluctuations, the Legion entered into an interest rate swap agreement on the long-term debt on December 3, 2013. This interest rate swap has been designated as a derivative and provides for the Legion to receive interest from the counterparty at the 30-day LIBOR rate plus 1.35% and to pay interest to the counterparty at fixed rate of 2.98% on a notional amount of \$1,211,949 and \$1,394,749 at December 31, 2014 and December 31, 2013 respectively. The interest rate swap matures in 2020. Under the agreement, the Legion pays or receives the net interest amount monthly, with the monthly settlements included in interest expense.

NOTE 8 – LEASES

The Legion has several non-cancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment, and copiers that expire at various dates through 2018. Rent expense under these leases for the years ended December 31, 2014 and 2013 was \$457,773 and \$425,074, respectively.

Minimum lease commitments are as follows:

2015	462,088
2016	420,219
2017	192,359
2018	15,740
	\$1,090,406

In addition, the Legion has a lease with the State of Indiana for rental of the National Headquarters building in Indianapolis which expired on June 30, 2013. The Legion is operating on a month-to-month basis until a new lease agreement extending the lease term is finalized. According to the terms of the lease, the Legion is required to maintain the interior of the building, and provide adequate insurance on the building in lieu of lease payments. The cost of maintenance for 2014 and 2013 was \$916,513 and \$943,173, respectively. Insurance coverage is included in the Legion's general insurance policy.

NOTE 9 – PAID-UP-FOR-LIFE MEMBERSHIP FUND

The National Executive Committee approved the establishment of a life membership plan available to any member of a participating department. In accordance with the plan, the assets of the Paid-Up-For-Life ("PUFL") Membership Fund are included in unrestricted, board designated net assets and segregated in a trust account from which funds equal to the annual dues of life members are withdrawn for current operations each year. The trust agreement provides that the Legion has the right to withdraw part or all of the assets of the trust account and to modify or terminate the trust agreement at its discretion.

Under the terms of the PUFL program, participating member's national, state and local dues are paid by the Legion for the remainder of the individual's life. Management has estimated and recognized a liability for the future payments

to state and local Legion organizations. Likewise, management has deferred recognition of the national dues portion of the members' payment. Deferred PUFL dues are recognized in annual amounts equal to the national dues in effect each year. The liability and deferred revenue amounts are estimated by the Legion's actuaries using PUFL membership summaries and discount rates comparable to the Legion's recent investment performance.

NOTE 10 – RESTRICTED AND RESERVE DESIGNATED FUNDS

The restricted fund is designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee and reported as unrestricted, board designated net assets. Earnings of the restricted fund, along with the principal, can be expended only upon recommendation of the National Finance Commission and a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee at two successive meetings. It is the policy of the Legion to transfer 10% of the prior year's defined net income from operations to the restricted fund. The Legion made no transfers to the restricted fund in 2014 and 2013.

The reserve fund is also designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee and reported as unrestricted, board designated net assets. However, earnings of the reserve fund may be used for the general operations of the Legion. The principal can be expended only by action of the Legion at its national convention, or by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee in two successive meetings not less than 60 days apart.

NOTE 11 – TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Temporarily restricted net assets are donor-restricted for specific purposes. At December 31, 2014 and 2013 the restricted purposes are as follows:

	2014	2013
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	\$ 1,010,881	\$ 1,010,583
Samsung scholarships	2,089,832	1,630,584
American Legacy Fund	9,498,788	7,979,924
National Emergency Fund	3,996,891	3,073,134
Boy Scouts	467,899	467,899
Operation Comfort Warriors	1,657,692	1,192,864
John Devore	313,402	302,097
Others	355,319	117,423
	\$19,390,704	\$15,774,508

NOTE 12 – NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM RESTRICTION

Net assets were released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes or by occurrence of other events specified by donors.

	2014	2013
Purpose restrictions accomplished		
Overseas graves decoration	\$ 11,090	\$ 32,945
Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)	428,932	909,462
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and		
Children & Youth programs	322,954	606,316
	\$762,976	\$1,548,723

NOTE 13 – PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Permanently restricted net assets represent donor-restricted gifts that have been invested and are to be maintained in perpetuity. Income from the Samsung scholarship fund is to be used to fund undergraduate scholarships for descendants of Korean War veterans and other wars in which U.S. servicemen and servicewomen participated. Income from the American Legion Endowment Fund is to be used to support the veterans affairs and rehabilitation and children and youth activities of the Legion.

At December 31, 2014 and 2013 the permanently restricted net assets are as follows:

	2014	2013
Samsung scholarships	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	7,987,835	7,648,514
	\$12,987,835	\$ 12,648,514

NOTE 14 – ENDOWMENT COMPOSITION

The Legion's endowments include donor restricted endowment funds and are comprised of two separate funds, the American Legion Endowment Fund and the Samsung scholarship fund. In accordance with GAAP, net assets associated with endowment funds, including funds designated by the National Executive Committee to function as endowments, are classified and reported based on the existence or absence of donor imposed restrictions.

Interpretation of Relevant Law: The National Executive Committee has interpreted the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act ("UPMIFA") as requiring the preservation of the fair value of the original gift as of the gift date of the donor restricted endowment funds absent explicit donor stipulations to the contrary. As a result of this interpretation, the Legion classifies as permanently restricted net assets (a) the original value of gifts donated to the permanent endowment, (b) the original value of subsequent gifts to the permanent endowment, and (c) net accumulations to the permanent endowment made in accordance with the governing documents of the Legion. The remaining portion of the donor restricted endowment fund that is not classified in permanently restricted net assets is classified as temporarily restricted net assets until those amounts are appropriated for expenditure by the Legion in a manner consistent with the standard of prudence prescribed by UPMIFA. In accordance with UPMIFA, the Legion considers the following factors in making a determination to appropriate or accumulate donor restricted endowment funds:

- (1) The duration and preservation of the fund
- (2) The purposes of the Legion and the donor restricted endowment fund
- (3) General economic conditions
- (4) The possible effect of inflation and deflation
- (5) The expected total return from income and the appreciation of investments
- (6) Other resources of the Legion
- (7) The investment policies of the Legion

Endowment net asset composition by type of fund as of December 31, 2014:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Donor restricted endowment funds	\$(64,308)	\$2,166,616	12,987,835	\$15,090,143
Total Funds	\$(64,308)	\$2,166,616	12,987,835	\$15,090,143

Endowment net asset composition by type of fund as of December 31, 2013:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Donor restricted endowment funds	\$ -	\$1,630,584	\$12,648,514	\$14,279,098
Total Funds	-	\$1,630,584	\$12,648,514	\$14,279,098

Changes in endowment net assets for the year ended December 31, 2014:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ -	\$1,630,584	\$12,648,514	\$14,279,098
Investment loss:				
Investment income, net of fees	\$1,965	398,798	-	400,763
Net appreciation (realized and unrealized)	1,600	487,549	19,682	508,831

Total investment loss	\$53,565	\$886,347	\$19,682	\$959,594
New gifts	-	-	319,639	319,639
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	(117,873)	(350,315)	-	(468,188)
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ (64,308)</u>	<u>\$2,166,616</u>	<u>\$12,987,835</u>	<u>\$15,090,143</u>

Changes in endowment net assets for the year December 31, 2013:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ -	\$ 2,402,192	\$12,773,882	\$15,176,074
Investment return				
Investment income, net of fees	-	463,117	-	463,117
Net depreciation (realized and unrealized)	-	(754,438)	(281,556)	(1,035,994)
Total investment return	-	(291,321)	(281,556)	(572,877)
New gifts	-	-	156,188	156,188
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	-	(480,287)	-	(480,287)
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$1,630,584</u>	<u>\$12,648,514</u>	<u>\$14,279,098</u>

Return Objectives and Risk Parameters: The Legion has adopted investment and spending policies for endowment assets that attempt to provide a predictable stream of funding to programs supported by its endowment while seeking to maintain the purchasing power of the endowment assets. Endowment assets include those assets of donor-restricted funds that the Legion must hold in perpetuity or for a donor-specified period(s). Under this policy, as approved by the National Executive Committee, the endowment assets are invested in a manner that is intended to produce income while assuming a low level of investment risk.

Strategies Employed for Achieving Objectives: To satisfy its long-term rate-of-return objectives, the Legion relies on a total return strategy in which investment returns are achieved through both capital appreciation (realized and unrealized) and current yield (interest and dividends). The Legion targets fixed income securities to achieve its long-term return objectives within prudent risk constraints.

Spending Policy and How the Investment Objectives Relate to Spending

Policy: Realized and unrealized gains/losses are added to the principal of the American Legion Endowment Fund and distributions are limited to cumulative interest, net of fees. On the Samsung scholarship fund, the capital appreciation is temporarily restricted and can be spent, along with the interest, net of fees, according to the spending policy. Endowment fund principal, unless otherwise directed by the donor, shall not be disbursed except for emergency situations. In order to make a principal disbursement, a majority vote by the Legion National Executive Committee will be required.

Funds with Deficiencies: As of December 31, 2014 and 2013, the Legion did not have any funds with deficiencies.

NOTE 15 – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

The Legion has a defined-benefit pension plan covering substantially all of its employees as well as those of certain affiliated and subordinated groups. The plan was established in 1944 by vote of the Legion's National Convention. Contributions to the plan are made by the Legion and other participating groups

on the basis of annual actuarial valuations.

In May 2008, the Legion voted to freeze the plan effective June 30, 2008 and voted to adopt a 401(k) savings plan with a qualified automatic contribution arrangement effective July 1, 2008. The result of the freeze is that current employees still received the benefits they had earned as of June 30, 2008, but no future benefits were earned and no new employees were added. The 401(k) savings plan calls for a 100% match of the first 1% contributed by the employee and a 50% match of the net 5% contributed by the employee. Thus, the maximum matching percentage an employee will receive is 3.5%. The Legion made contributions of \$401,165 and \$396,495 in 2014 and 2013, respectively.

The following table sets forth the Legion's portion of the plan's funded status and amounts recognized in the Legion's consolidated statement of financial position at December 31, 2014 and 2013:

	2014	2013
Benefit obligation	\$ (62,598,869)	\$ (53,995,406)
Fair value of plan assets	49,954,578	50,308,848
Funded status	<u>\$ (12,644,291)</u>	<u>\$ (3,686,558)</u>
Service Cost	\$ -	\$ -
Interest cost	2,336,601	2,282,923
Actual loss (return) on assets	(2,526,794)	(4,793,264)
Amortization of prior service costs	121,085	121,085
Amortization of loss	1,245,309	1,707,475
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	(890,698)	1,510,886
Net periodic pension cost	<u>285,503</u>	<u>829,105</u>
Net loss	8,793,315	(5,008,310)
Prior service cost	(121,085)	(121,085)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	<u>\$ 8,672,230</u>	<u>\$ (5,129,395)</u>
Prepaid benefit cost	13,165,425	13,450,928
Accumulated benefit obligation	62,598,869	53,995,406
Vested benefit obligation	61,100,719	53,992,693
Net periodic pension cost	285,503	829,105
Benefits paid	2,881,064	2,883,583
Measurement date	12/31/2014	12/31/2013

Estimated future benefit payments:

2015	\$ 3,372,155
2016	3,463,442
2017	3,517,906
2018	3,557,497
2019	3,541,669
2020-2024	17,938,997

The asset investment policy is a lower risk strategy with the primary objective of preservation of capital with an emphasis on long-term growth and generation of current income to provide adequate cash flow needed for benefit payments. The target asset allocation is 0-20% in cash or cash equivalents, 40-60% in fixed income and 40-60% in equities. Prohibited investments include real estate investment trusts, real estate partnerships, mutual funds, private equity, hedge funds and guaranteed investment certificates.

The fair value of the Legion's defined benefit plan assets at December 31, 2014 and 2013 are as follows. See Note 5 for descriptions of inputs for each type of asset.

Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2014, using			
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Money market accounts	\$3,873,390	\$ -	\$ -
U.S. Government and agency obligations	-	9,486,634	-
Asset backed securities	-	2,984,046	-
Municipal bonds	-	1,611,664	-
Corporate bonds	-	11,115,397	-
Common stock:			
Materials	625,585	-	-
Industrials	2,750,812	-	-
Consumer discretionary	1,815,605	-	-
Consumer staples	1,796,463	-	-
Energy	1,349,353	-	-
Health care	2,520,460	-	-
Financials	4,581,970	-	-
Telecommunication	530,082	-	-
Technology	3,569,347	-	-
Utilities	1,026,823	-	-
Other	147,951	-	-
Accrued interest	168,996	-	-
	\$24,756,837	\$25,197,741	\$ -

Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2013, using			
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Money market accounts	\$2,783,798	\$ -	\$ -
U.S. Government and agency obligations	-	10,702,087	-
Asset backed securities	-	4,617,555	-
Municipal bonds	-	1,433,701	-
Corporate bonds	-	10,992,195	-
Common stock:			
Materials	755,089	-	-
Industrials	2,189,744	-	-
Consumer discretionary	2,562,238	-	-
Consumer staples	765,285	-	-
Energy	2,478,504	-	-
Health care	1,724,568	-	-
Financials	5,564,075	-	-
Telecommunication	223,824	-	-
Technology	3,133,789	-	-
Utilities	120,627	-	-
Other	67,904	-	-
Accrued interest	193,865	-	-
	\$22,563,310	\$27,745,538	\$ -

Historical returns of multiple asset classes were analyzed to develop a risk free real rate of return and risk premium for each asset class. The overall rate for each asset class was developed by combining a long-term inflation component, the risk free real rate of return, and the associated risk premium. A weighted average rate was developed based on those overall rates and the target asset allocation of the plan.

Weighted-average assumptions	2014	2013
Discount rate	3.67%	4.45%
Expected return on plan assets	7.00%	7.00%
Rate of compensation increase	0.00%	0.00%

The amounts of net loss and net prior service cost expected to be recognized as components of net periodic benefit cost for the year ending December 31, 2015 are \$2,470,872 and \$121,085, respectively.

NOTE 16 – FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

The following represents a functional breakdown of the Legion's expenses by program and supporting services:

	2014	2013
Program services		
Veterans programs and services	\$ 37,312,183	\$ 35,043,406
Americanism, Children & Youth activities	1,896,947	4,804,864
	39,209,130	39,848,270
Supporting services		
Management and general	15,613,828	16,882,530
Member development	9,567,828	12,735,733
Fundraising	8,397,117	5,318,546
	33,578,773	34,936,809
	\$72,787,903	\$74,785,079

Member development includes direct response advertising expense of \$5,878,102 and \$10,246,445 for the years ended December 31, 2014 and 2013.

NOTE 17 – LITIGATION

The Legion is currently involved in and/or has been mentioned as a defendant or co-defendant in several legal actions. It is the opinion of the National Judge Advocate that these claims are without merit and any ultimate liability of the Legion with respect to these actions will not materially affect the financial statements of the Legion.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Financial Position
December 31, 2014

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,853,594	\$ 196,390	\$ 20,705	\$ 200,970	\$ -	\$ 2,271,659
Accounts receivable	5,360,048	405,497	987	34,241	(412,725)	5,388,048
Interest receivable	622,288	4,363	51,468	23,118	-	701,237
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,578,478	-	1,840	-	-	1,580,318
Deferred membership expense	5,619,594	-	-	-	-	5,619,594
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventory	2,704,357	-	-	-	-	2,704,357
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	16,590	-	-	-	-	16,590
Beneficial interest in trust	-	-	217,900	-	-	217,900
	<u>19,754,949</u>	<u>606,250</u>	<u>292,900</u>	<u>258,329</u>	<u>(2,412,725)</u>	<u>18,499,703</u>
Investments						
General	15,377,229	-	-	-	-	15,377,229
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	32,618,517	-	-	-	-	32,618,517
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	23,801,938	-	-	-	-	23,801,938
Samsung scholarship fund	7,934,482	-	-	-	-	7,934,482
Building funds	5,532,253	-	-	-	-	5,532,253
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	9,583,418	-	-	-	-	9,583,418
Special account – Endowment Fund	-	-	2,267,776	-	-	2,267,776
General account – Endowment Fund	-	-	7,439,635	-	-	7,439,635
National Emergency Fund	-	-	-	3,738,562	-	3,738,562
Other	3,118,412	2,127,401	-	-	-	5,245,813
	<u>97,966,249</u>	<u>2,127,401</u>	<u>9,707,411</u>	<u>3,738,562</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>113,539,623</u>
Property, plant and equipment, net	<u>5,662,843</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,662,843</u>
	<u>\$ 123,384,041</u>	<u>\$ 2,733,651</u>	<u>\$ 10,000,311</u>	<u>\$ 3,996,891</u>	<u>\$ (2,412,725)</u>	<u>\$ 137,702,169</u>
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	\$ 1,796,667	\$ 607	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (412,725)	\$ 1,384,549
Scholarships payable	1,041,586	-	-	-	-	1,041,586
Accounts payable – Legion	-	-	2,000,000	-	(2,000,000)	-
Deposits on ambien merchandise sales	229,037	-	-	-	-	229,037
Deferred income	624,823	-	-	-	-	624,823
Deferred dues income	21,357,070	-	-	-	-	21,357,070
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	4,621,989	-	-	-	-	4,621,989
Accrued vacation benefits	1,037,790	-	-	-	-	1,037,790
Accrued pension expense	12,644,291	-	-	-	-	12,644,291
Other liabilities	1,183,321	-	-	-	-	1,183,321
Notes payable	1,211,949	-	-	-	-	1,211,949
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Membership	21,204,292	-	-	-	-	21,204,292
Life memberships due to state and local posts	22,487,809	-	-	-	-	22,487,809
	<u>89,440,624</u>	<u>607</u>	<u>2,000,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(2,412,725)</u>	<u>89,028,506</u>
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted	15,443,298	916,134	(64,308)	-	-	16,295,124
Temporarily restricted	13,500,119	1,816,910	76,784	3,996,891	-	19,390,704
Permanently restricted	5,000,000	-	7,987,835	-	-	12,987,835
Total net assets	<u>33,943,417</u>	<u>2,733,044</u>	<u>8,000,311</u>	<u>3,996,891</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>48,673,663</u>
	<u>\$ 123,384,041</u>	<u>\$ 2,733,651</u>	<u>\$ 10,000,311</u>	<u>\$ 3,996,891</u>	<u>\$ (2,412,725)</u>	<u>\$ 137,702,169</u>

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Financial Position
December 31, 2013

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,166,168	\$ 4,920	\$ 107,625	\$ 393,059	\$ -	\$ 1,671,772
Accounts receivable	2,776,054	-	1,333	80,569	(181,376)	2,676,580
Interest receivable	588,251	7,601	41,654	21,163	-	658,669
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,111,344	-	1,805	-	-	1,113,149
Deferred membership expense	4,243,253	-	-	-	-	4,243,253
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventory	2,528,224	-	-	-	-	2,528,224
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	19,185	-	-	-	-	19,185
Beneficial interest in trust	-	-	255,127	-	-	255,127
	14,432,479	12,521	407,544	494,791	(2,181,376)	13,165,959
Investments						
General	16,672,525	-	-	-	-	16,672,525
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	29,994,122	-	-	-	-	29,994,122
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	19,375,836	-	-	-	-	19,375,836
Samsung scholarship fund	8,155,301	-	-	-	-	8,155,301
Building funds	5,041,826	-	-	-	-	5,041,826
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	7,317,762	-	-	-	-	7,317,762
Special account - Endowment Fund	-	-	2,249,177	-	-	2,249,177
General account - Endowment Fund	-	-	6,991,793	-	-	6,991,793
National Emergency Fund	-	-	-	2,578,343	-	2,578,343
Other	3,132,626	1,808,183	-	-	-	4,940,809
	89,689,998	1,808,183	9,240,970	2,578,343	-	103,317,494
Property, plant and equipment, net	5,892,107	-	-	-	-	5,892,107
	\$ 110,014,584	\$ 1,820,704	\$ 9,648,514	\$ 3,073,134	\$ (2,181,376)	\$ 122,375,560
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	\$ 2,298,406	\$ 144,144	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (181,376)	\$ 2,261,174
Scholarships payable	1,045,025	-	-	-	-	1,045,025
Accounts payable - Legion	-	-	2,000,000	-	(2,000,000)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	216,386	-	-	-	-	216,386
Deferred income	671,849	-	-	-	-	671,849
Deferred dues income	22,118,520	-	-	-	-	22,118,520
Deferred income - direct membership solicitation	5,601,353	-	-	-	-	5,601,353
Accrued vacation benefits	1,038,409	-	-	-	-	1,038,409
Accrued pension expense	3,686,558	-	-	-	-	3,686,558
Other liabilities	718,132	-	-	-	-	718,132
Notes payable	1,394,749	-	-	-	-	1,394,749
Deferred dues income - Paid-Up-For-Life Membership	18,571,364	-	-	-	-	18,571,364
Life memberships due to state and local posts	18,709,473	-	-	-	-	18,709,473
	76,070,224	144,144	2,000,000	-	(2,181,376)	76,032,992
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted	17,435,900	483,646	-	-	-	17,919,546
Temporarily restricted	11,508,460	1,192,914	-	3,073,134	-	15,774,508
Permanently restricted	5,000,000	-	7,648,514	-	-	12,648,514
	33,944,360	1,676,560	7,648,514	3,073,134	-	46,342,568
Total net assets	\$ 110,014,584	\$ 1,820,704	\$ 9,648,514	\$ 3,073,134	\$ (2,181,376)	\$ 122,375,560

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statements of Activities,
Year ended December 31, 2014

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	\$ 26,208,428	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-	26,208,428
Direct membership solicitation	8,126,608	-	-	-	-	8,126,608
Member service fees income	726,969	-	-	-	-	726,969
Affinity income	3,144,483	6,246	-	-	-	3,150,729
Sales of emblem items	12,243,214	-	-	-	-	12,243,214
Advertising	10,490,471	-	-	-	-	10,490,471
Contributions	8,626,640	1,351,856	319,639	762,353	(221,893)	10,838,595
Label and printing fees	1,826,994	-	-	-	-	1,826,994
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,301,363	37,119	202,227	91,618	-	2,632,327
Net realized gains (losses)	(9,331)	21	(18,154)	812	-	(26,652)
American Legion Endowment Fund income	173,259	-	-	-	(173,259)	-
Other	2,313,840	-	-	-	-	2,313,840
	<u>76,172,938</u>	<u>1,395,242</u>	<u>503,712</u>	<u>854,783</u>	<u>(395,152)</u>	<u>78,531,523</u>
Expenses						
Salaries	15,928,906	-	-	-	-	15,928,906
Employee benefits	3,423,205	-	-	-	-	3,423,205
Cost of sales - Legion	6,683,745	-	-	-	-	6,683,745
Department and magazine costs	3,063,870	-	-	-	-	3,063,870
Direct publications	11,920,926	-	-	-	-	11,920,926
Executive and staff travel	3,368,856	-	5,854	-	-	3,374,710
Commission and committee	1,637,849	-	-	-	-	1,637,849
Printing and postage	10,020,891	-	-	-	-	10,020,891
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,406,542	345,849	173,259	65,575	(395,152)	1,596,073
Office and other operating	11,313,832	9,414	12,237	1,736	-	11,337,219
Occupancy and usage	2,077,524	-	-	-	-	2,077,524
Special projects and programs	1,668,314	54,671	-	-	-	1,722,985
	<u>72,514,460</u>	<u>409,934</u>	<u>191,350</u>	<u>67,311</u>	<u>(395,152)</u>	<u>72,787,903</u>
Change in net assets from operations	<u>3,658,478</u>	<u>985,308</u>	<u>312,362</u>	<u>787,472</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,743,620</u>
Net unrealized losses - investments	<u>3,855,302</u>	<u>71,176</u>	<u>39,435</u>	<u>136,285</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,102,198</u>
Net change in PUFL	<u>2,402,816</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,402,816</u>
Amortization of pension loss	<u>(1,245,309)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(1,245,309)</u>
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	<u>(8,672,230)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(8,672,230)</u>
Change in net assets	<u>(943)</u>	<u>1,056,484</u>	<u>351,797</u>	<u>923,757</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,331,095</u>
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>\$ 33,944,360</u>	<u>\$ 1,676,560</u>	<u>\$ 7,648,514</u>	<u>\$ 3,073,134</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 46,342,568</u>
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ 33,943,417</u>	<u>\$ 2,733,044</u>	<u>\$ 8,000,311</u>	<u>\$ 3,996,891</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 48,673,663</u>

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statements of Activities,
Year ended December 31, 2013

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	\$ 26,654,751	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	26,654,751
Direct membership solicitation	9,883,114	-	-	-	-	9,883,114
Member service fees income	888,211	-	-	-	-	888,211
Affinity income	3,183,472	-	-	-	-	3,183,472
Sales of emblem items	11,705,925	-	-	-	-	11,705,925
Advertising	10,745,474	-	-	-	-	10,745,474
Contributions	5,631,965	1,336,622	234,154	471,317	(58,382)	7,615,676
Label and printing fees	1,562,454	-	-	-	-	1,562,454
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,364,052	9,114	258,587	87,865	-	2,719,618
Net realized gains	134,575	-	(1,246)	(337)	-	132,992
American Legion Endowment						
Fund income	137,755	-	-	-	(137,755)	-
Other	2,437,632	-	-	-	-	2,437,632
	<u>75,329,380</u>	<u>1,345,736</u>	<u>491,495</u>	<u>558,845</u>	<u>(196,137)</u>	<u>77,529,319</u>
Expenses						
Salaries	15,589,187	-	-	-	-	15,589,187
Employee benefits	3,487,348	-	-	-	-	3,487,348
Cost of sales - Legion	6,252,946	-	-	-	-	6,252,946
Department and magazine costs	2,581,581	-	-	-	-	2,581,581
Direct publications	12,279,710	-	-	-	-	12,279,710
Executive and staff travel	3,233,272	-	4,838	-	-	3,238,110
Commission and committee	1,864,766	-	-	-	-	1,864,766
Printing and postage	8,228,511	-	-	-	-	8,228,511
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,763,601	337,732	137,755	638,955	(196,137)	2,681,906
Office and other operating	14,587,432	158	153,751	787	-	14,742,128
Occupancy and usage	2,136,461	-	-	-	-	2,136,461
Special projects and programs	1,702,425	-	-	-	-	1,702,425
	<u>73,707,240</u>	<u>337,890</u>	<u>296,344</u>	<u>639,742</u>	<u>(196,137)</u>	<u>74,785,079</u>
Change in net assets from operations	1,622,140	1,007,846	195,151	(80,897)	-	2,744,240
Net unrealized gains - investments	(6,059,312)	(56,822)	(371,439)	(198,893)	-	(6,686,466)
Net change in PUFL	(2,846,311)	-	-	-	-	(2,846,311)
Amortization of pension loss	(1,707,475)	-	-	-	-	(1,707,475)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	5,129,395	-	-	-	-	5,129,395
	<u>(593,857)</u>	<u>593,857</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Change in net assets	(4,455,420)	1,544,881	(176,288)	(279,790)	-	(3,366,617)
Net assets, beginning of year	38,399,780	131,679	7,824,802	3,352,924	-	49,709,185
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ 33,944,360</u>	<u>\$ 1,676,560</u>	<u>\$ 7,648,514</u>	<u>\$ 3,073,134</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 46,342,568</u>