

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 116TH NATIONAL CON-  
VENTION OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS  
OF THE UNITED STATES

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COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE ADJUTANT GENERAL, THE VETERANS  
OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

TRANSMITTING

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 116TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF  
THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES,  
HELD IN PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA, JULY 18-22, 2015, PUR-  
SUANT TO 44 U.S.C. 1332; (PUBLIC LAW 90-620 (AS AMENDED  
BY PUBLIC LAW 105-225, SEC. 3); (112 STAT. 1498)



MAY 3, 2016.—Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and  
ordered to be printed

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NATIONAL ENCAMPMENTS OF VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS;  
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PRINTED ANNUALLY FOR CONGRESS

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

[Approved October 2, 1968.]

**LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL**

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES  
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI  
April, 2016

Honorable Paul Ryan  
The Speaker U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In conformance with the provisions of Public Law No. 620, 90<sup>th</sup> Congress, approved October 22, 1968, I am transmitting to you herewith the proceedings of the 116<sup>th</sup> National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, July 18-22, 2015, which is submitted for printing as a House document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John E. Hamilton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "J".

John E. Hamilton  
Adjutant General



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

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

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

\* indicates deceased

**American Veterans of Foreign Service**

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

American Veterans of Foreign Service  
(Eastern Branch)

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

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

**Army of the Philippines**

1900-1901	Gen. Francis V. Greene *	.....Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1901-1902	Gen. Irving Hale *	..... Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.

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

### **Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States**

1913-1914	Rice W. Means*	Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1914-1915	Thomas Crago *	Elected at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.
1915-1916	Gus Hartung*	Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1916-1917	Albert Rabin*	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1917-1918	William Ralston*	Elected at New York, New York.
1918-1919	F. Warner Karling*	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1919-1920	F. Warner Karling*	Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1920-1921	Robert G. Woodside*	Elected at Washington, D.C.
1921-1922	Robert G. Woodside*	Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1922-1923	Tillinghast Huston*	Elected at Seattle, Washington.
1923-1924	Gen. Lloyd M. Brett*	Elected at Norfolk, Virginia.
1924-1925	John H. Dunn*	Elected at Atlantic City, New Jersey.
1925-1926	Fred Stover*	Elected at Tulsa, Oklahoma.
1926-1927	Theodore Stitt*	Elected at El Paso, Texas.
1927-1928	Frank T. Strayer*	Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1928-1929	Eugene P. Carver*	Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
1929-1930	Kezekiah N. Duff*	Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1930-1931	Paul C. Wolman*	Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
1931-1932	Darold D. DeCoe*	Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1932-1933	Adm. Robert E. Coontz*	Elected at Sacramento, California.
1933-1934	James E. Van Zandt*	Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1934-1935	James E. Van Zandt*	Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.
1935-1936	James E. Van Zandt*	Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1936-1937	Bernard W. Kearny*	Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1937-1938	Scott P. Squires*	Elected at Buffalo, New York.

1938-1939	Eugene I. Van Antwerp* .....	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1939-1940	Otis N. Brown* .....	Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1940-1941	Joseph C. Menendez* .....	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1941-1942	Max Singer* .....	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1942-1943	Robert T. Merrill* .....	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1943-1944	Carl S. Schoeninger* .....	Elected at New York, New York.
1944-1945	Jean A. Brunner* .....	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1945-1946	Joseph M. Stack* .....	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1946-1947	Louis E. Starr* .....	Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1947-1948	Ray H. Brannaman* .....	Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
1948-1949	Lyall T. Beggs* .....	Elected at St. Louis, Missouri.
1949-1950	Clyde A. Lewis* .....	Elected at Miami, Florida.
1950-1951	Charles C. Ralls* .....	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1951-1952	Frank C. Hilton* .....	Elected at New York, New York.
1952-1953	James W. Cothran* .....	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1953-1954	Wayne E. Richards* .....	Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1954-1955	Merton B. Tice* .....	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1955-1956	Timothy J. Murphy* .....	Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1956-1957	Cooper T. Holt* .....	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1957-1958	Richard L. Roudebush* .....	Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1958-1959	John W. Mahan* .....	Elected at New York, New York.
1959-1960	Louis G. Feldmann* .....	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1960-1961	T.C. Connell* .....	Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1961-1962	Robert E. Hansen* .....	Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1962-1963	Byron B. Gentry* .....	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1963-1964	Joseph J. Lombardo* .....	Elected at Seattle, Washington.
1964-1965	John A. Jenkins* .....	Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
1965-1966	Andy Borg* .....	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1966-1967	Leslie M. Fry* .....	Elected at New York, New York.
1967-1968	Joseph A. Scerra* .....	Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1968-1969	Richard W. Homan* .....	Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1969-1970	Raymond A. Gallagher* .....	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1970-1971	Herbert R. Rainwater* .....	Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1971-1972	Joseph L. Vicites* .....	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1972-1973	Patrick E. Carr* .....	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1973-1974	Ray R. Soden* .....	Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1974-1975	John J. Stang .....	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1975-1976	Thomas C. Walker* .....	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1976-1977	R. D. Smith Jr. ....	Elected at New York, New York.

1977-1978 Dr. John Wasyluk\* .....Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.

1978-1979 Eric Sandstrom\* ..... Elected at Dallas, Texas.

1979-1980 Howard E. Vander Clute Jr.\* .... Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.

1980-1981 T. C. Selman\* .....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.

1980-1981 Arthur Fellwock\* ..... Succeeded T.C. Selman, Oct. 21, 1980.

1980-1981 Arthur Fellwock\* ..... Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

1982-1983 James R. Currieo .....Elected at Los Angeles, California.

1983-1984 Clifford G. Olson Jr ..... Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.

1984-1985 Billy Ray Cameron ..... Elected at Chicago, Illinois.

1985-1986 John S. Staum ..... Elected at Dallas, Texas.

1986-1987 Norman G. Staab\* .....Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.

1987-1988 Earl L. Stock\* ..... Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.

1988-1989 Larry W. Rivers .....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.

1989-1990 Walter G. Hogan ..... Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.

1990-1991 James L. Kimery\* .....Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.

1991-1992 Robert E. Wallace ..... Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.

1992-1993 John M. Carney ..... Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.

1993-1994 George R. Cramer ..... Elected at Dallas, Texas.

1994-1995 Allen F. "Gunner" Kent ..... Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.

1995-1996 Paul A. Spera .....Elected at Phoenix, Arizona.

1996-1997 James E. Nier ..... Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.

1997-1998 John E. Moon .....Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.

1998-1999 Thomas A. Pouliot ..... Elected at San Antonio, Texas.

1999-2000 John W. Smart ..... Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.

2000-2001 John F. Gwizdak .....Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

2001-2002 James N. Goldsmith\* .....Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

2002-2003 Raymond C. Sisk\* ..... Elected at Nashville, Tennessee.

2003-2004 Edward S. Banas, Sr. .... Elected at San Antonio, Texas.

2004-2005 John Furgess ..... Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.

2005-2006 James R. Mueller .....Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.

2006-2007 Gary L. Kurpius ..... Elected at Reno, Nevada.

2007-2008 George J. Lisicki ..... Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.

2008-2009 Glen M. Gardner, Jr. ....Elected at Orlando, Florida.

2009-2010 Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr. ....Elected at Phoenix, Arizona.

2010-2011 Richard L. Eubank ..... Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.

2011-2012 Richard L. DeNoyer ..... Elected at San Antonio, Texas.

2012-2013 John E. Hamilton ..... Elected at Reno, Nevada.

2013-2014 William A. Thien ..... Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.

2014-2015 John W. Stroud .....Elected at St. Louis, Missouri.

2015-2016 John A. Biedrzycki, Jr. .... Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

### VFW NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 2014-2015

Commander-in-Chief..... John W. Stroud  
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief..... John A. Biedrzycki, Jr.  
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief ..... Brian Duffy  
Adjutant General.....John E. Hamilton  
Quartermaster General..... Robert B. Greene  
Judge Advocate General ..... Daniel J. Nail  
Surgeon General ..... Robert Lane, Jr., DMD  
National Chaplain..... Charlene K. Cobb  
National Chief of Staff..... Merlin B. Hollinger  
Inspector General ..... Raymond K. Thomas  
Assistant Adjutant General &  
Executive Director, Washington Office ..... Robert E. Wallace  
Assistant Adjutant General, Operations ..... Jerry L. Newberry  
Assistant Quartermaster General ..... John R. Muckelbauer  
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Associate Director, Administrative Operations ..... Zach Schwenk  
Associate Director, Administrative Operations ..... Johnathan Duncan  
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Director, Human Resources ..... Debra L. Anderson  
Director, Membership..... Robert A. Crider  
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Associate Director, Membership ..... Corey Q. Cornett  
Director, National Legislative Service ..... Raymond C. Kelley  
Director, National Veterans Service..... William L. Bradshaw  
Deputy Director, National Veterans Service ..... Gerald T. Manar  
Deputy Director, National Veterans Service ..... Ryan Gallucci  
Director of Operations ..... Patrick J. Botbyl  
Director, Programs..... Kevin C. Jones  
Director, VFW Properties..... Billy R. Weissend  
Director, Publications and Editor-in-Chief, VFW magazine ..... Richard K. Kolb

### NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEMBERS, 2014-2015

Department of Alabama	George Jones
Department of Alaska	Robert Myles
Department of Arizona	Timothy Borland
Department of Arkansas	Terry Callahan
Department of California	Denis Wells
Department of Colorado	Ronald Lattin
Department of Connecticut	Richard DiFederico
Department of Delaware	John Morrow
Department of District of Columbia	Herman Salley

Department of Europe	Peter Mascetti
Department of Florida	Daniel P. Duffy
Department of Georgia	Pledge M. Cannon, Sr.
Department of Hawaii	Norbert Enos
Department of Idaho	John Crotinger
Department of Illinois	Jules Spindler
Department of Indiana	Richard Faulk
Department of Iowa	Darrell Blasberg
Department of Kansas	J. T. Plummer
Department of Kentucky	Claud Wyatt
Department of Louisiana	Federico Arends
Department of Maine	Raymond Lupo
Department of Maryland	Eugene Stewart
Department of Massachusetts	George Murray
Department of Michigan	John Pray
Department of Minnesota	Donald Nix
Department of Mississippi	Johnnie Richard
Department of Missouri	Jessie Jones
Department of Montana	Timothy Peters
Department of Nebraska	Dan Petersen
Department of Nevada	Herman Hagen
Department of New Hampshire	Paul Lloyd
Department of New Jersey	Manuel Almeida
Department of New Mexico	Allan Kuchinsky
Department of New York	James McNally
Department of North Carolina	Jason Schoolcraft
Department of North Dakota	Dale Ronning
Department of Ohio	Richard Uzl
Department of Oklahoma	Donald Fenter
Department of Oregon	Bert Key
Department of Pacific Areas	Gerald Kraus
Department of Pennsylvania	Robert Eiler
Department of Rhode Island	Allen Wagonblott
Department of South Carolina	Melvin Gunter, Jr.
Department of South Dakota	Russel Dramstad
Department of Tennessee	Darryl McPheron
Department of Texas	Lazaro Velasques, Jr.
Department of Utah	Brent Neilsen
Department of Vermont	Ronald Tallman
Department of Virginia	Kim DeShano
Department of Washington	Jerry Herker
Department of West Virginia	Robert Caruthers
Department of Wisconsin	Allen Kochenderfer
Department of Wyoming	James Pedersen
Immediate Past Commander-in-Chief	William Thien

**NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE**

**July 19 - 23, 2014, St. Louis, Missouri**

Convention Committee Chairman	James Mueller
Health Fair Chairman	Deborah Halter
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-Chairman	Lewie Cooper
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-Chairman	Michael Key
Assistant Adjutant General, Administration Operations	Jerry Newberry
Manager, Meetings & Events	Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM
Memorial Service Chairman	Kenneth Allison
Patriotic Rally Chairman	James Malson
Registration Chairman	Phillip Pippins
Transportation Chairman	John Ebner

**NATIONAL HONOR GUARD**

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

**NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS**

	POST
Bryan P. O'Brien	2394 MA

**NATIONAL ASSISTANT SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS**

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



John W Stroud  
Commander-in-Chief  
2014-2015





John A. Biedrzycki, Jr.  
Commander-in-Chief  
2015-2016

## VFW NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 2015-2016

Commander-in-Chief.....	John A. Biedrzycki, Jr.
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.....	Bernard J. "Brian" Duffy
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief .....	Keith E. Harman
Adjutant General.....	John E. Hamilton
Quartermaster General.....	Lawrence M. Maher
Judge Advocate General .....	Matthew M. "Fritz" Mihelcic
Surgeon General .....	Curtis O. "Doc" Bohlman
National Chaplain.....	Joseph N. "Nick" Guest
National Chief of Staff.....	Allen Q. Jones
Inspector General .....	William J. "Doc" Schmitz
Assistant Adjutant General & Executive Director, Washington Office .....	Robert E. Wallace
Assistant Adjutant General, Communications & Marketing .....	Jerry L. Newberry
Assistant Adjutant General, Administration & Programs .....	Kevin C. Jones
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**July 18- 22, 2015, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**

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SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE 116th NATIONAL CONVENTION  
OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA, JULY 19-22, 2015

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE  
SUNDAY, JULY 19, 2015

(The Memorial Service of the 116th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief John W. Stroud, presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will please escort the Gold Star families and the Past National Chaplains to their reserved seating.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: National Sergeants, escort in the Gold Star Parents, Gold Star Families and the Past National Chaplains. Ladies and gentlemen, please rise, and I ask, please, no applause.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the hall for the advancement and posting of the Colors, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem.

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

ADVANCE OF COLORS

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

(Whereupon, the Assembly gave the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the National Anthem sung by Willa A. Watts, National Soloist, Ladies Auxiliary, and the Posting of the Colors.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: The opening of this Memorial Service has been completed, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Please remain standing for the Invocation by Reverend Thomas M. Hall, II.

#### INVOCATION

REVEREND THOMAS HALL: My first VFW Convention was as a junior in high school in 1969 in Washington, D.C. I was a state winner of the VFW Voice of Democracy contest. You brought me to Washington.

I got to meet my congressman, who just weeks later appointed me to the Air Force Academy and sent me on a 30-year career in the Air Force, and on the GI Bill the seminary here in Pittsburgh. You changed my life. Thank you.

Would you pray with me.

O, Lord, God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, You alone are holy. You are the source of truth and justice, mercy and love.

You created us in your image that we might serve You and serve each other for all time. You poured out Your blessings upon the Nation that it might be a source of hope and freedom for all humankind.

We thank you that in every generation, You raise up men and women who answer to their country's call. We especially thank you for the memory of our honored dead. Protect and guide all who serve, especially those who serve far from home.

Bless and comfort their families. Bring home our POWs and MIAs, and heal our wounded warriors.

Now, Lord, pour out Your spirit on this Memorial Service. Be present with us as we honor our fallen comrades. Open our minds and hearts that we might see Your face and be a guiding reality to us throughout this week. Join us always to Your redeeming work in the world. Amen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Please be seated. The Yinzer Singers will now perform "I Hear America Singing."

(Whereupon, the Yinzer Singers sang "I Hear America Singing".)

#### IN MEMORIAM NORMAN G. STAAB AND ARTHUR J. FELLWOCK

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Sadly, two of the VFW's great commanders-in-chief passed away this past administrative year. Norman G. Staab, on December 2, 2014 and Arthur J. Fellwock on March 16, 2015.

As indicated in the program, Norman was Commander-in-Chief from 1986 to 1987, and Arthur was Commander-in-Chief from 1980 to 1982.

The family of Commander-in-Chief Staab is represented by his wife, Cacilie Staab, and his son, Andreas Hawthorne, and the family of Chief Fellwock is represented by his daughters, Debbie Haton, Vicki Fellwock and Cheryl Adams.

Please remember them in your prayers.

## MEMORIAL RITUAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Comrades, Auxiliary members and friends: We meet at this time to commemorate our comrades of the United States Armed Forces who have answered the last call. The VFW Ritual provides that the audience shall refrain from applauding. The Chief of Staff will see that there is no disturbance during the ceremonies.

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

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

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN CHARLENE COBB: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am at your service and shall endeavor to perform the solemn duty in the spirit of faith, hope and charity. We will now have the lighting of the POW-MIA candle and the Armed Forces vigilant candle by the National Commander-in-Chief and the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary.

We lost five members of our Armed Forces in a senseless shooting this last week. Our Armed Forces vigilant candle reminds us of the price that our servicemen and women can be asked to pay. Our prayers are with the families, friends and comrades of Gunnery Sergeant Thomas J. Sullivan from Springfield, Massachusetts.

Staff Sergeant David A. Wyatt, Brook County, North Carolina, a high school graduate from Russellville, Arkansas.

Sergeant Carson Holmquist, Grantsburg, Wisconsin.

Lance Corporal Squire "Skip" Wells, Marietta, Georgia, and Petty Officer Randall Smith, from Paulding, Ohio.

Let's pray. O, God Almighty, Creator and Ruler of the universe, some of Your comrades and companions are prisoners of war and missing in action. Comfort them, we pray, in their isolation from their homes and loved ones.

Supply their needs and protect them from want and deprivation, strengthen and sustain them that they may face discouragement with courage and hardship with resolution.

Grant that they may find patience to endure and peace in the knowledge of Your continuing presence.

O, God, we ask that You will strengthen and protect all our members of the Armed Forces of the United States of America. In the day of battle, may they be courageous and strong, resourceful and capable, resolute and victorious. In a moment of loss, may they feel Your presence and be a comfort to families left behind to carry on. In the time of peace, may they serve with dignity and honor as effective emissaries of goodwill for this Nation.

May their devotion and loyalty to You and to their homeland, inspire them in moments of challenge, and comfort them in tribulation and long separations from loved ones.

Finally, we ask they may return safely to serve You and Your country in the days and years to come. Amen.

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

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

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

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

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

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: I have. The Book of Life tells us, "Like a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."

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

LADIES AUXILIARY CHAPLAIN DEE GUILLORY: I have a message of hope that should inspire our comrades at this solemn moment and all through life. The message is from the Captain of our Salvation. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN COBB: Comrades, we are thankful for those inspiring thoughts. Let us learn the lesson of the hour, which is that we, too, are nearing the end of life's pilgrimage and sooner or later these services may be held in our memory.

Let us so live that when our summons comes we may depart with a good conscience, in the comfort of a sincere religion, belief in God, and a perfect charity toward all mankind. Let us pray.

Father, we, come humbly before You knowing that You are ultimately in control of the world as we honor the memory of those no longer with us. Keep us diligent in our walk with You that we might be a light to the world, reflecting Your goodness and the salvation of the Lord.

Bless all those in attendance here, bless our servicemen and women wherever they are serving. Bless their families and God bless our wonderful organization and country. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Willa Watts, National Soloist from the Ladies Auxiliary, will now perform "Sleep Soldier Boy."

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



## SYMBOLIC TRIBUTE

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN COBB: Thank you, Willa. That was absolutely beautiful. Comrades, in commemorating the virtues of our departed heroes, who served their country in time of need, we now offer our symbolic tributes.

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

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

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

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN COBB: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, have you a tribute to place upon this sacred shrine?

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

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

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

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN COBB: Jim Phelps will now perform "Amazing Grace."

(Whereupon, Jim Phelps played "Amazing Grace" on the bagpipes.)

## MEMORIAL ADDRESS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is now my distinct pleasure to introduce our speaker, Judge Michael E. Dunlavy. Judge Michael E. Dunlavy was born in Buffalo, New York. He graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 1967, and shortly thereafter spent four years on active duty in the United States Army.

After completing a tour of duty in Vietnam, he went on to earn his juris doctorate degree from the State University of New York, at Buffalo.

He established a private practice in Erie, Pennsylvania, concentrating in complex civil litigation, while also serving as an Erie County Assistant District Attorney and part-time public defender.

While in private practice, he received numerous awards from his civic activities, including the U.S. Small Business Administration 1999 National Veterans Advocate of the Year Award.

In 2003, was designated the Distinguished Pennsylvanian of the Year by Gannon University. Judge Dunlavy was elected to the Court of Common Pleas in November 1999, and assigned to the Family Law Division.

As a member of the Army Reserve, he served and commanded units from detachment through division. He was selected for promotion to brigadier general and was assigned as the Deputy Commanding General of the Army Intelligence and Security Command, and later reassigned as the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, and promoted to major general.

Upon completion of that assignment, he was chosen by Lieutenant General Michael Hayden to be his assistant at the National Security Agency.

Shortly after the September 11th terrorist attacks, Dunlavey was mobilized as a general working for Hayden. He was personally chosen by the Secretary of Defense to establish an interrogation center to house Al-Qaeda, Taliban, and other terrorists in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He completed that mission in November 2002, and returned to the NSA.

In 2003, he was assigned to the New Terrorism Threat Integration Center as Associate Director for Homeland Security. He completed that assignment and returned to civilian life in April 2004.

Among his many awards are the Army Distinguished Service Medal, the NSA Director's Medal for Excellence, the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal with Bronze Star, with Oak Leaf Cluster, and Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

Please join me in welcoming Judge Michael E Dunlavey. (Applause)

JUDGE DUNLAVEY: Good morning, everyone. Thank you, Commander, for those kind words. Fellow veterans, Gold Star Families, I am Mike Dunlavey and I am proud to say I am a life member of the VFW.

I was told by the Chaplain that this is a memorial service. I won't argue with God's right-hand man, but I believe that this is really a Celebration Service. A celebration of life in that we have men and women like you, who have answered America's call when you were needed most.

It is a celebration of the life of the four Marines and one Sailor in Chattanooga who gave their lives in our current war against terrorism. A war that is now on our doorsteps.

The late Major Dick Winters of Company E 101st Airborne, better known as the Band of Brothers, said he was not a hero but was proud to serve in the company of heroes, men and women just like you.

Here in Pittsburgh we are surrounded by heroes: Charles Commando Kelly, from World War II, Captain Joe Marm from the First Battle of Ia Drang in Vietnam, Sergeant First Class Randy Shughart from Black Hawk Down in Mogadishu, Specialist Ross McGinnis, a hero from Bagdad, and Rocky Bleier, a fellow Notre Dame graduate, a fellow Vietnam vet, Pittsburgh Steeler and outstanding advocate for Veterans everywhere.

Every day now the first thing I do, like many of us, is look at the obituary list, it's sad but true. Most of our World War II vets are gone and Korean War and now, unfortunately, Vietnam vets are all too frequently on that list.

Fortunately, we still have one member of the Band of Brothers still alive and well in Erie, Pennsylvania. But I cannot forget another Screaming Eagle, Gary Wion, a very good friend and a fellow Vietnam veteran who is fighting his final battle with cancer caused by Agent Orange. A wound that continues to kill more Vietnam vets than enemy bullets.

Having said all that, it is an honor for me to remember the men and woman of our Armed Forces who throughout our history have sacrificed their lives so that we might live in freedom. And I will tell you that this is both a personal and public journey for me.

Because you asked so little but inspire so much, only asking for gratitude from a grateful Nation and a commitment to never forget the sacrifices of our heroes and their families. We know that we must continue this fight rather than allow our fallen heroes, their families, us and our families to become casualties again if we allow Washington to have a memory loss.

Remember Gary Sinise, better known as Lieutenant Dan in Forrest Gump? Well, he is a true American hero, too. I have seen him regularly visiting the wounded and their families at Walter Reed and he does so without public thanks, and without fanfare. Recently he said, "A man doesn't die until he is forgotten." I think that is absolutely true.

During my time on active duty, I actually lived at Fort Myer, right next door to the National Cemetery. Every day when I went back and forth to work, I saw the rows upon rows of white headstones of the men and women who served this country of ours.

The true honor was over Memorial Day weekend. Prior to the weekend, I watched the members of the Old Guard Third Infantry Regiment place American flags on all the graves.

At each grave, they placed the flag, stepped back, paused, saluted smartly, and then moved on to the next grave. Some graves have personal notes on them or other personal things to remember our commitment to these men and women. They are not forgotten.

That commitment is important because as hard as war is and all-consuming as war is, we cannot forget its aftermath. The broken bodies, the broken minds and the broken families require our continued attention.

As a country we must remain committed to provide our wounded warriors and the families of our fallen and missing from all wars with our full support. As you know, over one million Americans have given their last full measure and we must ensure that their sacrifice was not in vain.

You may remember a famous poem titled "The Charge of the Light Brigade" about a British regiment in the Crimean War.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"  
Was there a man dismayed?  
Not though the soldier knew  
Someone had blundered:  
Theirs not to make reply,

Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die.  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.”

Well, ladies and gentlemen, this is a new era, a different kind of war, but ironically, the same general location. Unlike the members of the Light Brigade, you and me all of us must reason why and we must speak out when we see injustices or failures of our society to continue to honor its commitment to our veterans and families. If we do not, we have failed in our mission and in our duty to them. That is the mantle that we all wear.

At West Point, in 1962, General Douglas MacArthur, gave his last speech. He was unaware that Vietnam was about to happen. What he said was not only prophetic, but much more eloquent than anything I could say, and he stated what our life mission should be.

I have taken the liberty to update a portion of that speech in a very small way.

Duty, Honor, Country: These three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying points; to build courage when courage seems to fail us; to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith; to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.

The unbelievers will say they are but words, but you know better. They will say it's a slogan, but you know better. They will say it is a flamboyant phrase, but you know better, but every demagogue, every cynic, every hypocrite, every troublemaker, and I am sorry to say, some others of an entirely different character, will try to downgrade them even to the extent of mockery and ridicule.

You are the glue which bonds together the entire fabric of our national system. From your ranks have come the great leaders who hold our Nation's destiny in their hands every time the war bugle sounds.

You warriors have never failed us. If you were to do so, a million ghosts in olive drab, in brown khaki, in blue and gray, in jungle and desert camouflage would rise from their graves, thundering those magic words: Duty, Honor, Country.

This does not mean that you are a warmonger. On the contrary, every soldier, every marine, every sailor, every airman, every Coast Guardsman, knows that we will pray for peace rather than go to war or otherwise, we will suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war. But always in our ears ring the ominous words of Plato, that wisest of all philosophers: "Only the dead have seen the end of war."

Let me close with a quote from another war monument. This is a British memorial in Burma from World War II. It says so well what I believe we should all feel today. It says, "When you go home, tell them of us and say for your tomorrow we gave our today. We shall never forget."

God bless you and God bless America. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN COBB: At this time, in memory of past Commanders-in-Chief Norman G. Staab and Arthur J. Fellwock, red roses will be presented to the families. Our sincere sympathy is extended to family and friends.

The Yinzer Singers will now perform "Ave Maria."

(Whereupon, the Yinzer Singers presented "Ave Maria" at this time.)

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN COBB: A little over ten years ago, I had the honor and the privilege of meeting Reverend Theodore Bowers at the then National Chaplains' Celebration in Kenosha, Wisconsin. About a month later, I was asked to do the Benediction at the memorial service in Salt Lake City. Little did I know that my father would pass away a few weeks before that service. So, it made the Benediction and that memorial service even more pointed. My father was a Purple Heart recipient in World War II, serving in France. So, it gives me a great honor to present Reverend Theodore Bowers to do the Benediction. If you would please stand.

#### BENEDICTION

REVEREND THEODORE BOWERS: Eternal God, the source and giver of life, we have gathered in this place and have remembered to pay our tribute to the men and women who have passed into Your eternal hands.

Sanctify every good memory of their lives. Be particularly close and comfort those who knew them, who loved them, and mourn their loss. And kindle within us a flame selfless, unwavering devotion to duty that we may never be found wanting in those qualities and spirit and mind, which are able to preserve, our homes, our communities and the peace of our Nation.

We earnestly implore Your providential care as our Nation faces the grim task which lies ahead in defeating terrorism.

Now, may our God bring strength, comfort and peace to all our hearts and His benediction rest upon us, our great organization and our Nation, now and forever more. Amen.

(Whereupon, Steven A. Leopold Played Taps at this time.)

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

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. Captain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Honor Guard, advance and retire the Colors of the Flag of the United States of America. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Colors have been retired, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We would like to acknowledge and thank all the participants who contributed to making this program a success.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the Gold Star Families and Past National Chaplains from the room.

(Whereupon, the Gold Star Families and Past National Chaplains are escorted from the hall.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: This concludes our Memorial Service. Thank you for your attendance.

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

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JOINT OPENING SESSION  
MONDAY, JULY 20, 2015

(The Joint Opening Session of the 116th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the 102nd National Convention of the Ladies Auxiliary, held in the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was called to order on Monday, July 20, 2015, at 8:00 o'clock a.m. by Adjutant General John E. Hamilton.)

CALL TO ORDER

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Joint Opening of the 116th VFW National Convention. I am John Hamilton, Adjutant General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

To kick things off this morning, I would like to start by thanking our sponsors as they are identified on the large screens. Without their generosity, this year's convention would not have been possible. Special appreciation goes to our primary supporters: Tri-West, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Cliffside Malibu, Burger King, Defense Mobile, Heroes with Hearing Loss, Humana, Sport Clips and USAA.

With us this morning are representatives from the 2014-2015 Outstanding Community Service Posts. Please stand as a group and be recognized.

This year, 175 Commanders have earned the title of All American. There are 17 Department Commanders, 28 District Commanders, and 130 Post Commanders to be honored, and those in attendance will be presented their awards later this morning.

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

I have just a few announcements before we proceed this morning. Firstly, due to the President's scheduled visit tomorrow, the All-American Luncheon and Senior Vice-Commander Biedrzycki's Department Commander's Luncheon, both ticketed events, will now begin at 12:45 p.m. There has been no room change to either ticket event.

Also, for the second year, we have planned an exciting Patriotic Celebration to take the place of the traditional Patriotic Rally. Tomorrow's celebration is truly going to be something special, and I guarantee you, you will not want to miss it.

The event will begin at 6:00 p.m. in the Great Hall at the Heinz Field. Buses will begin departing from your hotel at 5:00 p.m., so we will be sure to end the afternoon meeting promptly so that you may catch the buses.

Concession stands will be available to you at the event, and buses will be on hand to drive you back to your hotels.

This is a private event, so please be sure to carry some form of your VFW or Ladies Auxiliary identification to the event. All other individuals must be accompanied by a member of our organizations. Again, this is going to be a fun event, and I hope to see all of you there.

Also, as a reminder: Those of you who have planned to attend the Commander-in-Chief's and National President's Reception on Wednesday, you must attend the installation and receive a ticket. Once the installation concludes, the Sergeants-at-Arms and other members of the staff will be distributing tickets. You must have a ticket in hand to attend the Reception. And finally, this is an especially important convention for us as we are celebrating a couple of different landmark occurrences. Will all of the Vietnam Veterans in the room please stand and be recognized. (Applause)

Please notice the special Vietnam ribbon appearing on each Vietnam Veteran's name badge this year in honor of the 50th commemoration of the Vietnam War. Comrades, we thank you for your service and once again welcome you home. (Applause)

In addition to celebrating a landmark year, we are also celebrating a landmark location for this convention. We are back in Pittsburgh, the birthplace of the VFW.

For those of you who may not know, our first convention was held in 1914 in what is now the historic William Pitt Union Building on the University of Pittsburgh campus. That's less than four miles east of where we are meeting for this convention.

A VFW historical marker outside of the William Pitt Union Building marks the momentous occasion of our founding. I encourage all of you to try to get by there to see it.

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

#### REMARKS BY COMRADE ROBERT EILER, CHAIRMAN OF THE VFW 116TH NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE

COMRADE EILER: Good morning, Comrades and Sisters. I am pleased to welcome you as this year's Convention Chairman. I am delighted to welcome you all to my home state, home of the Liberty Bell, the great state of Pennsylvania. Our state motto is "Virtue, Liberty and Independence," and that's why it's so fitting that the National Convention is being held here.

We sincerely hope that the time you spend with us here this week is enjoyable and that you leave here with a great sense of pride in belonging to our wonderful organization.

Our conventions serve to reinforce our commitment to America's veterans and the military, and bring new excitement to our work as members of the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary.

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



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

#### ADVANCEMENT OF COLORS

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

#### INVOCATION

COMRADE EILER: For this morning's Invocation, we will have the National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Charlene Cobb. Please, then, remain standing as we recite the Pledge of Allegiance, led by the Sergeants-at-Arms, the National Anthem will be sung by Willa Watts, the Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist, and for the posting of the Colors.

#### INVOCATION BY NATIONAL CHAPLAIN COBB

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN COBB: Almighty God, we thank you for bringing us together this day. With humble hearts, yet proud of the confidence placed in us by our comrades and sisters, we gather for this important convention.

We thank you for this year we have completed, for its successes, and for the strength you have given to us to overcome its disappointments. We ask your blessing upon our VFW Commander John Stroud and our Ladies Auxiliary President Ann Panteleakos for their dedication and commitment to the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary.

O, Lord, be with us; may Your wisdom and counsel guide us as we seek to develop and authorize programs that will benefit our veterans and their families in the year to come and bring unity and inclusiveness to our great organizations.

Teach us to think wisely and carefully before we speak, to act with courage and conviction for the good for all our members. May our work bring credit to the VFW and Auxiliary, and be of benefit to those we seek to serve. All this we ask of You, our Heavenly Father. Amen.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND NATIONAL ANTHEM

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was given, followed by the singing of the National Anthem by Ladies Auxiliary Soloist Willa Watts, and then the posting of the Colors.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade, your orders have been obeyed.

COMRADE EILER: Now, please dim the lights for a special presentation.

## VIDEO PRESENTATION

(Whereupon, a video on the 2014-2015 year was shown at this time.)

### INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMRADE EILER: It brings me great pleasure to introduce a gentleman who has served his country and the VFW for a combined 40 years. He is a 21-year Air Force veteran and has worked to serve his fellow veterans in a multitude of responsibilities with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and most recently as Commander-in-Chief.

John W. Stroud was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on July 23, 2014, at the VFW's 115th National Convention, held in St. Louis, Missouri.

Comrade Stroud served in the U.S. Air Force from 1976-1997, including a tour in Korea in 1992-1993 with the 51st Fighter Wing at Osan Air Base as a flight operations superintendent.

His decorations include four Meritorious Service medals, three Air Force Commendation medals, three Air Force Achievement medals, the Korean Defense Service medal, and the National Defense Service medal.

He joined the VFW in 1996 at Post 10047 in Las Vegas, and he maintains his Gold Legacy Life Membership at Post 2313 in Hawthorne, Nevada.

Comrade Stroud has served the VFW in many leadership positions, including Nevada Department Commander in 2006-2007, and has served on numerous national committees, including chairman of the National Veterans Service Committee. He is also a Triple Crown All-American Commander Award recipient.

The Chief graduated with honors from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in 1990 with a bachelor of science degree in professional aeronautics, went on to work as the Mineral County Building Official and he is now retired.

Commander Stroud is a member of the American Legion, the Elks and is a life member of the Disabled American Veterans, the Military Order of the Cootie, and the VFW National Home for Children. Please welcome our National Commander-in-Chief, John Stroud. (Applause)

(Whereupon, Comrade Eiler presented Commander-in-Chief Stroud with the convention badge, bell and gavel.)

### REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Good morning. Comrades, Sisters and guests, for the past year I have had the unique and extraordinary opportunity to lead the largest and greatest combat veterans organization in

America. It has truly been a remarkable experience, and one that I will hold onto for the remainder of my life.

What made this experience so remarkable for me wasn't our legislative victories, our assisting of countless service members and military families, the progress we made in bettering the VA or the many other positive achievements noted in the video we just watched.

What was most remarkable for me was witnessing the awe-inspiring strength of our organization working together to achieve all of this, and I have each of you to thank.

As I stand before you here today, I remain humbled. You entrusted me with the highest office of our great organization, and it's been a pleasure leading you, but the truth is my tenure in this office was only made successful by you, your resolve, your commitment and dedication to the VFW mission, and I thank you for that.

I know the sacrifices you have made over the past year. I know that you have stepped outside of your comfort zone and made some tough decisions.

And I know that time and again, you have put your fellow veterans' needs ahead of your own. I assure you that by doing so, if you can't see it already, you have actively helped to ensure an even stronger VFW and further reaffirmed that, "No one does more for veterans than our VFW."

While I extend my gratitude to each of you for all you have done, and will continue to do, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge a few individuals who both inspired me and kept me in check over the last year, reminding me of my purpose as Commander-in-Chief.

First and foremost, my best friend and lovely wife, Mary. You are my heart and soul, and I wouldn't be the man I am today without you.

To my children, Andrew, John, Jr., Teri and Jennifer, you continue to inspire me.

Past Commander in Chief Jim Nier, thank you for the confidence you instilled in me nearly 20 years ago and for seeing the last year through with me.

Past Chiefs Eubank, Kurpius, Pouliot, Kent and Stang, thank you for your guidance and mentorship.

National President Ann Panteleakos, it has been an absolute pleasure serving with you.

To the Adjutant General and Quartermaster General, I extend my sincere gratitude to you and your staffs.

And, of course, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Brian Duffy. You may recall, immediately after taking office last year, I said, "Let's get ready to kick the tires and light the fires because we are going to break the sound barrier and get this job done." That's exactly what we've done, and I am proud to have had the opportunity to serve with you.

And finally, to all of the comrades and sister in the Post Departments and Districts, I have had the honor of visiting during my years in the chairs,

thank you for what you do for this organization, your hospitality, gifts, and most importantly, your friendship.

Comrades and sisters, as evidenced by the video we watched a few minutes ago, the work we do on behalf of the America's heroes is extraordinary, and there is no work less selfless.

We take care of our own because it's the right thing to do, plain and simple. It's not glamorous, it's not going to make any of us rich or famous. But it's the right thing to do and if we don't do it, who will?

I am extremely proud to be a part of this organization and it's clear by your being here today or watching on our Live Stream that you share in this pride.

By definition, conceit is defined as taking too much pride in your own worth. Well, I will be the first to say that when it comes to the VFW I am one conceited son-of-a-gun.

I have unapologetically spent the last year banging on the eardrums of the troops, veterans, their families, nonveterans, Congress, international dignitaries, and also the President with all that's right about the VFW and all that we accomplish.

Words, rich with truth, I have told them of the commitment of our amazing members. The nearly eight million hours we donate annually to VA medical facilities and local communities across America.

The nearly \$7 billion our service officers have fought to recover from the VA for veterans in the last three years. The \$2.4 million we have provided to military families to keep them from losing their homes.

The more than \$1 million in college scholarships we have granted veterans and service members, and I have told them that it was the VFW that led the charge to create a VA system so long ago, and after last year's debacle, it was the VFW who was first in line to help fix it.

All that I have just mentioned are now a part of our storied past, but I, like many of you, maintain a vision of strength for the future of our organization.

In a few short days, I will pass the mantle of leadership along to our esteemed comrade Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki. And I can say with absolute certainty that under his leadership and with the enduring commitment of all of you, the VFW will continue to succeed in its mission.

I will continue to be an active and outspoken member of this great organization for years to come, so don't think you are getting rid of me just yet.

The truth is, the need for the VFW will be in its highest demand going forward with more and more veterans entering into the VA system. We must remain steadfast in our mission to do all we can to help restore faith in the VA system. It's our responsibility, and our obligation. America veterans are depending on us.

As my tenure as National Commander ends, please note that I have the utmost confidence that the VFW will continue to thrive in its quest to serve America's veterans and their families. I know this because I know all of you,

your dedication, your selflessness, and your steadfast commitment to service has made us the Nation's leading veteran's service organization, a reputation that was just hard-earned and we, together, must never let it be tarnished.

One of the best decisions this First Sergeant has ever made was back in 1996 when I took a VFW Post outside of Nellis Air Base, Post 10047 come up on a sign that read, "Active duty military welcome", and stopped in after a long day of work.

I can't help but chuckle to myself when I hear the expression, "It was a sign", because it was a literal sign that led to me joining one of the greatest combat veterans organization in the world, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Again, thank you all for giving me the honor and privilege to serve as your National Commander and along with each of you, I wish our next Commander-in-Chief, John Biedrzycki, every success. Thank you all for the memories.

God bless you, God bless America, and God bless all of the men and women who serve so proudly today and the families who support them. Now, let's have a great convention. (Applause)

#### PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT AND CITATION TO ANN PANTELEAKOS, NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY

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

Ann Panteleakos is a life member of Albert J. Breault Auxiliary 1523 in Putnam, Connecticut. She began her participation in the organization in 1976 on the eligibility of her father who served in the United States Army.

Since joining, she has served in a number of capacities for the organization, including terms as Auxiliary and District President, and as Department President, during which she was named Outstanding Runner-Up President of the Year for her membership group.

On the National level, she has served as National Eastern Conference Chairman for the Mentoring and Publicity Programs and as Director for the Patriotic Arts/Voice of Democracy Program. I am very proud to have served with her over the past year.

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

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: "Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded to Ann Panteleakos, National President, Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars 2014-2015.

"In esteemed recognition and sincere appreciation of her loyal and benevolent concern for America's veterans as the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW. Her theme, 'Patriotism begins at home,' reflects

her outstanding dedication and unique vision, and will forever serve as the true and honorable legacy of her presidency.

“Her wealth of experience and long-time commitment to the objectives of the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW, have justly earned her the highest level of admiration, respect and gratitude of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 20th day of July, 2015.” This has been signed by John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General. (Applause)

#### REMARKS BY NATIONAL PRESIDENT ANN PANTELEAKOS, LADIES AUXILIARY

NATIONAL PRESIDENT PANTELEAKOS: Commander-in-Chief Stroud, National VFW and Ladies Auxiliary officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief, Past National Presidents, Comrades, Sisters and Guests:

I am so very honored to receive this award from the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I thank you most sincerely. It is humbling to accept this award just as it has been humbling to represent my auxiliary sisters all year long and work with our VFW counterparts. The VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary set high goals this year to Commander-in-Chief Stroud and all the members of the VFW, job well done. And to my Auxiliary sisters, you make me proud.

My year may be coming to a close, but the work of both our organizations must continue. Now more than ever, we must support our military and the veterans of the many conflicts our country has engaged in.

When they come home, the fight is not over. When they open the doors to their homes, the healing is not completed. And when they start living their lives again, we must be there for them.

We must hold our government accountable. We must fight for their rights and entitlements. We must be the ones to make sure their service is honored.

I am not done with this mission. Our organizations are needed now and in the future.

This medallion I wear on behalf of all the members of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Their incredible passion and their hard work, I thank them for that. (Applause)

To every veteran here today, thank you, thank you for answering the call, thank you for your sacrifices, and thank you for serving our country.

My eligibility to this great organization is through my father, a Navy veteran, and I thank him and all the veterans in this room for your service and sacrifice, because if it wasn't for what you did then, we would not be free to do what we do now. May God bless you all, may God bless our troops, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you so much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Am I a lucky guy or what?  
(Applause).

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE BILL PEDUTO, PITTSBURGH MAYOR

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: A self-proclaimed “reformed Democrat”, the only politician on Pittsburgh’s celebrity hockey team, our next guest is currently serving his first term as mayor of Pittsburgh. The Honorable Bill Peduto earned his undergraduate degree at Pennsylvania State University and his master’s degree in public policy and management at the University of Pittsburgh.

He has worked in many political avenues including political consulting, political director for the then-acting governor Mark Singel and chief of staff to former city councilman Dan Cohen. He spent an impressive 12 years on the Pittsburgh City Council prior to his election to mayor.

Since taking office, Mayor Peduto has been committed to honoring America’s veterans, and he has pledged to end veteran homelessness in Pittsburgh by the end of 2015.

Please join me in welcoming a true American patriot, the Honorable, Mayor Peduto. (Applause)

#### GREETINGS BY THE HONORABLE BILL PEDUTO

MAYOR PEDUTO: Thank you. It is my great honor on behalf of the people of Pittsburgh to welcome you. It has been 101 years since the VFW has been in Pittsburgh, and I have to take a moment to give a special recognition to John Biedrzycki, a hometown guy who will be serving as Commander in his own town. We are so very proud of him.

Pittsburgh has changed in 101 years. It used to be the hubbub of industry. Even before that, and I know those that are here helped to make America history, so let me tell you a little bit about the town you’re in and its place within America’s history.

You know, we were the Western frontier. This was it. The French came, they settled right at the fork of where the Monongahela and the Allegheny form the Ohio, and they said we are here and this is as far as the new world will go.

Then there was a young major in the Virginia militia, and he came across the Allegheny Mountains, and he decided on behalf of the British this is where they should be. In the middle of the night over a couple of hills over in the Laurel Highlands, there was a small battle where they came upon a French group that was sleeping and a young Frenchman ensign at Jumonville was killed by this major. His name was George Washington.

That was the beginning of what we call the French and Indian War, which the world knows was the seven-year war, which was the First World War, and they were sitting over this little area, then over in Asia and Europe.

And soon the British would come in and they named the fort at that location, Fort Pitt, after the prime minister.

Soon after that, they would become known as the Bourough, Pittsburgh, with an “H”, the Scottish spelling which is why we still have our “H”. It became the city of Pittsburgh. They elected their first mayor in 1816, Ebenezer Denny, who if you ever saw the movie “The Patriot” with Mel Gibson, at the end when he is leaning over his musket and is pulling the flag out and Cornwallis surrenders, he says, “The only thing I can hear on the battlefield is the sound of the drummer boy, the most beautiful sound I have ever heard in my life.”

Ebenezer Denny was our first mayor, and frontier town. A couple of guys, they got in a boat down by Heinz Field and they settled over there, and they were Lewis and Clark.

All of sudden this wasn’t the West, this was just a gateway to the West. As they went and they had the Manifest Destiny to see a country born from ocean to ocean, they looked over the right shoulder and they said, “We will build it” And they looked back at Pittsburgh.

First, it was glass, then it was iron, and then it was steel, and then aluminum. In the process, we built America. Every bridge and skyscraper in your city was manufactured here.

By the time of World War II, we were producing more steel than Germany and Japan combined. In that process, we not only built America, but in places like Pittsburgh, in Detroit, and in Cleveland, we built the middleclass.

Then 1979 came, and I remember it well because I started high school at a place up the street called Chartiers Valley.

You may remember the Pirates won the World Series, Willie Stargell, “We are family.” The Steelers won their fourth Super Bowl in six years, and then Pittsburgh died. We died.

That economic engine, that industry that helped to build this country and change the world was ripped out from us. We went through a period where our debt, and it still is, was higher than New York City’s when they went bankrupt. Our unemployment is double that of Detroit today, and where we lost more people than New Orleans lost after Katrina.

But we are Pittsburghers, and from that little dusty fortress turned into the industrial giant, to the collapse, we did what Pittsburghers do. We dusted ourselves off and we started again. There were no federal programs for us, no bailouts. We had to find a new way to build a new city, and that is what you are seeing today.

The overnight success that people talk about Pittsburgh was 30 years in the making, and it was done through a lot of hard work and a lot of innovation. We realized we would never be that city that we were, we would never be the city that my grandfather came over from Italy with a second grade education to be able to provide his family middleclass lifestyle by working in the mills.



We have changed and the mills have moved, and it is called the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, UMPC, and our hospital systems, our eds and meds and technology and engineering are now our engines, and in that process we have grown into the city that we are today.

So, let that be a message for all those that are here. As we see mass reductions happening in our military, and we see so many people transferring from military to civilian life, let the engines of change be the cities in which they will return to.

We have created in this city a model with our corporate community to be able to take veterans and to put them to work and to help them through the transition with veterans.

But that's just the beginning, because we want to retrain them in our universities, we want to give them the opportunities to work with our labor unions and our building trades, and we want to have that opportunity packaged around them, affordable housing for them to settle.

What we call it is "Operation Black and Yellow Ribbon", where the City of Pittsburgh becomes the welcoming map for the transition of the lives of those that have served us. Let it be that that program becomes a model throughout this country.

It is an honor to have you here, to see the transition that has happened in one city and to recognize that transition within the individuals of those that you call your brothers and sisters, and to understand that the place where they can call home is in every city in this country.

If we can find the ways to be innovative and understand the change in the individual and the change of the city is both unique and can be done together. Thank you and welcome. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF ERIC BENKEN,  
MILITARY AFFAIRS RELATIONSHIP DIRECTOR, USAA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: The VFW is fortunate to have a longstanding relationship with the truly outstanding company, the United Services Automobile Association, or better known as USAA. USAA has been a friend to our veterans, service members and their families from its beginning back in 1922.

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

I am proud to welcome our next guest, a man who knows about service and serving veterans, USAA Military Affairs Relationship Director for the Air Force, Eric Benken. He is a retired chief master sergeant and served nearly three decades of active duty.

Throughout his military career, he has served in operational, maintenance and support units at every level of command, from squadron through major air command. He has also served as the advisor to the Secretary

and Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force on matters concerning welfare, effective utilization and progress of the enlisted members of the Air Force.

His impressive background led him to his career with USAA where he is now part of a team that knows what it means to serve. He has dedicated himself to advocating for those who are currently serving and all those who have honorably served in the past.

Comrades and Sisters, please give a warm VFW welcome to our esteemed guest and fellow VFW member, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Eric Benken. (Applause)

#### REMARKS BY COMRADE ERIC BENKEN

COMRADE ERIC BENKEN: I am a soldier from Cincinnati, Ohio, but the Mayor told me that all rivalries are suspended until the convention is over so we will forgive that.

I want to thank Commander-in-Chief Stroud for his work in the Air Force as a First Sergeant, but also as the Commander in Chief of this great organization. It is very obvious by the video that the VFW has done tremendous, tremendous work for our veterans, on behalf of our veterans, and as you can see by the video, also there is a lot of work to do.

I am very honored and humbled to be here with so many military heroes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and thank you for inviting me to come and talk to you today.

I am also personally proud of my personal membership in the VFW. Like many of you, my tenure with the VFW and my eligibility is rooted in my time in Vietnam.

It seems like a million years ago that I was a 19-year old scrawny kid with a bad haircut and a penchant to listening to Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and a few other rock and roll legends. Oh, yeah, I still listen to that once in a while. My barber still gives me a bad haircut once in a while, too.

I was classified as a 702XO administrative specialist. For you Army guys, that is "71 Lima", and for you Navy folks, that is a yeoman.

My weapon system was that ferocious and deadly Smith & Corona manual typewriter. Let me tell you, nothing strikes fear in the hearts and minds of the enemy more than a 19-year-old skinny white dude with a manual typewriter in his hands.

Becoming of age in the '60s and early '70s, along with the Vietnam experience, has certainly shaped my views of the world and my views on politics. It made it very clear to me that Americans must stand behind those who defend this country and give them a proper homecoming regardless of what that war's popularity is or what is your political strife.

As the saying goes, we hate war, but we love the American warrior. In my message to you this morning, I would like to focus on a single word that captures everything about our Armed Forces and is representative of who we are and what we do. That single word is legacy.

Webster defines legacy as something that is handed down from one generation to the next. Nowhere is that definition more appropriate than with our military. We are all about legacy. It is about your legacy to our latest generation of warriors.

As a former Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, I am privileged to continue traveling to Air Force bases where I often speak to airmen leadership schools and NCO academies. I give them that old gray beard perspective on leadership and the profession of arms. Without fail, every time I do that there is some young person that stands up and says, "Chief, how do I become the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force? What is it that I should do to reach that lofty career, to have that objective?" I always tell them, "Heck, I don't know. I am as surprised as anybody else that I ever got there."

It certainly was not a beauty contest, and there are a lot of guys who will tell you intelligence wasn't involved, either.

Then I quickly follow up that message to the students, and I give them a little more advice. I remind them that any success that we enjoy in our military careers is a result of the legacy paved forward by veterans who served before us. They are the ones who paved the way for us to follow in their footsteps.

Each generation of warriors stands on the shoulders of men and women who preceded them. They gleaned from that generation the importance of fundamental discipline, the need for a higher standard, and the absolute essentials for teamwork.

They become great warriors through mentorship, guidance and compassion of their forebearers. They also learned from the chronicles of incredible courage and valor in battle that is displayed by ordinary people doing extraordinary things. They are keenly aware of the brave men and women before them that answered the call that gave up the comforts of home, and traveled to destinies to confront evil

Their loved ones would face family separation and fear of the unknown. Many would return broken and severely wounded, and many found their final resting place in cemeteries on foreign soil.

We are deeply indebted to our past generations for their courage, their commitment and their sacrifice. The legacy continues as Americans are also indebted to our latest generation for their contributions and their sacrifice.

They have been at war in faraway places for more than a decade. They, too, are confronting evil in faraway lands, and they are bearing the burdens of family separation and the scars of war.

Our society refers to this generation as millennials. They are between the ages of 18 and 34, and according to the demographers they outnumber all generations of baby boomers beginning this year.

Regardless of how we label them, these young veterans have proven to be outstanding warriors. When you look into their eyes, you can see and feel their tremendous pride and their competence, and if you look just a little

bit deeper into their eyes, you can see the shadows of the veterans who preceded them.

In their eyes, you can see yourselves, you can see your spirit, your grit and your determination. They proudly stand on your shoulders and continue your legacy.

Make no mistake, the young men and women of today's Armed Forces fully grasp the responsibility and the necessity to defend this nation against our enemies. It is your legacy of the fighting experience that lives on in their hearts, in their minds and in their souls. They also possess your legacy of assured brotherhood and sisterhood.

Fighting for one another on the battlefield is the number one priority. This human connection and this bond with one another runs so deeply in our military culture that we take a solemn oath to leave no man or woman behind on the battlefield. To this day, we continue to exhaust every effort to repatriate our fallen for past wars and conflicts. No other country takes this obligation as seriously as we do.

Then Lieutenant Colonel Hal Moore captured the essence of this warrior bond in his book, "We Were Soldiers Once and Young."

In reflecting on the battle for Ia Drang, Vietnam, in 1965, he said this: "In battle our world shrinks of the man on our left and the man on our right, and the enemy all around. We held each other's lives in our hands and we learned to share our fears, our hopes and our dreams, and what little else would come our way."

Today's warriors are no different. They sacrifice and they bleed for each other. Many of them are recipients of the Purple Heart, the Silver Star and the Medal of Honor. Many earned those medals by giving their lives for their comrades.

In that regard, they are exactly like the warriors of past generations. Just like their predecessors, they share a deep and abiding love for one another.

Finally, you have passed along to this amazing generation of warriors your core values, values that you treasure dearly, values like integrity, service before self, excellence in all that you do, honor, courage and commitment. These values are the cornerstone legacy of World War II's greatest generation and passed on to those who served in Korea and Vietnam, and that legacy lives on in our Armed Forces today. They recognize values these must be eternalized and provide the motivation for them to be the best that they can be.

By living these values, veterans of all generations further strengthen the fabric of our Nation's character and ensure that we stand the tallest among all nations.

Today's young warriors are the caretakers of your legacies to them. They continue to make us proud. With the backing of all Americans, they will pick up the guidon and march to victory over our enemies. They will continue your legacies.

I constantly remind our young troops that they are in the most honorable of professions. I tell them there is a day of reconciliation in their future when they will look back on their lives and ask themselves, did my life have meaning, did I serve a purpose and was my time on earth well spent? The answer, of course, to that is a resounding yes.

Be proud that you served and know that you made significant contributions to our nation and to humanity. For that, you will be judged most favorably.

In closing, I would like to offer a quote from General John “Black Jack” Pershing that serves as a reminder for all Americans. It was true for so many of our conflicts in the past and remains true today.

It goes like this: “3,000 miles from home an American Army is fighting for you. Everything that you hold worthwhile is at stake. Invoking the spirit of our forefathers, the Army ask your unflinching support so that the high ideals for which American stands may endure upon this earth.”

Thanks again for having me here this morning, and thank you for your countless legacies to our current generation of warriors. Thank you for being members of the VFW, an organization that does so much for our veterans and our families, and thank you for your extreme patriotism and your enduring love for this great Nation. May God bless all of you, God bless our troops, and God bless America. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION BY ANTHONY IMPERATO, PRESIDENT,  
HENRY REPEATING ARMS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Joining us today is a new friend of the VFW, a man well-known for giving back to service members and veterans and for taking great pride in American-made Henry Rifles.

As president of a company whose namesake “rifle” is one of the most legendary, respected and sought after in the history of firearms, crafted under the motto, “Made in America or Not Made at All,” it is not surprising that he is dedicated to America’s veterans and keeping jobs here on American soil.

Here today for a special presentation, it gives me great pleasure to introduce Mr. Anthony Imperato, president and owner of Henry Repeating Arms. (Applause)

REMARKS BY MR. ANTHONY IMPERATO

MR. ANTHONY IMPERATO: Good morning. Thank you for that lovely introduction, and thank you all for the love that I feel that you are putting out for our great country this morning. I am very moved by it. Thank you for serving our country and your support of this esteemed wonderful organization.

This morning, I have the honor of presenting and paying tribute and recognizing six very deserving individuals who have both served our country and have worked extremely hard on behalf of the VFW.

Before I go into that presentation, I would just like to pick up on the remarks from the Honorable Mayor of Pittsburgh and let him know that four or five of our key suppliers of component parts for our rifles are made here in the great state of Pennsylvania, right here in the Pittsburgh area, in Belle Vernon, in Greensborough.

There is a company called Keystone Profiles that we have been doing business with for over 20 years as well as Leslie Precision, Pittsburgh Testings.

I tip my cap to this wonderful industrial great city of Pittsburgh in this Western Pennsylvania area. So, thank you. (Applause)

Our first honoree served in the U.S. Air Force from 1976 to 1997, including a tour in Korea in 1992-1993 with 51st Fighter Wing at Osan Air Base as a flight operations superintendent.

His decorations include four Meritorious Service Medals, three Air Force Commendation Medals, three Air Force Achievement Medals, the Korean Defense Service Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal.

He joined the VFW in 1996 to Post 10047 in Las Vegas, Nevada. He maintained his Gold Legacy Life Membership at Post 2313 in Hawthorne, Nevada.

He served the VFW in many leadership positions, including the Nevada Department Commander in 2006-2007. He also served on numerous national committees, including Chairman of the National Veterans Committee.

He is a Triple Crown All American Commander Award recipient. He was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on July 23rd, 2014, at the VFW's 115th National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri.

It is my honor and it is my privilege to bring up the Chief, Chief John Stroud. We want to thank him for all he has done and present him with a Henry Military Service Tribute Rifle. (Applause)

This wasn't part of the plan, but I honestly have been moved so deeply this morning by this feeling of patriotism, and in memory of my father who served in the Korean War from 1953 to 1955, I would like to present the VFW with a check for \$50,000 as a donation on behalf of the Henry Repeating Arms. I don't have the check with me, but I think we are going to be good for it. (Applause)

Our second honoree enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1977, and achieved the rank of noncommissioned officer. He was a member of the 24th Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, Georgia. In 1990, his division led the way into Desert Shield/Desert Storm in Iraq.

During his tour, he was one of only two soldiers in his battalion to receive a Bronze Star for heroism. During his second tour, he was involved in operations with Somalia and Haiti.

After 22 years of active service, including nine years in combat, he retired in 1999. It is my honor to present Chief Warrant Officer Eugene Perrino, Sr., a Henry Military Service Tribute Rifle. (Applause)

It is time for the glasses. Thank you for your patience, everybody. The next honoree served in the U.S. Army for more than 28 years as an

infantryman, paratrooper and ranger. He served three tours in the Ranger Battalion. He also served as a drill sergeant, and student and faculty battalion commander at the U.S. Army's Sergeant's Major Academy.

His deployments include the multinational force and of service in Sinai Operations upholding democracy in Haiti. He did surveys for state training side to Bosnia and Kosovo, in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

He has partnered with the VFW in 2004 for humanitarian aid that resulted in the VFW being a national honoree of the 2005 U.S.A. Today Newman's own Make a Difference Award.

Please give a warm round of applause and a thank you to Commander Sergeant Major Tim Green who we will present with a Henry Military Service Tribute Rifle. (Applause)

Our next honoree joined the Air Force in 1999, where she served as a tech sergeant in the National Guard while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. She has earned six prestigious campaign ribbons, including the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal and the Afghanistan Campaign Medal.

She became a life member of VFW Post 7217 in North Woods, New Hampshire.

Since 2006, she has held several prominent positions, most currently as the Junior Vice Commander of the State of New Hampshire. She has been a national certified recruiter for the VFW for the last four years and is employed as a national certified veteran peer support specialist at the VA Medical Center in Manchester.

She is passionate about meeting the needs of our veterans, and it is our honor to present Shannan Brown with a Henry Military Tribute Rifle. (Applause)

Folks, the last but not least, our next recipient served in the H&S Company Third Battalion, 1st Marine Division in Vietnam from September of '69 through March of 1970. He was severely wounded from a landmine explosion, and is rated at 100 percent disabled by the VA. He is a life member of the VFW Post 2493, and he is employed as a skilled machinist.

Please give a great round of applause for Mr. Michael DePew. Thank you for your service to our country and to the VFW. (Applause)

We would love to present you with a Henry Miller Service Tribute Edition Rifle.

Mr. DePew asked for a hug from the lady in red, so I said it is okay. (Applause)

Now that you have heard enough of my Brooklyn accent, I just want to say thank you again for having me. It has been an honor and a privilege to be here this morning. God bless America. (Applause)

Oops, I am sorry, I forgot one other person. Please forgive me.

Last but not least, our next honoree enlisted in the United States Navy in March of 1968. He was stationed at the Naval Relay Station in Kodiak,

Alaska, as a petty officer 3rd class radioman, where he earned the responsibility for top secret and special category messages.

He was a plank runner on the SS Badger from July '70 through July '72. The Badger was assigned to duty on a gun line off the coast of Vietnam performing critical fire missions.

During the course of his assignment, he and his shipmates helped save the lives of our ground forces by using spotter aircraft and field spotters to locate and fire on the enemy. He joined the Department of Oregon Deschutes Post 4108 and remains loyal and committed to helping VFW veterans.

Please allow me to present to Mr. John Wrinkle with a Henry Military Service Tribute Rifle. (Applause)

#### PRESENTATION OF AWARDS TO 2015 ALL AMERICAN POST, DISTRICT AND DEPARTMENT COMMANDERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Wow that was a surprise. Certainly, the most prominent accolade earned as a Commander in the Veterans of Foreign Wars is to be named a member of the All-American team. We have 17 Department Commanders, 28 District Commanders and 130 Post Commanders who have earned that distinguished title and most are with us today. I will now be joined by Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Brian Duffy to present the All-American Commander Awards as the Adjutant General John Hamilton announces this elite group.

#### ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON:

##### ARIZONA

Comrade Phil Yin, Post 7507  
Comrade Derek J. Tramondo, Post 7968  
Comrade Fred R. Nelson, Post 10227

##### ARKANSAS

Comrade James W. Terry, Post 9095

##### CALIFORNIA

Comrade David Loera, Post 3208  
Comrade Carlon C. Perry, Post 6311  
Comrade Maurice N. Hansen, Post 9934

##### DELAWARE

Comrade Marc L. Garduno, Sr., Post 3238

##### EUROPE

Comrade John L. Leffler, Post 10810



## FLORIDA

Comrade Glen F. Tilley, Post 2391  
Comrade Powell S. Thomas, Jr., Post 3911  
Comrade Jorge E. Martinez, Post 4127  
Comrade Ronald H. Price, Post 4423  
Comrade Ronald D. Stark, Post 8696

## GEORGIA

Comrade Earl B. Lewis, Sr., Post 4706  
Comrade John A. Veverka, Post 5255  
Comrade Sean B. Farrell, Post 8385

## HAWAII

Comrade Joseph F. Bragg, Post 12138

## IDAHO

Comrade Richard H. Cesler, Post 1173

## ILLINOIS

Comrade Eugene C. Blackwell, Jr., Post 311  
Comrade William G. Oerly, Post 4551  
Comrade John Patterson, Post 7448

## INDIANA

Comrade Britton C. Shoellhorn, Post 5864

## IOWA

Comrade Jacob B. Gruber, Post 738

## KANSAS

Comrade Lee E. Reynolds, Jr., Post 7397

## KENTUCKY

Comrade Richard L. Quire, Post 4075

## LOUISIANA

Comrade Elvin R. Bass, Post 3337

## MARYLAND

Comrade Hugh M. Warner, Post 3285  
Comrade Michael Johnson, Post 5118  
Comrade Reginald J. Elzey, Post 10159

## MASSACHUSETTS

Comrade Brian W. Willette, Post 801

Comrade Christine B. Bassett, Post 3236

#### MICHIGAN

Comrade Stephen D. Klein, Post 3293

#### MISSISSIPPI

Comrade James E. Corley, Jr., Post 2434

Comrade Edward Corker, Post 5393

Comrade John C. Woodville, Post 12124

#### MISSOURI

Comrade Dennis L. Sweet, Post 2426

Comrade Troy D. Williams, Post 2442

Comrade Robert E. Myers, Jr., Post 2659

Comrade John J. Ebner, Post 3944

Comrade Lansing R. Kellogg, Post 5923

#### NEBRASKA

Comrade Andrew R. Packer, Post 2704

#### NEW MEXICO

Comrade Cynthia L. Archuleta, Post 5890

#### NEW YORK

Comrade Russell L. Marsden, Post 369

#### NORTH CAROLINA

Comrade Edward E. Beard, Post 6018

#### NORTH DAKOTA

Comrade Devlon J. Olson, Post 7564

#### OHIO

Comrade Freeman Foughty, Jr., Post 3320

Comrade Robert W. Critell, Post 4270

#### OKLAHOMA

Comrade James L. Dockemeyer, Post 1317

Comrade Dorilynn D. Gimondo, Post 1719

#### OREGON

Comrade Wesley J. Larson, Post 661

Comrade Rick L. Higgins, Post 4039

Comrade Michael L. Beyerlin, Post 9448

Comrade Kenneth L. Kraft, Post 12140

#### PENNSYLVANIA

Comrade Russell S. Davidson, Post 6393

Comrade George P. Fletcher, Post 7043

#### SOUTH CAROLINA

Comrade Matthew Blake, Post 6500

Comrade Francis W. Havlin, Post 8760

Comrade Augustus Singleton, Post 4262

#### TEXAS

Comrade Jay W. Sanders, Post 912

Comrade Gilbert R. Uriegas, Post 1533

Comrade John M. Tellier, Post 4709

Comrade Rolando S. Webber, Post 7108

Comrade Lupita M. Perez, Post 7473

Comrade Lora A. Land, Post 9191

Comrade Michael E. Leonard, Post 9213

Comrade Larry L. Sanders, Post 12041

#### UTAH

Comrade Kenneth W. Omer, Post 409

#### VERMONT

Comrade Robert L. Colby, Sr., Post 782

#### VIRGINIA

Comrade Philip J. Arendsen, Post 637

Comrade Geoffrey D. Lyster, Post 9835

#### WASHINGTON

Comrade Wilmar C. Donahue, Post 2554

Comrade Gregory D. Ham, Post 2995

Comrade William M. Sisco, Post 8956

#### WEST VIRGINIA

Comrade George E. Ash, Post 2716

Comrade Vernon Anderson, Post 4442

Comrade Melvin K. Goddard, Post 4484

#### INTRODUCTION OF ALL-AMERICAN TRIPLE CROWN WINNERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: The term "Triple Crown Winner," is universally applied for an extraordinarily exceptional accomplishment.

Winning all three major thoroughbred horse races, the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness Stakes and the Belmont Stakes is considered the greatest

accomplishment of a racehorse. Until last month, only 11 horses in history had ever managed the amazing feat. But on June 6, 2015, 30 years since the last "Triple Crown" winner has been named, the racehorse "American Pharoah" proudly stepped into history and became the 12th Triple Crown Winner of thoroughbred horse racing.

In major league baseball, a player earns the "Triple Crown" when he leads a league in three special statistical categories.

For batters, a player must lead the league in home runs, runs batted in and batting average; pitchers must lead the league in wins, strikeouts and earned run average.

Again, this is a very rare occurrence. It has been three years since the Detroit Tigers' Miguel Cabrera accomplished this feat, and he was the first batting "Triple Crown" Winner since 1967. Pitchers Justin Verlander of the Detroit Tigers and Clayton Kershaw of the Los Angeles Dodgers each accomplished the feat in pitching 2011.

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

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure in recognizing this year's select group of VFW's "Triple Crown" Winners who are here behind me.

From the Department of Georgia is Alfred Lipphardt.

Next is Brian Sturgis from the Department of Maryland.

Also Kathie Schiebel from the Department of New Mexico.

Norman Henshen from the Department of Oregon.

Next from the Department of South Carolina is Augustus Singleton.

And Vernon Wade from the Department of Utah. (Applause)

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

#### PRESENTATION OF STREAMERS TO TOP CONFERENCE DEPARTMENTS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: For years, individual comrades have been brought to the stage and honored for their tireless recruiting efforts throughout the year. Today, we want to also recognize VFW Departments that have excelled in this area.

I would like to recognize the departments that had the largest percentage increase in members in their Conference since the last membership year.

Those departments are:

The District of Columbia from the Eastern Conference.

South Carolina from the Southern Conference.

And from the Western Conference, Oregon.

Ladies and gentlemen, please give these departments a hand as their Department leaders join us on stage to accept these streamers in honor of their hard work and dedication. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE DWIGHT E. EISENHOWER AWARD  
TO GENERAL JAMES MATTIS, USMC RETIRED

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is now my honor and privilege to introduce the recipient of this year's Dwight D. Eisenhower Award, retired Marine Corps General James N. Mattis.

The General hails from Washington State and would enlist in the United States Marine Corps in 1969 before finishing college and earning his commission as a second lieutenant in 1972.

He would go on to command a rifle and weapons platoon and company; The First Battalion, 7th Marines, during the first Gulf War;

The 7th Marine Regiment, the 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade, and Task Forces 58 during the War in Afghanistan;

The 1st Marine Division during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and subsequent stability operations to include the April 2004 Battle of Fallujah.

And then command the Marine Corps Combat Development Command and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

After being confirmed as a Four-Star General in 2007, he commanded Joint Forces Command, then in 2010, U.S. Central Command, which oversaw the conduct of both wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

General Mattis is admired in the Corps as a Marine's Marine, someone who always took care of his Marines, such as when he was a Brigadier General at Quantico he stood watch as the officer-of-the-day so a young major could be at home with his family on Christmas. In that same vein, he also never hesitated to replace ineffective field commanders.

General Mattis retired in 2013 with more than 41 years of service, but he would retire with one regret, that he couldn't serve longer.

Today, he still serves by ensuring America's military remains the best, that our intelligence resources remain clear-eyed, and that our elected officials hear the unvarnished truth. He also wants to destroy the PTSD victim myth.

In April 2014, he spoke to a group of OEF and OIF veterans in San Francisco about how in America it's the victim who is glorified.

"This nation has a disease orientation," he said. "You have been told that you are broken, that you are damaged goods and should be labeled as victims of two unjust and poorly executed wars and the problem is," he said, "especially when we hear it enough is that we start believing it, whereas, the truth is that we are the only folks with the skills, determination and values to ensure American dominance in this chaotic world."

The General now counters PTSD with "post-traumatic growth," when you come back from wars stronger and much more sure of yourself.

The Dwight D. Eisenhower Award has been presented annually since 1970 to one individual for his or her contributions to American security, unity and world peace.

It recognizes extraordinary contributions and achievements to secure the Nation from foreign threats, to advance the interests of the nation abroad, and to inspire the American public to support these efforts.

Comrades, Sisters and distinguished guests, please welcome the recipient of this year's Dwight D. Eisenhower Award, Retired Marine Corps General James Mattis. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Dwight D. Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award and Citation awarded to General James N. Mattis, U.S. Marine Corps, Retired.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation of more than four decades of honorable and exceptional service to his country. For commanding United States Marines in battle, from Operations Desert Storm, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, to overseeing the conduct of all forces in Afghanistan and Iraq as commander of U.S. Central Command. By taking the fight directly to the enemy, he served our Nation as few others have.

"His dedication to mission accomplishment, and to those who carry out his orders, is true to the ideals, traditions and values of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 20th day of July, 2015. Approved by the National Council Administration."

This has been signed by John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General. (Applause)

#### RESPONSE BY GENERAL JAMES MATTIS

GENERAL MATTIS: I thank all of you high-spirit Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Commander-in-Chief John Stroud and National President of the Ladies Auxiliary Ann Panteleakos: Frankly, ladies and gentlemen, after some of my public sized remarks, I find it an honor to be invited to speak in front of any polite company anymore.

But I do come here today to pay my respects to you, and to pay my respects for who you are and for what you represent to our country. And, of course, as you will understand, to humbly accept an award that was really not won by me but by veterans like you.

Our America has two significant powers. The first is the power of inspiration and the second is the power of intimidation. That is where you come in.

For an imperfect world, America must be seen for what it is, and that is a revolutionary experiment, ladies and gentlemen, to determine if a

government of the people, by the people and for the people can endure and can pass on its freedoms intact to the next generation.

For most of us, we were born in this country completely by accident. We all live in this country by choice. Yet, we have an obligation to turn over intact to the next generation the same freedoms that you and I enjoy, and that is where you come into the never-ending equation of freedom.

You who have carried the patriots burden, you who have carried out your patriotic chore, you who rallied to the flag and answered your country's call when it was in its most imperial, you were the ones who signed the blank check to the American people paying with your lives, and that is a reality that you and I have seen far too often in our lost buddies, our comrades and our shipmates who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Here among the warriors, I am very comfortable. You are unapologetic about America's values and about what you will do to defend those. I can only accept the Eisenhower Award on behalf of soldiers, sailors, airmen, coast guardsmen and marines, who I have had the privilege to serve alongside.

Alongside each other, we are all coequal regardless of our rank in the defense of the Constitution, in the defense of our people and in the defense of the values that we hold so dear.

You will understand why I was absolutely amazed that the Marines allowed me to stand in the ranks for so many years, 40-odd years, alongside the most selfless, the most rambunctious, the most ferocious and the most ethical fighters in the world.

While you and I know we are not the perfect guys, we are the good guys. I leave perfection to God. But we are the good guys that it was an absolute delight to serve alongside all of you. It is an honor to march and sail alongside sailors and Marines in most of my years, and eventually soldiers, Army, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen. I will just tell you we were carrying on your legacy.

It is a magnificent country, but we have one that is also striving to improve by listening to what President Lincoln called "our better angels." It is a country trying to rediscover right now the fundamental unity and its fundamental friendships with one another.

Our countrymen and women only need to look at the military that you veterans made better by your service, a military that takes pride in each other's success on the battlefield where the cost is dear.

As a people, the American people need only to look to you to see an American that is never complacent, always striving to live up to its ideals, and an America that remains the greatest beacon of hope and freedom for all mankind. At a time when Russia has regressed and chosen to become a threat once again invading European countries, and flying nuclear capable bombers off of California where I live, at a time when Chinese bullying in the South China Sea, have them seeking a veto power over other nations' sovereignty. When nuclear armed North Korea raises its saber to get attention for its bankrupt

ideology, and when merciless terrorists murder the innocent, and proclaim our freedoms a threat to their tyranny, we see the threats that history tells us will always confront America in one form or another.

Yet, explicitly in the midst of all this, we advise our enemies in advance what we won't do. Our Congress paralyzed by a lack of compromise cannot repeal mindless sequestration that is doing more damage to our military today than any foe in the field. And even in the face of these threats we shrink our military and yet we are not reducing treaty commitments overseas leaving us with a strategic one mismatch between our stated political ends and our military means.

So, the military you fought in today must be prepared to buy time when danger looms, buy time for America. Until American can get back on a stable financial footing and fully reenergize our economy, can regain its fundamental unity and that all important friendliness between us all in our wonderfully argumentative democracy. Our military is getting smaller, so it is inevitable that we must do less with it. Yet at the same time it is essential that when the Commander-in-Chief, whoever he or she is, makes the commitment of our troops overseas, commitment that you have carried out yourselves, we must make certain that when that happens it is the enemy's longest day and the enemy's worst day. (Applause)

So, that brings me to why I am here to pay my deepest respects and show you my gratitude for your record in past battles reminds troops that nothing they face can be worse than what you faced, you and your predecessors.

Today's troops carry that legacy stretching from the Battle of the Bulge, Pulaski, and Midway to Pork Chop Hill, to Fallujah in Iraq, and the Helmand River Valley in Afghanistan.

Having ordered many troops into a fight, owe you for your stoicism and courage.

On 9-11, those maniacs thought they could hurt us and that would scare us by killing thousands of innocent people in New York City, here in Pennsylvania and in Washington, D.C., killing the innocent people from 70 different countries who were in America. They thought they could strike fear into us.

The military that you created in your battles gave proof that we don't scare. The descendants of Bunker Hill, of bloody Shiloh, both sides, Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima, Caisson, and thousands of other battles, we proved today that Americans are not made of cotton candy. We are worthy, descendants that you Veterans of Foreign Wars made by your service and showed the world that America retains its awesome determination to defend herself.

To show you my respect for your example is built on reality, let me relay an experience I had, one which will illustrate the debt of what the military owes each of you.

In early April 2004, as our Commander in Chief, John Stroud, just mentioned, I was in an organization ordered to attack Fallujah. It would turn



out to be the bloodiest battle for the Marines since Hue City, Vietnam, and for the soldiers, sailors and Marines who fought that battle, it was going to be a very tough one.

The night before the battle, I went down to visit the assault battalions and about midnight, it is time for generals to get out of the way and leave it in the hands of the infantry, the infant soldiers, the young soldiers, and that is how they got their name.

As I was falling back with my half a dozen radio operators to my vehicles, the enemy created some mischief nearby. We were behind the company laying on the line of departure. It was quite chilly, and they didn't have sleeping bags. They were stripped down to their assault gear.

This company would attack before dawn in order to clear the enemy outpost so the rest of the battalion could move in. The enemy started some mischief, and I checked with the corporal, and he said, "No sweat, General, we will take care of it."

After it all died down, there we laid for a few minutes to make sure it was quiet before we moved on. One of the young Marines asked his corporal, and the corporal probably himself was not old enough to buy a beer legally – notice, I said legally. This young man asked to the corporal, "Do you think Fallujah is going to be rough?" We have ladies present, so I will not put the response quite in the terms of the marine corporal. He basically said, "Hush, and get some rest. We took Iwo Jima, Fallujah won't be nothing." (Applause)

Ladies and gentleman, will you understand more than any other group I can talk to, generals can give brave speeches and we can do everything possible to have the ammunition stacked up, and the artillery to fire, but your example is worth more than all the gold in Fort Knox. When troops are laying on the line, departure, and they are shivering from more than just the cold. I may not know each of you personally, yet I do know your character.

Like today's young patriots who look past the hot political rhetoric of poorly explained wars and signed on. In this imperfect world, when the still radical idea of a free people governing themselves with respect for each other's differences is such a frightful notion for those intimidated by our freedom.

In such a world as this, your example of individual service, of your willingness to face danger and discomfort, again, that example is worth more than anything else when the troops are ready to go.

Even on its worst day, our military remains the envy of the world. It is the fiercest, it is the most ethical, and it was an honor to serve in as all of you know. It was by your service that you made it so, that you made these attributes of veracity, courage, and reality by keeping the faith and staying loyal in the tough times.

That is the only time that loyalty really matters. So, it is no surprise that you enjoy the respect and the affections of a Nation so very, very proud of you.

Thank you for allowing me to join you here in Pittsburgh. I will never forget the irredeemable debt I owe you magnificent veterans, and what I say

now will surprise none of you here, because you and I are cut from the same cloth.

I accept the Eisenhower Award on behalf of the troops who are in my place here today, earned my place with their blood and the sweat and all too often the Gold Star Families who earned this place that I occupy with their tears. Thank you, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and as we say in the U.S. Marines, *semper fi*. (Applause)

#### INTRODUCTION OF KENNETH KRAFT, NATIONAL RECRUITER OF THE YEAR

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I think that is what they call a Marines Marine, thanks for being with us.

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

Before announcing the National Recruiter of the Year and the Certified National Recruiters of the Year, I would like to take a moment to recognize three elite recruiters, each of whom recruited more than 250 new or reinstated members.

Comrades, please stand and be recognized as your name is called. Stephen Ward, from the Department of Europe, had 261 recruits. From the Department of Utah, Sanford Rosenthal, had 268 recruits. And Jack Lewis, from the Department of Maryland, had 271 recruits. Comrades, congratulations on a job well done.

Now I want to recognize the VFW National Recruiter of the Year, Kenneth L. "Ken" Kraft, from Post 12140 in the Department of Oregon, has been making a tremendous impact recruiting members to our great organization.

After recruiting 153 members last year, Ken pushed himself to do even more and has truly set the bar by accomplishing an astounding 529 — that's right, I said 529 — recruits this past year.

Ken, it is my pleasure to now present you with the National Recruiter of the Year Award. Let's all give him a big round of applause for a job well done. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: National Recruiter of the Year Award 2014-2015 presented to Kenneth L. Kraft, Department of Oregon.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation of your exceptional efforts in recruiter training as well as recruiting new or reinstated members for this membership year, your outstanding performance has earned you the designation as the most distinguished National Recruiter of the Year.

"You are commended for your professional achievements and recognized for your dedication to the goals of the 'Defending Freedom's Defenders' team.

“IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 20th day of July, 2015.”

This has been signed by John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, and John E. Hamilton Adjutant General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: That is Amazing, amazing, Comrades. He has pledged to do even more next year. (Applause)

#### PRESENTATION OF CERTIFIED NATIONAL RECRUITER OF THE YEAR AWARD FOR 2014-2015 TO DENNIS FLYNN, DEPARTMENT OF MISSOURI

Now, I have the pleasure of presenting the Certified National Recruiter of the Year Award to an individual who has become known for his dedication to performing this vital VFW mission. In fact, this is his third year in a row to be presented with this prestigious award.

This individual recruited a remarkable 311 new or reinstated members this year. This brings his total number of recruits to more than 1,100 members over the last three years.

With a growing history of recruiting success, this is an outstanding accomplishment and fully deserves to be recognized by all of us.

From Post 2866, located in St. Charles, Missouri, please welcome Dennis Flynn, the 2014-2015 Certified National Recruiter of the Year. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: “Certified National Recruiter of the Year 2014-2015 presented to Dennis L. Flynn, Department of Missouri.

“In special recognition and sincere appreciation of your exceptional efforts in recruiter training as well as recruiting new or reinstated members for the membership year, your outstanding performance has earned you the designation as the Most Distinguished Certified National Recruiter of the Year.

“You are commended for your professional achievements and recognized for your dedication to the goals of the ‘Defending Freedom’s Defenders’ team.

“IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 20th day of July, 2015.”

This has been signed by John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General. (Applause)

#### INTRODUCTION OF LEGACY LIFE CONTEST WINNERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: The VFW’s Legacy Life Membership provides an opportunity for life members to leave their mark on the nation’s largest organization of war veterans. Membership in this fraternity of distinguished and committed VFW members not only offers expanded and

exclusive benefits, but also helps ensure that the VFW's good work continues to not only help today's veterans, but the veterans of tomorrow.

This is accordingly the true meaning of the word "legacy" in this most prestigious and important program.

The winners of the Commander-in-Chief's Legacy Life Contest deserve to be highly celebrated for their achievement and for their dedication to our organization.

Comrades, please stand as your Post or District is recognized:

Post 2485, Department of Pacific Areas;

Post 8385, Department of Georgia;

Post 9143, Department of Georgia;

Post 369, Department of New York;

Post 7402, Department of Georgia;

Post 6311, Department of California;

Post 1448, Department of Montana;

Post 11290, Department of Missouri;

District 6 from the Department of Pacific Areas;

and District 7 from the Department Pacific Areas,

It also brings me great pride to acknowledge and commend three Posts that have earned a Legacy Society Post Proclamation in recognition of having at least 25 Legacy Life Members. Today I am pleased to recognize Joseph Monfort Post 9400, in Phoenix, Arizona, for having 25 Legacy Life Members.

Next is Jimmie Connors Post 6311 in Manteca, California, for having 25 Legacy Life Members.

And Angeles City Post 2485 in Angeles City, Philippines, for having 75 Legacy Members.

Comrades, please join me in giving them a big round of applause for achieving such a high honor. (Applause)

#### PRESENTATION OF THE ARMED FORCES AWARD TO ARMY MEDICS 68 WHISKEY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is my honor and privilege to present the 2015 VFW Armed Forces Award to those that hold the Army M.O.S. of 68 Whiskey, the Army medics.

Battlefield medicine in some shape or form has been with us since the Army's founding on June 14, 1775.

The list of wars, conflicts and humanitarian operations since then is a history of America, from our independence from England and preservation as a union, to assisting others in need no matter where; And everywhere our Army went, so did our combat medics, side-by-side with the infantry at the very tip of the spear.

But their job at the front often left them the most exposed, the most vulnerable, because their mission was to focus on the wounded, not the enemy

to their immediate front. And many made the ultimate sacrifices so that others may live.

According to the U.S. Army Medical Command, 28 combat medics would earn the Medal of Honor for Valor under fire. The majority during World War II and Vietnam, with 15 of them posthumously, as well as an untold number of Distinguished Service Crosses, Silver Stars and Purple Hearts.

After Vietnam, they would continue to serve with honor and distinction in Granada, Panama, Desert Storm, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Iraq and Afghanistan, and today accompany our POW/MIA search and recovery teams as they scour the earth for 83,000 missing American servicemen who are still listed as missing and unaccounted for from our Nation's wars.

The VFW Armed Forces Award is awarded annually to active or retired military members or organizations in recognition of extraordinary national security achievements that reflect the highest traditions of service to the Armed Forces and to our Nation.

Affectionately called "Doc," there is no argument that many in this room today owe their lives to an Army combat medic who accomplished his or her mission, and the bond that exists between medics and the troops they serve cannot be over-exaggerated.

Accepting the award on behalf of all Army combat medics is their top "Doc", Command Sergeant Major Gerald C. Ecker from the U.S. Army Medical Command.

The Sergeant Major is a career medic with a deployment history that includes Operations Desert Shield and Storm, and three more trips back for Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn.

At this time I would ask if all current and former Army medics from the 68 Whiskey, or older 91 M.O.S. Code to please rise and remain standing for the presentation of this award.

Comrades, sisters and distinguished guests, it is with great honor and pride that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States presents its 2015 VFW Armed Force Award to U.S. Army Medics. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Armed Forces Award and Citation awarded to United States Army Medics.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation of more than 240 years of faithful and dedicated service so that others may live. From America's independence and preservation to assisting others in need of battlefields across the world, their job on the front lines frequently leave them the most vulnerable because their focus is on caring for the wounded, U.S. Army Medics represent the very best of military medicine at home and abroad, and in times of conflict and humanitarian assistance. Their selfless and continuing service is true to the ideals, traditions and values of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 20th day of July 2015. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General. (Applause)

#### REMARKS BY COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR GERALD ECKER

COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR ECKER: Hooah. Now, how many combat veterans are medic corpsmen we have out there, Air Force medical technicians? Can I get you to stand real quick? I just want to clap my hands for you because you have been a great example to us. Thank you for your service. (Applause)

Commander-in-Chief Stroud, Adjutant General Hamilton, distinguished guests and families and, of course, veterans: Good morning.

I bid you a hearty welcome from our Army Surgeon General, Lieutenant General Patricia Horoho. She is out doing our Army's bidding right now trying to take care of our troops, and I am very honored to be here to receive this gift on behalf of all our combat medics.

As a Minnesota man, I want to pay a special hello to all you veterans out there in Minnesota. It sounds like we might have a few out there. Welcome to Pittsburgh.

It is certainly a great honor for me to be here this morning to accept this 2015 Armed Forces Award. It is truly my honor to be in your midst today, because guys like me and those that are going to do this after me and us, we truly stood on your broad shoulders to maintain the same high standards and the same tenacity and velocity of patriotism and operational craft and art.

Thank you for your leadership and your continued leadership. Over the past 14 years, life has been a little rough. Over the past 14 years of war, our 68 Whiskeys have served with great distinction. They have been the first on the objective to save soldiers on the battlefield at a rate of 92 percent. This is directly due to their sound minds, strong backs, skilled hands and compassionate spirit.

Our infantry and all combat soldiers can move out confidently on their missions because, yes, they know "Doc" will be there if needed.

As military members and veterans, we have all heard the same: In war, hope is not a good course of action. I contend that. I contend that all of our combat medics carry that hope. They carry it with them wherever they are, and provide it wherever needed. Medics make hope our reality.

The reality that is real as life, a life is a great course of action combat. So, again, I just want to say thank you very much. This has been a great honor for me.

I wish you a great convention and as the Army would say it, the Army medics would say, it is an honor to serve, and the Army is there to defend. God bless you all. (Applause)

#### INTRODUCTION OF HONORABLE TOM WOLF, GOVERNOR OF PENNSYLVANIA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is an honor and a privilege to introduce the governor of the Keystone state of Pennsylvania, the Honorable Tom Wolf.

The Governor hails from York County in south central Pennsylvania, and he will be the first to tell you he is not a politician.

He lives in the same house that he grew up in. He drove forklifts in his youth, and worked in the warehouse of his family's building supply company.

He joined the Peace Corps and served two years in India. He also ran a True-Value Hardware store.

And now he governs Pennsylvania, the 33rd largest in size, 6th largest in population, 4th largest in number of veterans, and more important to us, the 1st largest state in number of VFW members. (Applause)

Comrades and distinguished guests, please welcome Governor Tom Wolf. (Applause)

GREETINGS FROM THE HONORABLE TOM WOLF,  
GOVERNOR, PENNSYLVANIA

GOVERNOR WOLF: Well, thank you very much. That was really nice. I hope all of you are having a good time in Pittsburgh. Are you? Unfortunately, the Pirates are not in town and we are sorry for that because I know there are a lot of Pirates' fans here.

We really appreciate your coming to Pennsylvania for this convention. As the Commander-in-Chief said, Pennsylvania has the highest number of Veterans of Foreign Wars members in the country. In my small town, and I know John Brenner is here and maybe some other folks. Yes, they are back there. The VFW post is one of the most, if not the most important, institution in my town.

It is great to be here with you. I just want to do a shout out to a few people. National Commander John Stroud, thank you for holding your convention here and the incoming National Commander John Biedrzycki, who is actually from Pittsburgh, from this area. Thank you.

The national president of the Ladies Auxiliary, Ann Panteleakos, I want to thank you again for being here and for leading the organization.

I want to talk a little bit about what I think we need to do, not just here in Pennsylvania, but also around the country, to honor what you have done for us. I appreciate what the VFW does for returning veterans, and I am truly grateful, obviously as all Americans are, to your members and the veterans who have done so much for our country, and who have done so much for the people like me.

So, I am honored to be here with you. I want to do two things. First, I want to recognize, as I think all of us have to do eternally, I want to recognize the huge contributions that veterans have made to our way of life.

Secondly, I want to talk about all the things that I think we owe you in return, what every American citizen owes every veteran in return.

Let me start with the recognition. Veterans are obviously so important to all of us. They have shown the willingness to go the last mile, to defend the self-rule that each of us in America holds so dearly. All of you have committed an extraordinary act to make sure our democracy survives.

I want to add my words to the General's that is really important. In many cases this extraordinary act comes from ordinary men and women, and that's the way, in a democracy, it is actually supposed to work.

So, in honoring veterans, I want to dignify all of you with the highest accolades I can give you, and I want to understand and I want all of us in the United States to understand that as veterans you have shown yourselves to be extraordinary citizens, the highest honor I think anyone could bestow on anyone else.

That brings me to the second point, which is what all of us who benefit from the sacrifices that you and your members have made, what we must do to be worthy of the contribution that you have made. I want to add again my words to what General Mattis said, we need to be good citizens. That's what we need to do.

Veterans have defended our country, but most of all they have defended our democracy. Along with that really precious notion of citizenship. They have protected our right to exercise our basic responsibilities as citizens. That means we owe it to all of you, to the brave veterans who exercise those basic rights and responsibilities that you have so nobly defended.

Like voting, we need to do it. We need to run for public office. We need to petition our government, and we need to hold that government accountable.

Finally, we need to make sure we do, through those elected representatives, everything we need to do to make sure the veterans who defended those citizenship rights that we make sure we do everything we can to make sure that the home they come back to is the right one.

What I am trying to say is that we need to go beyond mere words in terms of the gratitude. We have to go beyond bumper stickers. We have got to go beyond empty platitudes. Our gratitude must be real. I am not sure we can show that gratitude in any more real way than acting as citizens we should act as.

Let me start with voting. We Americans, we don't vote. Certainly, not like we used to. In the late Nineteenth Century, it was not unusual to have turnout at election time of over 75 percent of eligible voters in presidential elections.

In a recent election in India, India has been an independent democracy since the late '40s, the turnout was over 60 percent.

I was elected in a primary election, those of you who are not from Pennsylvania, overwhelmingly in May 2014. The turnout, less than 20 percent of eligible voters. That was less than 20 percent. That is not a democracy. That does not represent the democratic ideal that you defended, nor is it appropriate behavior in a democracy that we all want to continue.



If we truly want to respect what you have done, we have to respect and use the right to vote that you so valuably defended. Second, running for office. If we don't vote, we don't run for elective office, either.

Commander-in-Chief Stroud said this is my first run for public office, it is. I have got to say I did not come straight from the True-Value Hardware Store to the governor's office. This is not automatic. That is something I did. Think of your own communities around the country. How many local offices are held by people who have been appointed by boards who are desperate for members, councils, school boards? It is hard to get people to leave their private comfort zones to run for public office.

People like us can't be bothered to run, therefore, people like us do not get to elect people like us to public office. That's not how citizens should behave, and that is not how democracy works.

We cannot strengthen democracy by consistently delegating or trying to delegate to others the responsibility we have to govern ourselves. That's not the way democracies are supposed to work, and that's not the democracy that you spent so much of your time, effort and lives defending.

Third, petitioning our government. We do a better job of petitioning government according to many studies than most other democracies in the world. That is we write letters to our representatives, we call them on the phone, we e-mail them. We engage them in meetings more citizens than many, many other countries.

But this type of activity, even here, seems to be confined to a very small group of Americans. The suspicion is that too few of us think that this kind of activity is worth the effort. So, once again, we too often delegate to others the responsibility we have as citizens. Again, that's not the way to honor our veterans.

Fourth, citizens in a democracy are meant to hold their elected representatives accountable. Veterans have risked too much, too often against tyrannies around the world to be happy with the tyranny that has grown out of the indifference we too often exhibit back here at home.

John Baer, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a Philadelphia Daily News correspondent in a recent article talked about what he calls the democratic deficit that exists right here in Pennsylvania, where there is a large disconnect between the views Pennsylvanians hold and the actual policies their representatives enact in Harrisburg.

Democracies can't work that way. Democracies can't work unless the citizens ensure that their public servants do what is right, make hard decisions and represent their views faithfully.

Finally, and hold the applause on "finally". Finally, veterans' willingness to practice citizenship and the limits must be rewarded here back at home by the representatives who actually run and work for the democracy they defended.

We need to do an adequate job, or better than adequate to make sure that the homes our veterans come back to helps them to readjust to civilian

life, provide them with the specific services they need for the work they have done, and reinforces the sense of gratitude we have for the important things they have done to make our democracy work.

They have done important things, you have done important things for us and we need to do important things for you.

There are a number of concrete ways I am proposing to do these things in Pennsylvania. Just as an example, first, I am looking to increase funding for veterans homes. Second, I want a huge increase in the education of the veterans' children's programs.

Third, we need to continue programs here in Pennsylvania aimed at things like homelessness, behavioral health and peer support programs, outreach services for the reintegration, and other programs that administer really well through organizations like the VFW.

Fourth, The Pennsylvania Military Family Relief Assistance Program provides financial support and assistance to the veterans who through no fault of their own are facing unforeseen circumstances, like a sudden or unexpected loss of income, and emergency need for child care, natural disasters, death, or serious illness of a parent, spouse, sibling or child.

Fifth, we need to continue to support the six extended care facilities that we run here in Pennsylvania for our veterans. Finally, we need to help veterans find good jobs.

Those are things that we owe to veterans who have done so much to defend us when they come back. In addition, I want to make sure that we all do, and I know the VFW is working through all states and the federal government to make sure that we encourage the federal government to do what it should do to address the mental and physical wounds that returning veterans bring back home when they come back home.

At the local level, we need to continue to work to make sure that we have veteran's courts, and the counties and municipalities are doing what they need to do to make life back home better.

In all of these areas, we need to show the gratitude we profess to hold for our veterans in really concrete ways. To be sure, we need to express our gratitude freely, frequently and openly.

But those expressions of gratitude must go beyond mere words. We need to exercise the precious rights that veterans have fought to preserve. We need to exercise the responsibilities that we each have as citizens to make sure the democracy you fought for actually thrives back here at home.

We need to make sure that the democracy that you fought for provides the support that you need for a good life back here at home. You need that and you deserve that.

The point is that we owe a debt of gratitude to all of you, to all of our fellow citizens for the service they have rendered us, and we need to actually show that gratitude as fully as we can.

Thank you to the VFW for doing such a great job of representing veterans so well. Thank you to your members for so faithfully and courageously defending our democracy.

As the governor of Pennsylvania, thank you so much for holding your National Convention here in Pennsylvania. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF MINISTER TUNG HSAING-LUNG, VETERANS AFFAIRS  
COMMISSION, REPUBLIC OF CHINA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is now my honor and a privilege to introduce Admiral Tung Hsaing-Lung, the minister of the Veterans Affairs Council for the Republic of China on Taiwan.

Minister Tung served in his country's military for almost four decades and retired as the chief of the Navy in July 2013, before joining the Veterans Affairs Council, which is similar to our Department Veterans Affairs.

The V.A.C. was a gracious host when I visited Taiwan in April, a visit that also included meeting his country's President Ma. I also want to thank him for hosting VFW Ladies Auxiliary National President Ann Panteleakos.

The VFW has a special relationship with the Veterans Affairs Council that goes back many years, plus we have a long-standing VFW National Resolution that supports the Republic of China on Taiwan.

I am very pleased that he could join us in Pittsburgh this year. Comrades and Sisters, ladies and gentleman, please welcome Minister Tung. (Applause)

REMARKS BY MINISTER TUNG HSAING-LUNG, VETERANS AFFAIRS  
COMMISSION, REPUBLIC OF CHINA

ADMIRAL TUNG: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief, for this warm introduction. Good morning.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor for me to attend this great convention. The VFW and my organization have been sharing the profound relation for many years. Commander-in-Chief Stroud led a delegation to Taiwan in April, and we exchanged ideas on how to improve the service to all veterans.

Our President Ma Ying-jeou took the time to meet with the delegation during their conversations. President Ma praised us for maintaining such a good friendship.

Each year the VFW has passed resolutions in support of my country. We truly appreciate it. This year marks the 70th anniversary of both the end of World War II, and the Republic of China's victory in fighting against the Japanese invasion.

There were more than 23 million Chinese people who were killed during that war. The purpose of commemorating the war is not to boast about

the victory, but to remember the historical facts. It is not about provoking hatred against another country, but it is about seeking peace.

Only by remembering history can one learn the crucial reality of war and realize that the most important thing is to prevent war from happening again. The military cooperation between our two nations has a long history. One good example would be the American volunteer group back in World War II, also known as the Flying Tigers led by General Chennault, which later became the 14th Army Air Force in China.

Within less than one year, they shot down nearly 300 Japanese airplanes which established the basis of winning the war in China.

With the assistance of the United States through all the years, militarily, economically, the people in Taiwan have been enjoying life of peace, democracy and freedom.

Under the leadership of our President Ma, we will remain a faithful friend of the United States and hopefully we will learn to deepen the fraternal friendship and the cooperative relations.

To take care of the veterans should be one of the nation's utmost responsibilities, and the purpose of my organization, the Veterans Affairs Council, is to take care of our veterans and their beloved families.

The value of our existence is to serve those who have dedicated themselves, including the life, to our country. As the words said by your Founding Father, President George Washington, "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 how the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."

Dear comrades, let's work shoulder-to-shoulder and provide a better and more comprehensive service to our heroes and their families.

Dear VFW friends, the Veterans of the Republic of China shares your friendship for you have always been supportive of us, and also I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to visit us, to visit my country, Taiwan, which is a beautiful island. It is beautiful scenery and wonderful people. Thank you. (Applause)

In recognition of Commander-in-Chief Stroud's contributions, on behalf of my country, I would like to present Commander-in-Chief Stroud with the Order of the Resplendent Banner. The certificate, to accompany the award of the Order of the Resplendent Banner with caveat to Mr. John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, in recognition of his significant contribution to the promotion of friendship and veteran exchange between the ROC and the USA.

His advocacy of the U.S. provision of articles to our government and his support of our overseas population in international organizations. The Order of the Resplendent Banner, with caveat, is hereby awarded on this date of the 20th of July, the year 2015. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF ADAM DENSMORE, FIRST PLACE  
VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Mr. Tung's English is better than my Chinese. (Applause)

For more than 65 years, the VFW Voice of Democracy program has been in place. This program provides students the opportunity to speak clearly about their values and give voice to how they perceive our Nation and the many liberties afforded to them.

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

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

Education and knowledge are the best weapons against any type of tyranny, and these young people are well-armed to face the challenges of America's future. Clearly, they will be contributing to not only America's future, but writing their own chapter in the history books.

Of all our VFW programs, none provides a better perspective on what the future holds than the submissions made to the program by our Nation's young people, all communicating pride, patriotism and love of country.

Mr. Adam Densmore's outstanding entry based on the selected theme, "Why Veterans are Important to our Nation's History and Future," earned him the esteemed title of 2014-2015 National Voice of Democracy winner and a \$30,000 college scholarship.

Adam is representative of the many thousands of young people who participate in the scholarship program annually.

He and his peers are the future of our country. What they are today, America will be tomorrow.

Please join me in welcoming and celebrating Adam Densmore's achievement as the 2014-2015 Voice of Democracy winner. (Applause)

SPEECH BY ADAM DENSMORE,  
FIRST PLACE VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER

MR. ADAM DENSMORE: In the past half year, I have had the privilege to associate with the VFW. During this time, I have come to appreciate what the organization does and the people of which the organization is composed. Thank you not only for your service but for what you all have generously poured into my personal life. It is an experience I won't forget, and I won't ever stop appreciating as I do now. (Applause)

My first taste of "American pride" was when I was 12, at the grocery store with my mom. We went to the food court for dinner, and noticed an

elderly man with a World War II veterans cap on. We approached him and introduced ourselves, and as I shook his hand, my heart swelled with pride.

I was proud of my country. I was proud of the man whose strong hand was wrapped around mine. I was proud of the men and women who represented America by joining the Armed Forces. I will never lose this pride. I will always be a patriot, a lover of the red, white and blue, and an admirer of our veterans.

Our National Anthem calls America the land of the free and the home of the brave, but America can only be free if she is brave. Economics tell us that nothing is free. There is no such thing as a free lunch, and that everything must be bought with a price. The same is true of freedom; our veterans have bravely sacrificed everything to pay the price for freedom. Courageous men and women like the one I met at the grocery store are the reason that America can still be free.

Throughout history, in wars like Vietnam, World War II, Afghanistan, and Iraq, our love of freedom has been tested. Enemies of liberty have sought to snuff out the light. However, proud representatives of America have ventured through jungles where armed enemies lurked in the unknown ready to strike and disappear.

They have charged onto beaches under heavy machine gun and artillery fire where they knew they probably wouldn't make it out alive. They have colored the ocean red with their blood — shed for the liberty of people they will never meet. Thanks to them, my family can go to church on Sunday. Thanks to our veterans, I have no fear of being caught praying. Thanks to our veterans, I can say what I want, when I want, and where I want, and thanks to our veterans I am free. (Applause)

Veterans used to get the attention they deserve. When a man returned home from fighting on the front lines, his family and friends would throw a welcoming celebration, he was thanked many times, and his face might even appear in the newspaper. Now, it seems that even though we have a national holiday for them, veterans aren't appreciated, respected, or thanked.

A failure to celebrate veterans is a failure to raise up the next generation. If future leaders don't understand the sacrifice necessary to maintain our free nation, no one will make that sacrifice later on down the road. We won't be able to remain the land of liberty, if veterans of tomorrow don't rise up, and if we fail to instill patriotism in our young.

America is only as free as she is brave. I met a veteran, and that made me want to be brave. Veterans not only protect us by fighting, they lead the next generation of patriots. Without veterans, my generation — the leaders of tomorrow — will not know what honor looks like. We will not grasp the idea of bravery. We will not have the dedication to answer the call of duty, to stand up and say, "I will go," when terrorists fly airplanes into our buildings.

No one will care. No one will be brave. Freedom isn't free. This means that veterans must continue to rise up if America is to remain the great land of liberty. Currently, the United States has Special Operations forces in at least

134 different countries around the world. Without them, the dark forces seeking to extinguish the flame of liberty would be successful.

Recently, in a high school district not far from my home, students began protesting because their history textbooks were misrepresenting historical events. Veterans could stop that, because they made history they were there, and they witnessed it firsthand.

If we take time to listen to their stories and ask them about their lives, we can learn what really happened. We don't have to rely on hearsay to know the facts, when we have the authors of history among us. These heroes deserve to be heard, and we are foolish if we don't take advantage of the opportunity.

As a high school student, everything I do is motivated by my future. I plan my future, I prepare for my future, and it's easy to take my future for granted. It's easy to assume that I'll have a future. It's easy to assume that I'll have an America to live in when I'm older. But the reality is, though, that freedom is not free. America is only as free as she is brave. Veterans are the backbone of America. Veterans provide the truth and inspiration necessary to maintain my generation's American pride. Thank you all for your service. (Applause)

#### INTRODUCTION OF JIMMIE W. SPENCER, DoD VIETNAM COMMEMORATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It brings me great pleasure to introduce our next guest representing an organization that the VFW is extremely proud to be affiliated with, the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration.

Not only has the VFW partnered with this impactful organization on a national level, but hundreds of VFW rider groups, Posts, Districts and Departments across America have also signed on as partners to ensure that Vietnam veterans receive the recognition and "thank you" they deserve. And I thank you for that.

Here with us today to speak more about the efforts of the commemoration is a graduate of the Sergeants Major Academy, both the U.S. Army and Republic of Korea Ranger schools, and the Canadian Airborne school.

He is a retired Army Command Sergeant Major who has 32 years of active military service to include a variety of assignments with conventional forces, Special Forces and Ranger units.

He has received a host of awards and decorations to include the Legion of Merit and Bronze Star, both with one oak leaf cluster, the Purple Heart and the Meritorious Service Medal with three oak leaf clusters.

Please welcome from the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration, a fellow VFW life member, Mr. Jimmie Spencer. (Applause)

REMARKS BY MR. JIMMIE SPENCER,  
DoD VIETNAM COMMEMORATION

COMRADE SPENCER: First of all, thank you very much for allowing me to be here as we honor all veterans of all foreign wars. It is special for me to be here, and thanks for that great introduction. It wasn't necessary.

The only thing I would like you to know about me is that I am a Vietnam veteran, and I am damn proud of it. (Applause)

Whoever put me behind this young man who spoke, I need to talk to him, because that is a very hard act to follow. He is just a wonderful young person.

Memorial Day 2012, I was with a small group of Vietnam veterans who were invited to a ceremony at the Vietnam Wall, the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.

The host of this event was the Secretary of Defense, and the President of the United States was the speaker, and what he said that day was pretty remarkable as far as I'm concerned.

He said that the Vietnam War era was a very troubling chapter in American history, a chapter that we should never, ever repeat again. It was a time when we blamed the veterans, we blamed the warriors for a war that they didn't start.

It was a time when many Americans could not separate their support for the war with their support for the warrior. It was a time when we seemed to focus on the misdeeds of a few, rather than the valor of the many. It was a time that we will never, ever repeat again. It was a time when we denigrated our soldiers when we should have been celebrating their service, sacrifice and valor.

As I was sitting there and listening to the President, I was thinking about another memorial some miles north of Washington, D.C. in a place called Sharpsburg, Virginia. Sharpsburg is the site of the bloodiest single battle in the Civil War. In that down there is a memorial to the Battle of Antietam. It is a cemetery filled with the dead of that great battle.

In the center of that cemetery is a monument. That monument is a form of a larger than life soldier dressed in the uniform of the day, but he actually represents every soldier who has ever fought in every war that America has been involved in. At the base of that monument that overlooks the graves, it simply says, "Not for themselves, but for their country."

Now, what the President was doing that day was thanking and honoring Vietnam veterans, but he was also beginning the kicking off of the Vietnam War Commemoration, commission and I happened to be part of that effort, and had the distinct honor to be a part of that.

It is my mission in life to thank and honor Vietnam veterans. Before I leave here today, it is my mission, my goal to shake your hands and thank you for your service.



As I was looking at the president and at the wall behind him, the black granite wall with names on it, I understood basically the real price of freedom with those 58,000 plus names there, every one of them representing a young person who was lost way too soon. A young person who will never know the joy of finding a soulmate to spend his life with, or share his life with.

Every one of those names on that wall represents the unbelievable pain that a mother must have felt when she received the phone call, a telegram, or a knock on the door telling her that the love of her life had been extinguished forever.

Every name on that wall represents a young person who did their duty, who answered the call, and not for fame or fortune, not to occupy one inch of foreign land, but they did it for the same reasons that their forefathers did. They did it to liberate the oppressed, free the enslaved, and lend a helping hand to those who needed a helping hand. They did it not for themselves, but for their country.

Those that we have lost, we owe them an eternal debt of gratitude for the freedom that we all enjoy, and we sometimes regrettably take for granted. We will never forget them. For those who came home, all but the 58,000, my mission is to thank you and honor you.

If you go by our booth in the exhibit hall, I will present you with a lapel pin and a handshake and on behalf of a grateful nation welcome you home. Thank you. Hoorah.

#### INTRODUCTION OF D. WAYNE ROBINSON, STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Our next guest is the president and chief executive officer for an organization that is no stranger to any of us, the Student Veterans of America, an outstanding organization that strives to help our veterans succeed after getting out of the service.

D. Wayne Robinson served in the U.S. Army and rose to the pinnacle of enlisted ranks as a Command Sergeant Major. During his career he held many leadership positions in artillery, special operations and recruiting, and he graduated from every enlisted leadership course offered by the Army.

He has over 39 awards recognizing his valuable contributions to multiple units, as well as actions taken during combat. He has also served in more than 12 countries around the world.

Before joining SVA's professional staff, Mr. Robinson served on the organization's advisory board. SVA's vision is one we truly believe in, that all veterans succeed in their quest for higher education, achieve their academic goals and gain meaningful employment, and the VFW is supporting that vision along the way.

Hundreds of VFW Posts have already teamed up with local SVA chapters and on college campuses across America, sharing our vast resources

to help them succeed in any way that we can. Further, they are learning of the importance of our organization and getting involved.

Members of the SVA are undoubtedly the future leaders of the VFW. If your Post hasn't already reached out to the members of its local chapter, please ensure that it does immediately following this convention.

Now, please join me in welcoming an outstanding veteran and a true American patriot, Mr. D. Wayne Robinson. (Applause)

REMARKS BY MR. D. WAYNE ROBINSON,  
STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA

MR. WAYNE ROBINSON: Good morning, and thank you for having me. Thank you to John Stroud, partners in the fight in Washington, D.C., and also to the Ladies Auxiliary for inviting me to be here today.

I would like to give you a little additional background on the SVA and take a few minutes to talk about something that is important to both of our organizations, which is recruiting.

A little background on Student Veterans of America. We are on more than 1200 college campuses and universities. We have over 460,000 members. We are growing at a rate of about 15 chapters per month. We conduct advocacy on behalf of about 1.1 million veterans in higher education, and we are prepared to deliver programming for about 500,000 on our college campuses.

I would like to begin to talk a little bit about recruitment, which John just recently mention. From the standpoint of a life cycle of a veteran, and I know a number of us transitioned a little while back and we forgot the stages that we were in, so I would like to address it from the standpoint of dependent, independent and inter-dependent.

When veterans are on our college campuses, they are dependent. During that period, what is on their mind is what am I going to be studying, will the course be tough, will I need a tutor, will I actually graduate? Can I do it? Where will I live? Will I make enough money to take care of my family?

So, in our partnership, I believe what we have found that this is probably not the best stage to recruit student veterans, and the reasoning is because at this point they are not thinking about service and giving back. They are thinking about how to transition and how to take care of their families at this point, at this stage. If they are recruited, then it is tough to keep them involved. Retention would be an issue, low retention and high turnovers.

The next phase that a student veteran goes through is inter-dependent where they are now becoming comfortable on campus. They are familiar with the environment; they are now thinking about where will I work? They are pretty confident that they will graduate and they will actually get involved with SVA chapters. At this point is where they become leaders in SVA, and they are now thinking about those that are transitioning and coming behind them.

The final stage of the life cycle of a student veteran is interdependent. At this stage they are transitioning into the workforce, they are going into business, and then now I believe that this is the greatest opportunity to recruit the more one million that will be returning in the last five years, and the one million that are currently on college campuses. This is the greatest opportunity for recruitment, and there is a SVA alumni. They are stable, educated and looking forward to serve.

I look forward to continuing these conversations on the life cycle of a veteran, how to not only continue to make SVA a stable organization that serves its veterans, its student veteran population, but also transition into giving back to those coming behind them, and continue to service the nation.

Once again I thank you for this opportunity and I look forward to furthering the SVA/VFW partnership. Thank you. (Applause)

#### PRESENTATION OF "CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP" CITATION TO DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have come to realize we can count on one thing that consistently remains the same at convention: The Department of Arizona increasing their VFW membership.

For a remarkable 48 years, the members of the Department of Arizona have come together as a team to consecutively increase VFW membership throughout the state.

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

Now, in honor of their hard work and dedication, I would like to call on Gregory Kozakiewicz, immediate past Department Commander of Arizona, to accept this "Consecutive Years of Membership Growth" citation. Congratulations to all in the great Department of Arizona. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: This Certificate of Commendation Awarded to Department of Arizona.

"In recognition of the remarkable achievement of 48 consecutive years of membership sustained by a Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 20th day of July, 2015."

This has been signed by John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General. (Applause)

#### INTRODUCTION OF SCOTT STUMP – NATIONAL DESERT STORM VETERNAS WAR MEMORIAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Now, countless times throughout history, America has defended nations against oppressive attacks. The brave men and women sitting in this room today understand what it takes to defend freedom and democracy, a commitment that was again called upon from afar, nearly a quarter of a century ago.

After Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait in 1990, over half a million of America's finest soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen bravely fought to expel one of the largest military forces in the world, and in doing so liberated a nation from extreme violence, occupation and tyranny.

Once the dust settled, over 300 brave men and 15 women had served and died as a result of their commitment to freedom and democracy. Sadly, as we near the 25th anniversary of the Desert Storm conflict, no national memorial stands in honor of the servicemen and women who served and those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Last year during the 115th VFW National Convention, VFW members spoke loud and clear in support of changing that. Passing the Operation Desert Shield/Storm Memorial Resolution allowed the VFW to endorse and voice our strong support for the National Desert Storm Veterans War Memorial and the mission to build a lasting tribute to the bravery, achievement, commitment and sacrifice of all Desert Storm veterans.

A major facet of our mission as an organization is to ensure those who have gone before us in war are remembered and honored properly. This memorial will do just that and much more.

Here today to talk more about the memorial is VFW Life Member Scott Stump, CEO and president of the National Desert Storm Veterans War Memorial board of directors. (Applause)

#### REMARKS BY COMRADE SCOTT STUMP – NATIONAL DESERT STORM VETERANS WAR MEMORIAL

COMRADE STUMP: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I want to help you to go back in time 25 years, so if you will bear with me, I have a short video I would like to bring your memories back to. If you would please direct your attention to the video on the screens.

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

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope you enjoyed that. I hope it took you back. More importantly, I hope it made you remember just how significant Operation Desert Storm was and how it could have very easily gone the other way. We are very fortunate with the way that it did turn out.

I also want to point out that I think that the video did an excellent job of dispelling some of the myths and some of the media manufactured linkage between Operation Desert Storm along with Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

They tend to lump those conflicts together when it is very obvious they had separate and distinct missions. Ours was all about liberating Kuwait, OIF and OEF was all about the war on terrorists. I hope that I illustrated that for you.

Now, as far as our focus, as Chief Stroud mentioned, our driving daily focus is on remembering these 300 folks that didn't come back. Everything resolved around that. However, there are some other issues about Desert Storm that sometimes people forget.

Operation Desert Storm was a very important and significant turning point in our country's history. Jimmie had mentioned here earlier our country went through a very rough time in Vietnam, and many of our Vietnam veterans were not treated the way they should have been. It was very appalling.

Our country finally realized that could never happen again. I believe without a shadow of a doubt that our men and women who are in uniform now and who have been serving in the war on terror, I don't believe they would be treated with that level of dignity and respect if it were not for those lessons learned in Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

I also will draw one other link with Vietnam, because there are many. A lot of people say, "Scott, you know, Desert Storm happened so quickly and was so successful because the Iraqis were so bad."

As a Marine Corps infantry officer, I can tell you I don't believe that. I don't believe that they were that bad. I believe we were that good. You know why we were that good? Because all of our leaders were Vietnam veterans. (Applause)

Those Vietnam veterans were not going to allow what happened the first time around to happen to us, and I want to personally give them all the credit for my being able to stand before you today. It was a big deal.

So where are we with the memorial? Well, as Chief had mentioned, we had just completed a brutal three-year, over three-year legislative battle. I am sorry, it is a process. I always get in trouble when I say it is a battle. It culminated with the passage of our bill and it was signed into law on December 19th.

What that law authorizes is the construction of the Desert Storm Memorial onto federal land in the District of Columbia through 100 percent private funding. So, no veterans programs are impacted with this. There is no taxpayer money involved whatsoever with this. It is all privately funded.

Now, this is where you all come into play. The current estimate that we have for everything involved with the Memorial is right at \$25 million. What we have, our goal is to raise that \$25 million during the 25th anniversary of Desert Storm, which commences on August 2nd.

I have had some people tell me, "Scott, you know, that is a huge financial hurdle. That is a lot of money."

I like to put things in perspective when it comes to that. In 1919, Kansas City, Missouri, the home of the VFW, raised \$2.5 million in ten days for the World War I Memorial. That's \$34 million and some change in today's

money. I believe the money is out there. We just need to find it and get wired in.

Another way to look at this, too, is there is some presidential campaigns that are underway at this point. It is funny how people don't bat an eye when you have people talking about hundreds of millions of dollars. Mr. Bush has raised already \$115 million. The average is \$710,000 a day in donations.

Mrs. Clinton has raised \$45 million since April, and nobody bats an eye about that.

I had a discussion with a gentleman here recently, and he said, "You know, Scott, the problem is that a lot of people in this country, they are more worried about influencing and shaping the future than they are about remembering and honoring the past."

I kindly but forcefully reminded him if it weren't for veterans of every war and every era of service, there wouldn't be any future to shape, period. (Applause)

So, I would like to personally appeal to you in closing, we need your help. We are at a critical juncture in this project, and we need seed money of \$200,000 that we are trying to raise by August 1st. I would like to appeal to you all at a Department level, at a District level, even at a Post level. Maybe you all know some folks in your state or in your District that are successful business people that you can introduce us to.

Maybe there are some corporations that are veteran friendly that we could network with to start the ball rolling here. Maybe your Post, maybe your District and your Department would be interested in conducting a fundraiser on behalf of this mission, or possibly you might be willing to write a check or donate to us through the website at [nationaldesertstormwarmemorial.org](http://nationaldesertstormwarmemorial.org), or [ndswm.org](http://ndswm.org).

However you all ultimately support this, I want to thank you in advance and humbly thank you for your support. It is going to take a team effort, and we need your help, folks. I want to appeal to you as a fellow VFW member. Help us to do the right thing. The right time is now. This is the right thing to do, and I am asking for your help.

Thank you so much, Chief Stroud and your staff. I thank you for a great year. I want to wish the incoming officers a great year. I look forward to working with all of you in 2015 and 2016. Fellow VFW members, thank you for your attention. God bless you all. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL ALCIDES "AL" LUGO,  
VFW DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA RETIREMENT HOME

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Our next guest is here representing a very unique and special endeavor by the VFW Department of Florida. Retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Alcides "Al" Lugo, Jr., is the executive director of the VFW retirement home in Fort McCoy, Florida.

The VFW retirement home is a 501(c) (3) non-profit veterans organization owned outright and operated by the VFW Department of Florida and it's the only facility of its kind anywhere in the world.

The goal of the facility is to provide a homelike atmosphere to veterans who have proven their loyalty and patriotism by serving our country in foreign lands during times of war.

The home's guiding principle is to provide affordable, independent living accommodations to VFW members, ladies' and men's auxiliary members and their spouses.

The doors to the VFW home opened in October 1991. The facility is spread out over 42 acres and rests among tranquil oaks and palms.

Before working at the retirement home, Lieutenant Colonel Lugo amassed a long and impressive career in the military, dating back to 1986. He held several key positions over the years, with stops in Germany, Afghanistan and the Pentagon, to name a few.

His awards include the Legion of Merit, four Meritorious Service Medals, three Army Commendation Medals, four Army Achievement Medals, the National Defense Service Medal with Bronze Star, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Armed Forces Service Medal, among others.

Comrades, please give a warm welcome to Lieutenant Colonel Al Lugo. (Applause)

#### REMARKS BY COMRADE AL LUGO – DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA RETIREMENT HOME

COMRADE AL LUGO: Good morning. I think it is still morning time. Commander-in-Chief Stroud, Past National Commanders, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Brian, National Quartermaster General Bob Greene and National Adjutant General Hamilton, fellow officers, and a special welcome to our first female commander in our 85-year history of Florida, Amber Putnam. (Applause)

It is an honor for me to stand here today to speak about one of a kind facility that the VFW Department of Florida built back in 1991. As the VFW National motto states, "No one does more for veterans," which is a very true statement.

The Department of Florida built that one of a kind facilities to take care of veterans, and I am pleased to be the Executive Director of that facility and thanks to the perseverance of the Department of Florida, with the assistance and guidance of the National Headquarters.

We are celebrating our 24th year of taking care of veterans. So, what is the VFW building all about? All of you should have a brochure in your packet. The Chief stole most of our thunder. I will reiterate a couple of things real quickly.

I don't want to stand between you and lunch. It operates with zero state or federal funding, and it is a 42-acre complex, 70 type apartments. It has

a 24/7 kitchen, transportation, housekeeping, three meals a day, cable TV, and free telephone and long distance, and you can call your friends in Michigan.

We have representatives from 15 states. There is no minimum age to be a resident. We also welcome “snow birds”. If all of this sounds very good to you, please stop by our booth at 435 and see and meet the employees there.

Again, I want to be brief, so before I leave the podium I would like to present the Chief with a small token of our appreciation for everything that the National Headquarters has done for us throughout the year.

Chief, on behalf of the residents and board members of the village, I want to present to you the converted Key to the Village, the Directors’ Award, so you and Mary will always have a place to come home to.

It says, “Key to the Village, Directors’ Award, presented to John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, 2014-2015.”

Commander, thank you for your leadership, your mentorship and friendship, aim high, and again for the opportunity to be here. God bless you all. (Applause)

#### PRESENTATION OF CHECK BY CLIFFSIDE MALIBU

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Al, thank you very much for that.

Everyone here in this room today can attest to the true cost of war. We know the price of freedom extends beyond the number of casualties and physical wounds. In many cases, the long-term effects of war are invisible.

The psychological wounds of war are no longer taboo, and the VFW is proud to have had a role in the bringing issues such as PTSD and suicidal ideation to the mainstream, ensuring funding, treatment, options and proper care are made available to aid those who otherwise would not have sought treatment.

This convention we have been joined by sponsor, Cliffside Malibu, an addiction treatment center, well-prepared to aid in the recovery success of any veteran who may benefit from its services.

Joining us on stage today is Dr. Constance Scharff, Senior Addiction Research Fellow and Director of Addiction Research at Cliffside Malibu Treatment Center. Please give her a warm welcome. (Applause)

#### REMARKS BY DR. CONSTANCE SCHARFF

DR. SCHARFF: Thank you for allowing us to be here today, and help sponsor this event. I am presenting at 2:00 o’clock, so I will be very brief here today.

But 22 veterans kill themselves every day coming back from these wars. That is absolutely unacceptable.

There is treatment, there is hope, and if you like to know more about it, see me at 2:00 o’clock.



Now, on behalf of Cliffside Malibu, I would like to present the VFW with a check for \$25,000. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Thank you. At this time we will recess until 1:45 o'clock p.m.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 12:30 o'clock p.m., to reconvene at 1:45 o'clock p.m.)

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FIRST BUSINESS SESSION  
MONDAY AFTERNOON, JULY 20, 2015

(The First Business Session of the 116th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States was called to order in the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, at 1:45 o'clock p.m. by Commander-in-Chief Stroud.

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We will now call to order for our afternoon business session.

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO THE  
115TH NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is now my distinct pleasure to present a Certificate of Appreciation to the 115th National Convention Committee for their work in planning and conducting last year's very successful National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri.

Here to accept the award on behalf of the committee is James Mueller, the Convention Committee Chairman for the 115th National Convention.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Certificate of Appreciation presented to 115th Convention Committee.

"In extraordinary appreciation and esteemed recognition of its outstanding dedication and persistent drive to ensure the success of the 115th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States held in St. Louis, Missouri, July 19-23, 2014.

"IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 20th day of July, 2015."

This has been signed by John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE – PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES MUELLER

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief John Stroud. As you well know, it takes a lot of volunteers to put on a very successful National Convention. I would like to take a moment to again thank my co-chairmen, the ones that could make it happen.

They are my Operations Chair, Jessie Jones, Past Department Commander and current Department Adjutant/Quartermaster.

My Registration Chairman, Past Department Commander Phil Pippins from the Eighth District.

My National Driver's Chairman, John Ebner, Twelfth District Commander.

The Healthcare chairman, the Eleventh District Commander, Deborah Halter, the Memorial Chairman, the Eighth District Commander, Ken Allison Commander and the Patriotic Chairman, Jim Olsen. The Halls Chairman, Ninth District Commander, Mike Keye, and Louie Cooper from Kansas.

The Ladies Auxiliary, Chairman Jackie Davis, Past Department President.

The Motorcycle Coordinator Group, Roy Sherwood, and a special thanks to the VFW Operations and Planning Convention, Chairman Vanessa Kane, and to all the Headquarters staff for all their help and assistance.

On behalf of the "Show Me State", the VFW and the Auxiliary, we hope you had a good time in St. Louis. If my memory serves me right, we hope to see you in 2018 in Kansas City.

If you would like to come back to St. Louis, and we will do it again. Thank you. (Applause)

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: The VFW has a rich tradition of community service, as evidenced by our members' nearly eight million hours of volunteerism each year. Those hours are spent in a variety of ways, covering everything from visiting with comrades at local VA facilities and maintaining veterans memorials, to teaching a classroom of children proper flag etiquette. Our works installs a sense of patriotism and pride in our communities.

Community service is a founding VFW tenet, benefiting education, the environment, health sciences, civic projects and the military. Today, we honor Sultan, Washington's Stoehr Glidden VFW Post 2554 for their patriotic hard work and tireless dedication to transforming their hometown's main street using American flags and uniting the citizens of their community.

Driving through towns that display "Old Glory" during special occasions and holiday weekends, it's not hard to understand why Post 2554 wanted that for their own hometown.

Spearheaded by VFW Post Chaplain David Sivewright and his now wife Christina Nelson, Post 2554's "American Flags on Main Street" project set out to accomplish that task in time for Veterans Day.

Lining Sultan's main street which spans several blocks through town was no easy task. American flags had to be acquired, flag poles needed to be purchased and assembled, and permanent holes needed to be cored and drilled into the concrete sidewalks so the flags could be displayed on holidays and for special occasions.

Post 2554 organized multiple fundraisers and bake sales in order to fund the project, and many Post members and individual citizens personally

donated to ensure the project's success, and after only six months the project was fully funded.

While the project's goal was to line Sultan's main street, the impressive display of American flags does so much more. The American Flag Project helped bolster patriotism and fostered new opportunities for camaraderie between members of the Post and the community.

Sometimes, it only takes a small spark to ignite pride and patriotism, and Post 2554 was that spark for Sultan. Citizens, businesses and the entire town rallied together in support of this project.

So, please join me in presenting the Fred C. Hall Memorial Outstanding Post Special Project Award to Sultan, Washington VFW Post 2554. Accepting the award on behalf of the Post is Post Commander Wilmar C. Donahue.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: The plaque reads, "Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Fred C. Hall Memorial Outstanding Post Special Project, 2014-2015, Stoehr-Glidden Post 2554."

COMRADE WILMAR DONAHUE: Thank you very much. (Applause)

#### REPORT OF CONVENTION CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will now request that Betty Gripp give us the initial credentials report. Betty.

SISTER BETTY GRIPP, DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA: Good afternoon, Commander-in-Chief, Council members and delegates: The opening credentials report for the 116th National Convention, at the close of business 4:00 p.m. yesterday, July 19th, 2015, total delegates registered with credentials, total delegates, 12,164. Total Department Commanders, 43. Total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 26. Total National officers, 51. That is for a grand total of 12,284. Total registered for the 116th National Convention, 1,968. That is my report, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Thank you. We will now have the report of the Convention Rules by Chairman John M. Carney.

#### REPORT OF CONVENTION RULES COMMITTEE

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Per your request, our committee met yesterday, these are the following committee recommendations. I would like to recognize the Vice Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief George Cramer, and certainly staff member David Prohaska who assisted us.

This is the report to the 116th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

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

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

3. A registered delegate shall be permitted to speak but twice on any one subject, or any pending resolution for a period not to exceed five minutes each except by consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the convention present, provided that chairmen of Convention Committees may speak as frequently as necessary in connection with reports of their committees. In the event of controversy, the presiding officer shall not entertain any motion which will curtail further debate without affording the maker of the motion or a member of the particular group presenting the resolution an opportunity for five minutes of final rebuttal.

4. All resolutions offered by the individual registered delegates must bear the endorsement of the Department Commander or, if absent, the Department Adjutant. All resolutions must be submitted to the office of the Adjutant General for numbering and referral to the committee no later than 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 21, 2015, and must be accompanied by a written explanation as to why the resolution was not presented to the Department Convention for consideration.

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

6. Committee chairmen, in report on resolutions referred to their committee, shall first read those resolutions on which favorable action is recommended. Specific resolutions may be set aside for individual action at the request of any delegate, the others being voted upon collectively. After action has been taken on all such resolutions, the chairman shall read the number and title of those resolutions which the Committee has disapproved. A resolution disapproved by the Committee shall be automatically rejected unless a motion is made and seconded that it be approved, in which case it shall be brought up for debate and Convention action.

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

8. The Convention will not consider any resolution endorsing legislation sponsored by any other Veterans organization, or requesting us to join with any other organization in sponsoring legislation not expressly proposed by the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

9. No person not a duly registered delegate or member of the National Convention shall participate in debate, directly or indirectly, on any subject before the Convention.

10. Unit rule of voting is not allowed.

11. Voting strength shall be determined by those delegates registered as of the close of the credential registration booth the previous day and as reported to the National Convention. The Department Commanders will receive, prior to the beginning of each business session, a list of Posts that have properly registered delegates. Only delegates representing those Posts listed on the report will be accorded voting privileges.

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

13. Registered delegates of a delegation may arrive at a vote in any manner, but shall announce it in terms of full units and not in terms of a fractional part of a vote.

14. Reconsideration of a motion or resolution upon which final disposition has been made shall not be allowed after the session at which it was acted on has been recessed or adjourned, unless the body is notified of such contemplated action prior to the close of that session.

15. When the report of the Department Commander of the delegation is not acceptable to all registered delegates of the delegation and a poll of the Department registered delegates is demanded by three registered delegates of said Department, the Adjutant General shall poll the registered delegates without discussion of question.

16. In accordance with Section 621 of the National By-Laws, voting shall be by acclamation, except a roll call may be demanded by ten registered delegates representing Posts in ten separate Departments, or by order of the Commander-in-Chief.

17. Nominating speeches for the National officers shall be limited to five minutes each. The time allocated to encompass all seconding speeches shall be limited to four minutes total. Nomination and election of National officers will be held according to the Congressional Charter, By-Laws, and Section 617 of the National Manual of Procedure.

18. Registered delegates and persons recognized by the Chair shall be entitled to a respectful hearing, and the Chair shall have the authority to clear the gallery or the floor or have the Sergeant-at-Arms escort from the floor any person or persons who may create any disturbance which interferes with the orderly procedure of the Convention.

19. The Commander-in-Chief may, as may be necessary and appropriate to informing the membership of the activities of this Convention, authorize that all or parts of the Convention be streamed through the website of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

20. Consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the Convention present is necessary for suspension of the rules of this Convention.

Commander-in-Chief, I make a motion that these rules be accepted for the 116th National Convention.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have got a motion properly submitted. Is there a second?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE CRAMER: Comrade Commander in Chief, George Cramer, a delegate from VFW Post 3873, Department of Illinois, a Past Commander in Chief. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I have a motion duly seconded to adopt the Convention Rules. Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any discussion on the motion?

Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". The motion carries. The Convention Rules are accepted.

We will now have the report of the Committee on National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual, by Chairman Allen "Gunner" Kent, Past Commander-in-Chief.

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

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: Commander-in-Chief, thank you very much. I am pleased to report to the Convention that the Committee on National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual met yesterday afternoon beginning at 2:00 o'clock.

Let me first introduce the Vice Chairman of the Committee, Past Commander in Chief, Larry Rivers, and advising us with his knowledge was David Prohaska, Director of Operations.

I know there are many Committee members in attendance. I ask they all stand and be recognized. If you are a Committee member, please stand and be recognized. Thank you very much for all your deliberations yesterday and your wisdom in this Committee.

In keeping with the procedures established, I will first read the proposed By-Law amendments recommended for adoption by the Committee. If you want to set one of these aside for discussion, you will rise, go to a microphone, address the presiding officer, and ask for a certain proposed amendment be set aside.

A motion to adopt will be in order for those remaining proposed amendments. We will vote.

If a particular amendment is not read, it was not recommended by the Committee for adoption, so you will need to rise and state a motion for its adoption. The ones we rejected, I will read after we discuss the ones that were for adoption.

I will now read the Committee's recommendation for adoption of the following By-Law amendments: B-1, B-2, B-5, B-8, B-12, B-13, B-14, B-15 and B-16.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Microphone number 3.

COMRADE PAUL SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Paul Spera, a delegate from North End Post 144 in Boston, and Past Commander-in-Chief. I ask that B-13 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: B-13 is set aside. I recognize microphone Number 1.

COMRADE DUANE HERMANSON: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Duane Hermanson, A delegate from Post 4452, State of Minnesota. Commander, I would like to set aside B-12.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: B-12 is set aside.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: Comrades, if we are going to set aside B-12 and B-13, you must set aside B-14, 15 and 16, because they are all interrelated. So, I need somebody to give me a motion on that, please. I see it is going to be a long afternoon.

COMRADE DUANE HERMANSON: (Department of Minnesota) I would like to set B-14, B-15 and B-16 set aside.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: We have a motion to set aside B-12, 13, 14, 15 and 16. Those will come up at a different time.

At this time, Commander-in-Chief, I move that we approve B-1, B-2, B-5 and B-8.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have got a motion to approve B-1, B-2, B-5 and B-8. Is there a second?

COMRADE HAROLD BURKE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Harold Burke from Post 1895, state of New York, seconds that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have got a motion duly seconded to approve B-1, B-2, B-5 and B-8. Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any discussion on the motion? Any discussion on the motion?

Hearing none, all in favor signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". The motion carries. B-1, B-2, B-5 and B-8 are accepted.

We will now entertain discussion on the set-aside for B-12, B-13, B-14, B-15 and B-16. I recognize microphone number 1.

COMRADE DUANE HERMANSON: (Department of Minnesota) Commander, if these By-Law changes were to change, it is going to take away the identity of our Ladies Auxiliary, which has been here for 101 years. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize the speaker at microphone number 2.

COMRADE JUDITH BURGER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Judith Burger, Post 4108, Oregon. This, Comrades, will in no way, shape or form change the identity of this Ladies Auxiliary. What it will, in fact, do is to strike and through credence and how we in our current military force is represented now today. It will revitalize and give strength to an Auxiliary that supports us.

I can tell you that my husband is just as good as your wives. I can tell you my son, my father and my grandsons are just as good, and they have spent a lot of years supporting my service and my sisters' service. So, I am asking you to step up and make this change.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Microphone number 3.



PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Paul Spera, a delegate from North End Post 144, and Past Commander-in-Chief. I arrive at this microphone to oppose this change on this floor. Let me make it perfectly clear, I have no objections to this change to the Ladies Auxiliary. I think it is about time that the change takes place. But I have one concern, and that concern is the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. This entire subject has been mishandled for the last three years. This should not be on our floor. This is a subject for the Ladies Auxiliaries to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to make the change. It is not for us. You may disagree with what I have to say, but you have no right to be disagreeable.

This change should be made by the Ladies Auxiliary. For us to stand on this floor after more than 100 years of service by that organization to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, to tell them today that we are going to remove their right of self-determination of their own organization. We cannot and I would venture to guess that every past state commander or past commander-in-chief, and many others in this room have stepped up to microphones at conventions, at conferences, and various other places, and have extolled the virtues of the Ladies Auxiliary.

We have told them over and over for more than 100 years that we could not accomplish what we have without them. We have always referred to them as partners. I understand the relationship between the organization and the Auxiliary. But I also understand —

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: You have one minute remaining, Comrade.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you. I also understand that it is not for us to stand on the floor of this convention and tell the Ladies Auxiliary that daddy says you have to go in the corner and we will tell you what to do.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 1.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ED BANAS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ed Banas, a delegate from Post 1004, Department of Connecticut. I wholeheartedly disagree with the last Comrade. The Ladies Auxiliary cannot do anything that would violate our National By-Laws. They are waiting for us to make this change.

It is correct, it is proper, and today in this convention is the time to do it because they are waiting for us to do it, and anything less would be a terrible decision on the part of this Convention. I support the Ladies Auxiliary change. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 2.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: Commander-in-Chief, I am Gunner Kent, a delegate from Post 9972, Sierra Vista, Arizona. First of all, for our esteemed colleague Paul Spera, last year on this convention floor Resolution 302 was passed and directed by this membership that the Adjutant General and the Secretary-Treasurer of the Ladies Auxiliary to meet with the

By-Laws Review Committee and bring to this floor a change to the Ladies Auxiliary eligibility. That is what we are doing today. With your indulgence, Commander-in-Chief, I would like to read the following letter.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Proceed.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: I have got to put my glasses on.

"Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Office of National President.

"Dear Ladies Auxiliary, VFW Members: There has been a lot of discussion and many questions regarding VFW Resolution 302 from last year's Convention, and the result proposed the VFW By-Law change that will be considered at this year's convention.

"I am pleased to report to you that the VFW has listened to our concerns and has reworked the terms of the By-Law change. Specifically, they are allowing grandfathering of current dual members as well as anyone who retains dual membership prior to August 20, 2015.

"I want to thank the VFW leadership and the By-Law Committee for taking our concerns into consideration. I also especially want to draw attention to the specific change in eligibility as it concerns step relations and what is being proposed in order to align with the By-Laws wise guidance and the regulations of the IRS requires Auxiliary members to be related to the members of the parent organization within two degrees of consanguinity."

That means two generations. This includes parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, children and grandchildren, but does not include nieces and nephews of the members. We believe stepchildren adopted families member do meet the two degrees of the IRS.

"We do not believe it is necessary to include these terms in the eligibility criteria. Those who have stepchildren, half or adopted are members of the immediate family. The eligibility for foster relations, as previously removed from the eligibility criteria of the Ladies Auxiliary and does not meet the two degrees standard.

"I encourage all of you to read the following attachment, a statement from the VFW, the Post changes, frequently asked questions. The National line officers and I are still very much in favor of the Auxiliary that represents the family members of all combat veterans.

"We will eagerly await the outcome of this vote and hope the best decision is made for both organizations. Ann Panteleakos, National President." Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GLEN GARDNER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Glen Gardner, a delegate from Post 3359, Garland, Texas. I stand, too, before this body in favor of this proposed By-Law amendment. Today approximately 20 percent of America's Armed Forces is made up of women. These women are on the front lines doing the same things most of us did when we served.

Many are being wounded, many are coming back and many want to continue their service to veterans by belonging to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, but their spouses are not given the opportunity to belong to an organization other than just on a Post level.

How long would we have stayed active if our spouses were not active in the Auxiliaries? That was what we faced. These ladies that serve today that are veterans are members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Their husbands, their brothers and fathers, they deserve the same opportunity to belong to the great part of this organization, to belong to the Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, to continue to help them serve and to help us do the work of the organization.

In 1978, I went to my first convention. I stood on that floor and I listened to the great debate by some great orators of that time. Many were against the proposal to allow women in to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. They talked about the many things it would do to destroy our organization. Comrades, all we have to do is look around in this room and see the many, many women who are now Department Commanders, Post Commanders, and District Commanders. They are doing a great job to serve veterans and continue to help us. (Applause)

I remember like it was yesterday, however, one of the last individuals that stood before that body stood up and addressed the Commander-in-Chief and said very simply, "Commander-in-Chief, this is the place and now is the time." Comrades, this is the place and now is the time to make this organization stronger for the future.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 1.

COMRADE GARY ANDERSON: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Gary Anderson, Post 6587, a delegate from the Department of Minnesota. I stand in opposition to this Resolution and By-Law change over the fact that our state is the first to have researched how many of these people will join this organization. In my opinion, it will be less than one-quarter of one percent who will join the women's Auxiliary.

We have a 102 year-old organization, who has told me through my Department they are against this By-Law change. This is why I stand before you and speak for Minnesota. They are totally against it. Our ladies feel that when men start coming into the organization, taking over their positions, they will be gone. They are life members and they will not be active anymore. Thank you, Commander.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 2.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN MOON: I am John Moon, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, a delegate from Ohio, and a Past Commander-in-Chief. I rise in opposition to the By-Law change, not for its content, but for the position of the Veterans of Foreign Wars has in leading the way.

The Ladies Auxiliaries are willing to change, but let the Ladies Auxiliaries change themselves, not for us to do it. Let me them do it. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE WARREN BOOKER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I am Warren Booker, VFW Post 7686, New Mexico. I rise in support of this change. Now, I may not be an eloquent speaker, and I don't have any prewritten comments, but let me tell you, I have been to Iraq and Afghanistan with female service members repeatedly, they have shown their metal and some of my best turret gunners in Iraq were females, airmen.

When they go into harm's way, their mothers worry about them. Their sisters worry about them. Maybe their daughters worry about them. There is a place for them currently. Do not their fathers, their brothers, their sons suffer just the same?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 1.

COMRADE CHRIS STERGOS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Chris Stergos, Post 7397, a delegate from Kansas. I stand for this change. Everybody keeps saying that it is not our place to change this. If it is not our place, why is it in our By-Laws to form an Auxiliary?

This was our organization that we stood up to support us. It is up to us to correct this mistake. We need to make this change.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Microphone number 2.

COMRADE KELLY GODDARD: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Kelly Goddard, Post 4484, Rainelle, West Virginia. I call for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a call for the question. Is there a second?

COMRADE RANDALL McCOMAS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Randall McComas, State Commander of Kentucky, VFW Post 6423. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Okay. We have got a motion properly seconded for the call for the question. It has got to be a two-thirds vote to call for the question. All in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". The motion passes. The question is called. I now entertain a motion to accept B-12, B-13, B-14, B-15 and B-16.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GUNNER KENT: I make the motion.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GLEN GARDNER: I am Glen Gardner, Post 3359, Garland, Texas, I will second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have got a motion duly seconded, and the question has been called for. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; all opposed "nay". The proposed By-Law amendments are passed.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GUNNER KENT: Thank you very much, Comrades. It is well overdue, and I believe we did a great historical thing today and I think that our organization will be much stronger. We should have done it in 1978. Sometimes we are a little slow, but we do get things right.

Now, the following By-Laws were rejected by the Committee. I will read the rejections, and we don't need any motion on them unless you want one set aside.

Rejected by the Committee was B-3, B-4, B-6, B-7, B-9, B-10, and B-11.  
Are there any set-asides?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Microphone number 1.

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA: Commander-in-Chief, I am Victor Fuentealba, a delegate from Post 9083 in Maryland. I move adoption of B-11.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: B-11 has been moved for adoption. Is there a second to B-11? Is there a second to B-11?

COMRADE PAUL JOHNSON: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Paul Johnson, Post 10077, Department Commander of Maryland. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion duly seconded. Any discussion on B-11? Any discussion on B-11?

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA: (Department of Maryland) Comrade Commander-in-Chief and Comrades, this proposed change was made by the Department of Maryland because of an incident that occurred recently involving several of our comrades, one of whom was a past Department Commander.

Three members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars were convicted of embezzling hundreds of thousands dollars from the Veterans Administration by filing false claims on behalf of their cohorts and then splitting the money that was received from the claims.

Our members, after these three members were found guilty, wanted to know why the Department of Maryland couldn't do something about it. Our only alternative was to follow the procedures of filing disciplinary proceedings against them. As it turns out, one of the members asked for a hearing, two of the others did not.

The purpose of this change is to eliminate that requirement in this case, and give the Commander-in-Chief the authority on his own, if he so desires, to revoke the membership of a member who is convicted or pleads guilty, or no contest to a felony.

The purpose of this is to eliminate the necessity of having to go through the disciplinary proceedings, which it is very obvious that these three individuals were guilty, and there was no question about it whatsoever, and it would save a lot of time and inconvenience for the Department. I ask that this change be adopted.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I call for the staff's comments.

COMRADE DAVID PROHASKA: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I am a member of the staff, the Administrative Operations Director, and I am also a delegate from Post 4434 in Michigan. The staff's recommendation is rejection of the amendment, as the Commander-in-Chief already has the authority to initiate a disciplinary action under Item Number 4 in our By-Laws, allowing the Commander-in-Chief to circumvent the procedures outlined in Article 9, in these types of instances violates the rights of the member under Section 110 of the National By-Laws.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Any other discussion on B-11?  
Microphone number 1.

COMRADE CHUCK CARROLL: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Chuck Carroll, Post 6774, Department of Montana. I am a delegate. I would like to speak in support of this By-Law change, the reason being is I have seen personally where we have a senior person within our Department who has held a senior office, has committed a significant felony, and basically nothing has occurred because we need to have the due process to get it to you. And I think in the case of a felony that is as well documented as this one that we need to have this to go directly to you and you can make the decision.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Microphone number 3.

COMRADE DANNY WILLIAMS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Danny Williams from Post 3685, Department of Mississippi. I would like to make a motion that B-4 and B-6 -

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Comrade, you are out of order. We have a motion on the floor currently.

COMRADE DANNY WILLIAMS: (Post 3685 – Montana) Oh, I am sorry.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Any other discussion on B-11?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GLEN GARDNER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Glen Gardner, Post 3359, a delegate from Garland, Texas. I stand in opposition to this proposed By-Law change. Number one, it puts a lot of stress on the Commander-in-Chief to decide what felony should kick somebody out of the VFW is good or bad. That is a decision that should be handled through the process we have in the By-Laws now.

There are some states where a convicted felon, who is someone who has two DWIs. There are some you have to kill somebody. So, it is a different world all over. I think we should leave the By-Laws the way we have them today and let that be handled in the process that now exists. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Is there any other discussion on B-11? I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE BILL BENNETT: Comrade Commander, I am Bill Bennett, District of Columbia, Post 346. I am in opposition. There is a potential legal problem here, and that is that the United States Supreme Court in 1978, and the case was called Roberts versus Jaycees International, they said a private organization like Jaycees International, like the VFW, is required to afford a member facing expulsion a due process before they can do it. I question whether a National Commander-in-Chief can summarily expel somebody and that would meet the requirements the Supreme Court has laid down. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Microphone number 3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LARRY RIVERS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Larry Rivers, VFW Post 1736, Louisiana. The cornerstone of this whole society is everybody gets that day in court. In fact, if a person is convicted of a felony, that person in our society, whether he is the worst serial

killer in the world, has a hearing. How can we as an organization say a person is not entitled to a hearing and fair play that we would give to every other member of the VFW? It makes no sense for us to circumvent our normal procedure.

We have procedures in place to take care of this, and allowing a Commander-in-Chief, regardless of how good his intentions may be, to arbitrarily make a decision on a person getting his membership revoked because he is a convicted felon, that absolutely makes no sense.

In all the states we have different rules for felonies. There are felonies and there are felonies. To equate the fact that you have a serial killer that is a felon, and you have gun guy, 18, 19 years old in the military that made a mistake that resulted in a felony, whether it be smoking dope or something else, the Commander-in-Chief can arbitrarily kick that person out of the VFW without a fair hearing and at least to have a chance to have a hearing before his fellow comrades makes no sense.

I urge the delegates to stand on the side of liberty, which is what we all fought for, and fair play, and leave our procedures in place that have worked for years and years. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Any other discussion on Bravo 11? Any other discussion on Bravo 11? Is there any other discussion on Bravo 11? All those in favor of the approval of B-11 signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". B-11 is defeated.

Are there any other recommendations for approval of the rejected By-Law amendments?

COMRADE DANNY WILLIAMS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Danny Williams, Post 3685, Department of Mississippi. I make a motion that we set aside B-4, B-6, B-7 and B-9.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: First of all, you have to make a motion to adopt, not set aside.

COMRADE DANNY WILLIAMS: (Post 3695-Mississippi) Okay. I make a motion that we adopt B-4, B-6, B-7 and B-9.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have got a motion to adopt B-4, B-6, B-7 and B-9. Is there a second?

COMRADE CHARLES PURCHNER: Commander-in-Chief, I am Charles Purchner, a delegate from Post 2539, Department of Mississippi. I second the motion on B-4, B-6, B-7 and B-9.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Before we go into discussion, do you want to have the staff's comments?

COMRADE DAVID PROHASKA: Once again, I am David Prohaska, Post 4434, Department of Michigan, and also Director of Administrative Operations.

As stated in the Committee, we recommended rejection. Members are in good standing when elected, and it is the individual member to ensure that their dues are current. Section 105 of the National By-Laws was amended to remove an officer from office if dues are delinquent. Members are notified multiple times for dues renewal and could receive as many as six dues notices

prior to being removed from office, via mail and three via e-mail, if an active e-mail address is on file.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will now entertain discussion. I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE DANNY WILLIAMS: I am Danny Williams Post 3685, Department of Mississippi. This system that we have now is a failed system. We are notifying these people constantly, and we are not getting the dues paid. I know in my department, I started out with 89 members that had not paid their dues, 89 officers. By the time of their anniversary date, we lost 37 offices in our Department. They are commanders, they are quartermasters, chaplains, trustees, important positions that need to be filled in the Post. I think that if we at the time of election, you will have the Quartermaster there, you will have the officer there, the officer has committed to serve the entire year. We need to collect those dues at that time, and then we will not have that problem. This is a problem over the entire nation. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 1.

COMRADE TERRY FLETCHER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Terry Fletcher, Post 3115, Wichita, Kansas. A simple solution to this is get a life membership, really. We are all adults. You know when your membership is up. Pay the dues or get a life membership. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Microphone number 3.

COMRADE LEE PERRY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Lee Perry, Post 9832, Mississippi. I was the current commander when we submitted this change. It is due because we had, like the Quartermaster stated, we had something like 85 members' dues expire in midterm. It would behoove us to do this so we wouldn't have to chase people down to find them to try to get them reinstated. As you know, the By-Laws state once your dues are expired, you cannot serve in that capacity for one year. This would totally eliminate the disruption that we find ourselves in, and not only in the state of Mississippi, but every state in this organization goes through the same thing. That's my support for this change, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Any other discussion on B-4, B-6, B-7 or B-9? I recognize microphone number 1.

COMRADE RODNEY BURNE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Robert Burne, Post 3447, Department of South Carolina. We are in a situation where I am totally in opposition to this because we have got existing By-Laws that take care of this situation. It is the Post Quartermaster's responsibility to make sure that he contacts or she contacts the comrades so they can pay their dues on time, and be retained in office. It is not the Department's responsibility, it's the Post's responsibility. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Now, seeing no other discussion at the microphones, we will vote on the adoption of B-4, B-6, B-7 and B-9. All those in favor of adoption will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". Those By-Law amendments are defeated.

B-3 and B-10 are rejected due to lack of motions for acceptance.



PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Now, we will go into the Manual of Procedures and Ritual amendments which require only a majority vote for passage.

The Committee recommends adoption of the following Manual of Procedures amendments: M-1, M-3, M-4, M-5, M-6, M-7, M-8, M-9 and M-10.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move adoption.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I have a motion. Is there a second to accept M-1, M-3, M-4, M-5, M-6, M-7, M-8, M-9 and M-10?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN MOON: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It has been duly seconded. Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any discussion on the motion? Any discussion on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor of accepting M-1, M-3, M-4, M-5, M-6, M-7, M-8, M-9 and M-10 signify by the usual signed of "aye"; those opposed "nay". The motion carries.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: I will now read the Manual of Procedure rejection, M-2.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Seeing no one at the microphone, that is automatically rejected.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: The Committee recommends for adoption the following Ritual amendments: R-1, R-3, R-4, R-6, R-7, R-8, R-9, R-10 and R-11. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I so move.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion. Is there a second?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GLEN GARDNER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Glen Gardner, a delegate from Post 3359, Garland, Texas, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: The motion has been duly seconded. Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion?

We are voting to approve R-1, R-3, R-4, R-6, R-7, R-8, R-9, R-10 and R-11. Seeing no discussion, we will call for the question. All those in favor of adoption will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay." The motion carries.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: R-2 and R-5 were recommended for rejection. Seeing nobody at the microphone, those are rejected.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, thank you very much for the appointment. That is the report of the By-Laws Review Committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Thank you very much, "Gunner". Members of the Committee, thank you for your good work. You are excused. I recognize microphone number 3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN SMART: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am John Smart, Past Commander-in-Chief, a delegate from Post 1503, New Hampshire.

I rise as an inquiry and look for assistance from the leadership of this organization. Where we just passed the Auxiliary change over, where in 2008

the National Convention in Milwaukee, we adopted the Men's Auxiliary. It basically addressed the same issues, Chief, that you addressed here today. Should we anticipate disbandment of the Men's Auxiliary so those that can choose where they want to stay or, would it be in the best interest to transfer over to the Ladies Auxiliary? I don't think that is controversial. I just think if we have an Auxiliary, many of them are going to be eligible to join. I believe, Chief, it probably will not be any need to have a Men's Auxiliary. Would you anticipate that coming out next year, sir?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: That needs to be addressed by resolution for an amendment to Article 13. This was an amendment to Article 11.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SMART: Do you think we can anticipate that, Comrade Commander-in-Chief?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I would think so, yes.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SMART: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

#### REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We will now have the report of the Committee on Finance and Internal Organization resolutions. The Chairman is Past Commander-in-Chief James R. Mueller.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Committee on Finance and Internal Organization met on Sunday, July 19, 2015. The Committee was called to order by myself at 2:00 p.m. We saluted the flag. I then introduced my co-chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas. I read a letter from the Commander-in-Chief. I then called our staff member, Pat Botbyl, for the roll call. It reflects 59 present, 1 absent who was excused.

I would now ask my Committee to please stand and be recognized. Thank you. (Applause)

Our Committee dealt with two resolutions, Resolution 201 and 202. After hearing from staff, the Committee voted to reject both of those resolution. If nobody comes to the microphone, they will automatically be rejected.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 2.

COMRADE RANDALL McCOMAS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Randall McComas, Post 6423, State Commander of Kentucky. I want to set aside 201.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: You have got to recommend approval.

COMRADE RANDALL McCOMAS: (Post 6423-Kentucky) Comrade, I recommend approval of 201.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion. Is there a second to approve 201? Is there a second to approve 201? I recognize microphone number 2.

COMRADE AARON CARDWELL: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Aaron Cardwell, Post 4075, Kentucky. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have got a motion duly seconded. Is there any discussion? I recognize microphone number 2.

COMRADE RANDALL McCOMAS: Commander-in-Chief, Randall McComas, VFW Post 6423, State Commander of Kentucky and a delegate. The reason I recommend we approve this, I have two granddaughters and on their 16th birthday I gave them life membership in the Ladies Auxiliary. If they become later available for the VFW, they can be kicked out, their birthday present is gone. I don't think that is a proper way to treat them.

This is not going to be that expensive for the VFW, and I recommend that we approve this. It is just wrong to do that.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Any other discussion? I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE SHARON LESLIE: Thank you. I am Sharon Leslie from the Department of Delaware, Senior Vice-Commander and a delegate to this convention. I was a member of the Ladies Auxiliary for about 25 years based on my father's service in the Korean War. I was sent to Kuwait with the 81st Battalion. I was already a life member of the Ladies Auxiliary and now I am a life member of the VFW. However, future members, if they paid their life membership to the Ladies Auxiliary and becomes members of the VFW and can no longer hold both, that membership should count towards the cost of that life membership wholeheartedly. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have addressed that, Comrade, and we have come to the conclusion that that will be a pro rata transfer of dues in those cases.

Microphone number 1.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ED BANAS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ed Banas, VFW Post 10004, co-chairman of this Committee. This motion was rejected, Commander-in-Chief. There were monetary issues that cannot be discussed at this Convention. It is an issue with money that is what I wanted to present.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: That motion is out of order because according to our Convention rules, adopted earlier, no discussions will take place on the expenditure of organizational funds. So, that motion is out of order. Seeing no one else at the microphones, R-1 and R-2 are rejected.

Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller, thank you for your work and the work of your Committee. You are dismissed.

I will now call for the report of the Committee on General Resolutions. The Chairman is Past Commander-in-Chief William A. Thien.

## REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THIEN: Thank you, Commander, for the appointment to this very important Committee. As you know, we met

yesterday. I want to thank the Vice-Chairmen, Past Commanders-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer, George Lisicki and John Moon, along with our staff representative, who was very helpful, Mr. Bob Crider. Will all the General Resolutions members please stand up, the Committee members. You have done a great job. (Applause)

Again, the General Resolutions Committee met yesterday and recommended approval of General Resolutions 305 and 306. The recommendation of the Committee is to accept 305 and 306. I move their adoption.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have got a motion to accept Resolutions 305 and 306. Is there a second?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RICHARD DeNOYER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Richard DeNoyer, from the Department of Massachusetts, a Past Commander-in-Chief, I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion and a second to approve Resolutions 305 and 306. Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any discussion on the motion? Hearing none, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; all opposed "nay". Resolutions 305 and 306 are accepted.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THIEN: The Committee also recommended the rejection of 301, 302, 303 and 304.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: There are no motions to adopt any of these Resolutions and they are automatically rejected. Past Commander-in-Chief Thien, I appreciate the work of you and your Committee.

Now, pursuant to Rule Number 4, in order for the Adjutant General to receive Resolutions until the close of the business session on Tuesday, any additional resolution this Committee will be dismissed.

The report of the Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs. The Chairman is Past Commander-in-Chief John F. Gwizdak.

#### REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GWIZDAK: Thank you, sir. I am John Gwizdak, a delegate from Post 5080, Lake City, Georgia.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, delegates to the 116th Convention, it is my pleasure to report that the Committee met at 2:00 p.m. Sunday, July 19th, 2015. Your instructions were read and roll call was conducted, and action was taken on the Resolutions referred to this Committee.

Once again, held our meeting in conjunction with the POW/MIA Subcommittee, because the information presented and the Resolutions that we passed are important to all Committee members. I thank them for their support, wisdom and guidance, Vice-Chairman Past Commander-in-Chief Kurpius from Tennessee, Past Commander-in-Chief Richard Eubank from

Oregon, Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, and Past Commander-in-Chief Tommy Tradewell, Vice-Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee.

The Committee advisors were Joe Davis and Bob Jackson from the Washington office, and all the members of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, and the POW/MIA Subcommittee, I would for them to stand at this time for recognition. All members of the POW/MIA and the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee. Please stand. (Applause) Thank you for your hard work.

I want to express the Committee's appreciation to the Department of South Dakota for also submitting a National Resolution, and it is also best to come from the bottom to the top. That is what makes our great organization work.

The Committee had three guest speakers, Admiral Tung Hsaing-Lung, the Minister of the Veterans Affairs Council, Republic of China on Taiwan.

Marine Corps Sergeant Major Bryan Battaglia, the senior enlisted advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Mr. Johnie Webb, the Director External Communications for the New Defense POW/MIA Accounting agency and, of course, a life member of VFW Post 352 in Hawaii.

I will now move forward with the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee's recommendations.

If any delegate would like a Resolution set aside for discussion, please so indicate after I have completed the approval segment of the report and moved for adoption.

I will now read the Resolution numbers that the Committee recommends for approval as submitted.

They are Resolutions 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426. Correction, 426 is not recommended for approval. Well, 406, 409 and 420, they were amended so we will pull them out of the approval.

I now move adoption for Resolutions 401 through 405, Resolutions 407, 408, Resolutions 410 through 416; Resolution 419 and Resolutions 421 through 425 as submitted.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: There is a motion. Is there a second?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN FURGESS: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: The motion has been duly seconded. Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE JAMES WAINSCOAT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am James Wainscoat, Post 628, Department of South Dakota. I am wanting to set aside 426.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Resolution 426 was recommended for rejection, and we are not at the rejected motion yet on the Resolutions.

COMRADE JAMES WAINSCOAT: (Post 628-South Dakota) Okay.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Seeing no other comrades at the microphones, all in favor of the Committee's recommendation of accepting 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 407, 408, 410 through 416, 419 and 421 through 425 signify by the usual sign of "aye"; opposed "nay". Those Resolutions are accepted.

Now we have some amended Resolutions. I will entertain a motion to accept Resolutions 406, 409 and 420, as amended.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK: Commander-in-Chief, I so move.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Is there a second?

POST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN FURGESS: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? Seeing none, all in favor of accepting 406, 409 and 420 as amended, signify by the usual sign of "aye"; opposed "nay". These Resolutions are accepted.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief and delegates, the Committee rejected Resolution 426.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE JAMES WAINSCOAT: (Post 628 South Dakota) I move to put forth a motion to adopt 426.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 1.

COMRADE DAVID COUCH: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am David Couch, Post 3442, South Dakota. I would like to second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion duly seconded. Is there any discussion? Microphone number 3.

COMRADE JAMES WAINSCOAT: (Post 628 South Dakota) Yes, Commander-in-Chief. The problem with families that are not on Post are employed personnel in the combat area, there usually falls a greater burden on those under E-5, who are not eligible for on-Post housing. Just think about how devastating it would be for one of these Wacko Jihadists to harm a family or an employed individual. I know the rejection was based on the fact that they felt it was not specific enough.

Well, in speaking with Senator Thune's staff, they felt make it general and they would have hearings on it. To get it to that point, to have us adopt it, I would amend that Resolution to specifically say that personnel not eligible for on-Post housing, who are deployed, that Congress allocate the funds to build suitable apartment housing on the Post to facilitate them until such time as their relatives return from combat.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Did you just move to amend the Resolution? You already have a motion on the floor. That is out of order.

COMRADE JAMES WAINSCOAT: (Post 628-South Dakota) The motion on the floor is what?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I am going to call for staff's comments before we go any further.

COMRADE JOE DAVIS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Joe Davis, VFW Post 3391, Department of Hawaii and staff advisor.

The intent of this Resolution is for the VFW to support any and all laws passed by Congress to gain in the protection and the well-being of families of employed personnel. The Committee regarded the topic as too broad and that is why we recommended it for rejection.

The Resolution only mentions Jihadists in text as a potential threat, but excludes more realistic threats like stalkers, burglars and others. The Committee regards the topic is too broad and that's why we recommended it for rejection.

The Resolution also just focused on military families that are employed. There are a number of preventions that military families already take to not let bad folks know their household has one less adult in it due to military employment. There are other steps that families can take to reduce their public footprint. It is the Committee's belief that safety and security of one's home is a personal responsibility and not something that is legislatively in Washington. That's why we rejected it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: You may speak one more time, Comrade.

COMRADE JAMES WAINSCOT: (Post 628 South Dakota) Hogwash.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: That is out of order.

We have got a motion to accept Resolution 426, duly seconded. All in favor of accepting 426 signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". Resolution 426 is rejected.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, this now concludes the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Past Commander-in-Chief Gwizdak, thank you and your Committee for your due diligence and hard work. I will delay your dismissal until after the POW/MIA Subcommittee report is given.

I now call on the report of the Subcommittee on POW/MIA by Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief Richard L. Eubank.

#### REPORT OF SUBCOMITTEE ON POW/MIA

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF EUBANK: Commander-in-Chief, Richard Eubank, VFW delegate to Post 9448 in Oregon and a past commander-in-chief.

Commander-in-Chief, I am pleased to report that the POW/MIA Subcommittee met on Sunday, July 19th and in the combined meeting with the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee.

Your instructions were followed and all members were present or accounted for. Action was taken on the Resolutions assigned to this Committee.

For their support, wisdom and guidance, I also want to thank the Vice-Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief Thomas

Tradewell from Wisconsin, the Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief John Gwizdak from Georgia, and the Vice-Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief John Furgess from the great state of Tennessee.

The Committee advisors were Joe Davis and Bob Jackson from the Washington office.

I want to thank all the members of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee and the POW/MIA Subcommittee for their thoughtful deliberation and active participation.

Comrades, I will now read the two Resolutions that the Subcommittee recommended for approval. If any delegate would like any of the Resolutions set aside for discussion, please so indicate after I have moved for the adoption.

Now, I move that Resolutions 417 and 418 be approved as submitted.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THOMAS TRADEWELL: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Tommy Tradewell, a delegate from Post 4698, Wisconsin. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I have got a motion and a second to adopt Resolutions 417 and 418. Seeing no one at the microphones, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". The motion carries.

COMRADE JOHN GWIZDAK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief this now concludes the POW/MIA Subcommittee Report, and thank you for the appointment.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Thank you, Past Commander-in-Chief. The National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee is now dismissed as well as the Subcommittee on POW/MIA. Thank you for your dedicated work in committee.

We will now have a report of the Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions. The Chairman is Past Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius.

#### REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KURPIUS: Commander-in-Chief Stroud, I report that your Convention Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions convened at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, July 19, 2015, And Past Commander-in-Chief Nier from the great state of Texas was the Vice-Chairman of the Committee. Roll call was taken and preliminary matters were discussed. The Committee was divided into three Subcommittees to carefully deliberate each of the 33 Resolutions that were assigned. The Subcommittees were established as follows:

Subcommittee I Health, chaired by Denise Estes from Nevada, and Vice-Chairman Wayne Hutchison from Ohio. Staff advisors were James Moss, Assistant Director, Veterans Health Policy, NVS, and Carlos Fuentes, Senior Legislative Associate, National Legislative Service.



Subcommittee II was Benefits, chaired by Paul Pirlot from Michigan, and Vice-Chairman Mark Barrett from California. Staff advisors were Jerry Manar, Deputy Director, National Veterans Service, and Aleks Morosky, Deputy Director, National Legislative Service.

Subcommittee III was Economic Opportunities/Other, chaired by Jason Smith from Florida, and Vice-Chairman Jon Gohn from Minnesota. Staff advisors were Ryan Gallucci, Deputy Director, National Veterans Service, and Kenneth Wiseman, Manager, Action Corps, National Legislative Service.

Before proceeding to the report, I wish to express appreciation to Bill Bradshaw, Director, National Veterans Service, and Ray Kelley, Director, National Legislative Service, for the valuable technical guidance which they and their staff provided to the Committee.

I also want to thank Dawn Jirak, NVS staff, who served as our Committee secretary and coordinated the results of our deliberation.

Commander-in-Chief, with your permission, I will begin the Committee report by presenting those resolutions the Committee recommends to be approved as written, will Vice-Chairman Nier proceed to report those resolutions that were approved, as amended. And, finally, I will conclude by presenting the resolutions the Committee recommends for rejection.

If for any reason, you or the delegates to this convention, would like a resolution "set aside" for further discussion, please so indicate after we have completed each segment of the report.

I will now proceed by reading the Resolution numbers and titles that the Committee recommends for approval as written: Resolution 601, Adequate Department of Veterans Affairs Budget. Resolution 602, Oppose VA Pharmaceutical Co-Payment Increases. Resolution 603, Make CHAMPVA Payments Fair to Providers. Resolution 605, Consider Treatment for a Presumptive Service Connected Condition as a Claim for VA Compensation. Resolution 606, Extending Gulf War Presumptions, Registry and Health Care to Afghanistan Theater Veterans. Resolution 607, Nursing Home Eligibility. Resolution 608, Traumatic Brain Injury Health Care. Resolution 609, PTSD and Mental Health Care. Resolution 610, VA Services for Women Veterans. Resolution 611, Increase Access, Choice, and Value of Health Care for Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families. Resolution 612, Expand VA Caregiver Benefits. Resolution 613, Extend Service Connection Presumption to Blast Survivors. Resolution 614, Tinnitus and Hearing Loss Presumptive Service Connection. Resolution 615, Hearing Loss Compensation. Resolution 616, VA Claims Backlog. Resolution 617, Improve Education Benefits for Survivors. Resolution 618, Burial Plot Allowance. Resolution 619, Toxic Exposures. Resolution 620, Homeless Veterans Priorities. Resolution 621, Ensure Veteran Success in Education. Resolution 622, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program Eligibility. Resolution 623, Veterans Employment and Training Programs. Resolution 624, Veteran Entrepreneurship. Resolution 625, Sustainable Non-VA Health Care Options for Veterans. Resolution 630, Inclusion of Veterans Traveling and Residing Abroad All-Inclusive Medical

Service Under the Foreign Medical Program (FMP). Resolution 631, Extend the Presumption of Exposure to Herbicides to Veterans Stations at Royal Thai Military Bases During the Vietnam War. Commander-in-Chief, I move to accept the Committee's recommendation to approve these Resolution.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I have a motion for approval. Do I have a second?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES NIER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Past Commander-in-Chief James Nier, a delegate from Post 8919, Texas, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion to approve 601 through 603, 605 through 625 and 630 and 631. Seeing no Comrades at the microphone, all in favor of the Committee's recommendation signify by the usual sign of "aye"; all those opposed "nay". These Resolutions are accepted.

PAST-COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES NIER: I will now read the resolution numbers and titles that the Committee recommends for approval as amended: Resolution 604, VA Medicare Reimbursement. Resolution 626, Marker Medallion. Resolution 627, Requesting the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Improve Chronic Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) Screening and Follow Up for Veterans Born Between 1945 and 1980 and Requesting the U.S. Department of Defense Update and Separately Codify Policies for Identification and Administration of Personnel for Chronic HBV Infection. Resolution 628, Department of Defense (DoD) Medical Assistance. Resolution 633, Authorization and Appropriation Legislation to Complete the Replacement VA Regional Medical Center in Aurora, Colorado.

Commander, I move to accept the Committee's recommendation to approve these Resolutions as amended.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I have a motion to approve the resolutions as amended. Is there a second?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARY KURPIUS: Comrade Commander, I am Gary Kurpius, a delegate from Post 9365, Alaska, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Motion has been made and seconded to approve the following resolutions as amended: 604, 626, 627, 628, 633. Seeing no one at the microphones, all in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". The Resolutions are passed as amended.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARY KURPIUS: I will now read the Resolution numbers and titles that the Committee recommends for rejection. There was only one: Resolution 632, Support for Vietnam Blue Water Equity Act. That was rejected in favor of Resolution 619, by the way.

And, finally, the Department of Virginia, on July 2nd, rescinded its resolution titled "Preserve GI Bill Equity," which had been assigned Resolution Number 629. Therefore, no action was taken on Resolution 629 by the Committee.

Comrade Commander, this concludes the Committee's report on Veterans Service Resolutions.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Seeing no one at the microphone that Resolution is rejected. Past Commander-in-Chief Kurpius, thank you and your Committee for your diligent work, and I dismiss you with our thanks.

I now call upon the Adjutant General for some announcements.

## CONVENTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

### CLOSING CEREMONIES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Sergeant-at-Arms, will you please perform the closing ceremonies for today's business session.

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

National Sergeants, Comrades, please rise. Comrade National Chaplain.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN COBB: Almighty God, we pause at the close of this opening session to acknowledge again your sovereignty over our lives and our world. We remember our service men and women serving around the globe and ask your blessing and protection upon them and their families.

Help us to realize that freedom does not automatically perpetuate itself, and that we have to work at it, nurture, protect and pray for it; that freedom like faith needs our attention and our due diligence to sustain it.

Help us to recognize that the work we do here is important and will impact the lives of all our veterans and their families for many years to come. May we be joined together in the common goal of service to our God, our country and our great organizations. Bless each of us in the work you have called us to do. We pray, Lord, in Thy holy name. Amen.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, facing the Flag of the United States, join me in the salute.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the closing of this meeting has been completed and your orders have been obeyed, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. We are recessed until 8:00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 3:15 o'clock p.m., to reconvene on Tuesday, July 21, 2015, at 8:00 o'clock a.m.)

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION  
TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2015

(The Second Business Session of the 116th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, meeting in the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was called to order at 8:00 o'clock a.m. by Commander-in-Chief John Stroud.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will now reconvene the 116th National Convention. Sergeant-at-Arms, you will please conduct the Opening Ceremonies.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BRYAN O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. Please rise for the Opening Prayer. Comrade National Chaplain.

OPENING PRAYER

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN COBB: Almighty God, in whom we live and move and have our being, we come here this day to ask your blessing upon the Veterans of Foreign Wars and all those gathered here to conduct the business of this great organization.

We ask that you be with our Commander, John Stroud, and his other officers; give them wisdom and guide them as they serve our fellow veterans and their families.

As our purpose is to help our fellow citizens and especially those who have served the Nation with honor in time of conflict, and to promote all that serves well our communities and our states and Nation, we pray you will inspire us in our deliberations, and strengthen our hands in all our undertakings.

May we always know the blessings of freedom purchased for us at so great a cost; that we may serve this great organization and the citizens of our great country. All this we ask in Your Holy Name. Amen.

SALUTE TO COLORS AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, please face the Flag of the United States of America and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance were given at this time.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the reconvening of this Business Session has been completed and your orders have been obeyed.

## REPORT OF CONVENTION CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. I would now like to now call on Betty Gripp for the Report on the Credentials.

COMRADE BETTY GRIPP (Department of Arizona): Good morning, Commander-in-Chief, Council members and delegates:

At the close of business at 4:00 p.m. yesterday, July 20, 2015, the total delegates registering their credentials, 12,858. Department Commanders, 43. Past Commanders-in-Chief, 26. National Officers, 51. The grand total is 12,978. The total registered at the National Convention, 2,187. That is my report, sir.

### INTRODUCTION OF JACK WAGNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PITTSBURGH HIRES VETERANS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Last month, the Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed that more than 8.6 million Americans are unemployed, an average rate of 5.5 percent.

Unfortunately, it also revealed that the average unemployment rate of post 9-11 veterans comes in at a higher 6.9 percent. That is 6.9 percent. America can do better and it must do better. We must make the investment in our veterans by doing whatever it takes to ensure their success in securing quality and gainful employment.

The VFW is honored to be a part of a new initiative right here in Pittsburgh, that works just do that.

Here to speak about this exciting model jobs program for veterans, please welcome a 40-year life member of Post 3945, former State Auditor General and Executive Director of Pittsburgh Hires Veterans, Mr. Jack Wagner. (Applause)

### REMARKS BY COMRADE JACK WAGNER

COMRADE WAGNER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Stroud. Good morning, Comrades, good morning ladies and gentlemen. It is a distinct honor to be with all of you today.

Pittsburgh Hires Veterans is a model job program that was created in cooperation with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the strongest and largest veterans organization in the world. The purpose of the model jobs program is to connect veterans with education, training and employment opportunities.

We have done this by partnering with proven veterans organizations, such as the Veterans Leadership Program here in Western Pennsylvania, and Heroes Supporting Heroes, another new program that is helping veterans, and high quality education and training programs, such as local colleges and universities, and a stellar training program here in Pittsburgh called New Century Careers.

Through our partners, we have identified hundreds of employers who would prefer to hire veterans for the obvious reasons that veterans make better employees, veterans work together, veterans have leadership skills, veterans are punctual, veterans are polite, veterans know what a mission is and how to meet that mission.

The goal of the program is two-fold: To help veterans find quality jobs that lead to a career, a productive career, and for the model jobs program to be easily replicated and contoured to other regions of America.

Pittsburgh Hires Veterans could easily become Charlotte Hires Veterans, could easily become Dallas Hires Veterans, and could easily become Detroit Hires Veterans.

In viewing the video that you are about to see, please pay special attention to our partners in the video. We are not reinventing the wheel. What we are simply doing is maximizing the potential of existing veteran organizations, educational institutions and training opportunities right here in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

What we have done here could be done anywhere in America. What we are doing is we are placing attention on America's heroes, American veterans. Please join Pittsburgh Hires Veterans in viewing a very powerful video.

(Whereupon, the video played at this time.)

A special thank you, first and foremost to the Veterans of Foreign Wars who have overwhelmingly endorsed this effort, Pittsburgh Hires Veterans.

A special thank you to John Stroud, your Commander, to John Hamilton, the Adjutant General, and our incoming National Commander, John Biedrzycki. We have had overwhelming support from them and from all of you and the Post Commanders here in Western Pennsylvania.

Also a special thank you to a special person, a person that I consider to be a very passionate patriot, Mr. John Rangos. Without with Mr. Rangos, this program would simply not exist.

I also mention Dr. Richard White, who has really been counsel and has offered great ideas to this program. We have a great team.

As I said earlier, we are not reinventing the wheel, we are utilizing existing organizations in Western Pennsylvania to make this happen, to put a priority on veterans. America is the greatest country in the history of the world because of veterans. Democracy exists just not only in this country but in the world, and 50 percent of the countries because of veterans.

Some of the finest people who have ever served our country are the people who are retiring from the military today.

Post 9-11 veterans, they are less than 1 percent of our population. They have served multiple tours of duty. They have faced situations that you

and I have never faced before as veterans. It is one of the reasons why I believe there are 22 suicides a day.

The most important thing after health care that we can do for our veterans is find them a quality career. I didn't say a job, I said a career.

Commander Stroud just talked about the unemployment rate for younger veterans. It is 2 or 3 percent higher than the general population. We all know that veterans are also underemployed, working for \$10, \$11, \$12 an hour. That is unacceptable for an American to put their life on the line in the defense of democracy against an enemy like Al-Qaeda, ISIS.

The four Marines in the Navy who were ambushed just recently is unacceptable. Veterans need quality jobs. They need careers, they need training, they need education, and they need a quality life. Again, it is less than one percent.

It is small line dividing us from the evil in this world. It is the people in this room that stood up for democracy. We have to stand up for veterans here in the United States of America. We cannot leave any veteran behind.

It is unacceptable just to say thank you to a veteran. Many Americans think that is okay. It is not okay just to say thank you to a veteran.

We have created a special jobs program here in Western Pennsylvania. Also, we have focused on manufacturing. Why manufacturing? Because literally hundreds of quality manufacturing companies still exist in Western Pennsylvania. It has evolved. It is now precision manufacturing.

It is a clean work environment. There is no doubt any American who has served their country today can qualify for those jobs. We have identified special training programs for those veterans. We are funneling them into it that jobs program and manufacturing may not be the jobs sector in other areas of our country.

In Texas, it may be energy; in Chicago it may be medical technology. But we need to find training, educational opportunities to help our veterans. Just like we veterans, U.S. Marines, all of you that served, just as we did not leave a veteran on the battlefield, we cannot leave a veteran unemployed or underemployed.

Please join Pittsburgh Hires Veterans. We have several booths on the convention floor in Aisle 600. Come join us, come see what we are doing.

We firmly believe with the support of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, with every VFW Post in America being and outpost, almost like a Burger King or a McDonalds where you can find a VFW Post, you can go and get help to be directed to a job opportunity, to training, to education, to a career.

Please stand up with us here in Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Hires Veterans. Let's not leave any veteran behind. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO  
JOHN RANGOS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: For those of you who haven't yet stopped by the Pittsburgh Hires Veterans section of the exhibit hall, you are now familiar with this outstanding initiative and I know you will join me in giving a warm welcome to our next guest who ensured the program came to fruition.

Mr. Rangos was the founding chairman of the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation. He was named Chairman emeritus for life at the 150th anniversary celebration in Gettysburg.

Mr. John Rangos is a renowned philanthropist and a Korean War veteran who developed a deep sense of patriotism and respect for our country's service members and their families at an early age.

His pride for America and its service members was born from World War II as he watched the men from his community leave for war, the women taking to the factories to work to support their families and the many difficulties his community would face.

As a young man, Mr. Rangos interrupted his education at the Houston School of Business to join the active Air Force Reserve unit in Pittsburgh, and would go on to serve the U.S. Army from 1951 to 1954.

Since then, Mr. Rangos has experienced great success and a storied career. Today, he focuses much of his efforts on philanthropy efforts that have had a tremendously positive effect on the military community.

Among his many good works, Mr. Rangos has made it his mission to support those endeavors that give our Nation's veterans a hand up when they need it, and his recent support to Pittsburgh Hires Veterans is yet another way he is fulfilling that mission.

The VFW is ever-appreciative of Mr. Rangos' generosity and commitment to America's service members. So, on behalf of the VFW, it is my distinct pleasure to present him with a VFW Certificate of Appreciation as I am joined by Senior Vice-Commander-in-Chief Biedrzycki, who will present him with a VFW Life Membership. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Certificate of Appreciation presented to John G. Rangos.

"In sincere appreciation and spirited recognition of his generosity and commitment to the Pittsburgh Hires Veterans Program, helping to ensure the success of America's veterans during their transition back to a civilian lifestyle.

"His love of country, lasting commitment to those who serve in America's Armed Forces and the absolute selflessness of his efforts have justly earned him the utmost respect and appreciation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 21st day of July, 2015."

This has been signed by John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General. (Applause)



## RESPONSE BY MR. JOHN RANGOS

MR. RANGOS: My fellow veterans, I couldn't be more honored to be here today. I want to thank John Stroud for his service, your new Commander John Biedrzycki, which I have had a lot of time and a great opportunity to know him. This program could not have been done without him.

You can tell a good CEO, which I have been for a long time in my lifetime, by how he will protect the risk.

John waited and studied us for quite a while, and then he saw the value as I did in our Committee, and I am thanking them for this success because their hard work made this possible. You are only as good as the people that are underneath you, and any CEO is, and John Biedrzycki is going to be great CEO and he will be heard of many times over this planet and in our country.

We will be challenged again and again. So, let's help the kids coming off the battlefield, ladies and gentlemen, with resources that this great and lofty and powerful country can do. We can do this program.

The reason I know why, the Metal of Honor Foundation was born here as the VFW was born here 115 years ago.

I started the Medal of Honor Foundation here. Let me tell you, it has been one of the most powerful boards in the world, not in the country, but in the world. We now have entered in 70 percent of the public schools and have thousands of teachers telling our kids in school freedom is not free.

There is American blood strewn on every ocean and every continent on this planet, and that's why this world is still free. We have a Commander-in-Chief, whomever and whenever the time comes, you volunteers, ladies and gentlemen, will effectively taking orders from that Commander-in-Chief and Congress and go anywhere in the world to fight for freedom.

Now, there was a controversial war that was fought called the Vietnam War. The reason I am bringing it up, when General Westmoreland received his Patriot's Award, which I received ten years later, in South Carolina, I had a long opportunity to talk to him. When we first started our conversation, he was very dejected.

He said, "John, what do you do when our kids won every battle, kicked their butts every which way you can kick it." I said, "General, we won that war and I will tell you why. The politics of war comes what happens after. That war was not fought for any territory, we wanted in Vietnam, that war was fought with one reason, to stop Communism, and we stopped it."

The whole Pacific Rim was at risk. When I say, "at risk", the leader of his people, he killed 2.5 million of them to convince them that Communism was the right thing for them. So, by doing what we did and showing a tenacious enemy supplied by Russia and China, no matter what you throw at us we are going to kick your butts on the battlefield, and we did.

What that war gave us, Indonesia shifting from Communism to democracy. Also, Cambodia, Burma was questionable, but the most important

part still says a strong democracy that is getting stronger every day and coming our way.

So, I said, "General, we won that war. You better let the media know."

It is the aftermath of what happened. God bless you as veterans in many wars that you have fought. I understand even some World War II folks are here. That was the most tenacious war that was ever fought on this planet.

Our great sailors, Marines and military of all types in the Army destroyed two tyrants, one named Hitler that ruled all of Europe until we got involved. The other is the Japanese Empire that we destroyed methodically with the great command level of McArthur and Halsey.

So, God bless all of you. We are the greatest Nation in the world, and who can ever say that a devout person will volunteer himself at the beck and call of our Commanders-in-Chief and Congress. And guess what, we have met every one of those people that have that desire to take that freedom away from us. God bless you all. (Applause)

PRESENTATION TO DANIEL "DAN" FITZPATRICK,  
CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is now my pleasure to welcome our next guest and award a recipient who has been a faithful advocate and staunch supporter of the VFW for years. While he is not a veteran himself, he has dedicated much of his own time and resources to advocating the work of the VFW and helping improve the lives of veterans, service members and their families, chairman, president, CEO and founder of Quality Dining, Inc., Daniel B. "Dan" Fitzpatrick.

Starting his own career as an hourly employee at a quick service restaurant, Dan has been the innovative force behind Quality Dining, Inc. for nearly 35 years.

Through his own vision and hard work, Dan grew a small Burger King franchise into a multi-concept restaurant company that now boasts 223 restaurants spanning six states.

With 165 participating Burger King restaurants, Dan and his team have been avidly supporting the Burger King VFW Unmet Needs Fund-Raising Campaign since 2008.

Finding new and creative ways to reach the community, Dan's team and loyal supporters have been unrelenting in support for the Unmet Needs program, raising a staggering \$875,000 to assist military families with basic life needs in times of crisis.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is now my honor to present a Certificate of Appreciation to Daniel B. "Dan" Fitzpatrick. Before he comes forward, I just want to add a personal note. If you want a cheeseburger, go to Burger King because they take care of our folks. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Certificate of Appreciation presented to Daniel B. "Dan" Fitzpatrick, chairman/CEO/founder, Quality Dining, Inc.

"In sincere appreciation of his unwavering support to our Nation's veterans and military families through the Burger King VFW Unmet Needs Fund-Raising Campaign. Through the exceptional leadership efforts of Dan, his Quality Dining team and their loyal patrons, Dan's Burger King franchises located in the states of Indiana, Michigan, and most recently Florida, have contributed over \$875,000 to assist military families with unexpected expenses related to rent, mortgage, medical expenses, utilities and other basic necessities due to unforeseen issues such as extended military deployments or a gap in government-related assistance.

"Since 2008, Dan has utilized his community's local media with numerous television and radio appearances advocating the work of the VFW and, most importantly, the necessity of programs such as Unmet Needs.

"Dan has also been a catalyst in recruiting other Burger King franchise owners to this much-needed program for our veterans, active-duty military personnel and their families.

"Dan's unrelenting efforts exemplify the spirit of the mission and values of the members and supporters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 21st day of July, 2015."

This has been signed by John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General. (Applause)

#### RESPONSE BY MR. DAN FITZPATRICK

MR. FITZPATRICK: Well, good morning, everyone. I bring you greetings from my hometown of South Bend, Indiana, home of the University of Notre Dame and God's football team.

You have all heard of bedside conversions, but there are no more conversions than held in the fourth quarter of a Notre Dame football game when we are only three points behind.

I also want to give out a special shout to the delegates here from Indiana and my adopted state down in Florida.

Thank you for that kind introduction, by the way. I am personally humbled to be here and to accept this award, but I want to be clear. I don't accept it on my own behalf. I accept it on behalf of all the people who work in my organization, but more importantly, my colleagues across the country who are Burger King franchisees.

We employ tens of thousands of people in a mission of VFW and in particular Unmet Needs is well-known. I also want to extend a special thank

you to one gentleman whom I think many here know well, Mike DeRosa and his soldier in arms, his wife, Sherri.

It is the two of them that have been remarkable leaders, remarkable ambassadors, and it is because of Mike and his passion for this program and for our veterans that I have now caught this bug of enthusiasm for Unmet Needs. I do indeed congratulate them.

I can't just come here and say thank you for this award. I want all of you to know why we are involved. The Unmet Needs program is especially important. I say that because it is the concept of us taking care of our own. This isn't a program where just problems are recognized, but it is where solutions are found and provided.

It is not a government program, it is not burdened by bureaucracy, confusion or mismanagement of mission, rather Unmet Needs is that ultimate of self-reliance.

As the introduction noted, I never had the privilege of serving our country as many of you have. My family and my extended family also were touched by the service of my father and other members of our family.

My father was a proud member of the Seabees, serving in World War II in Korea. He taught me and my brothers that he was formed by his service, formed as a man, taught him to be self-reliant, taught him to be responsible, to be a leader and to do his job, and have intestinal fortitude so that you would never give up. Those things all rings familiar to you. Now, our association with the military also caused the loss of a very dear family friend, who was wounded during Vietnam.

Many of you here in this room today have suffered the loss of a family member or a close friend. It just shows that the gift of life is precious, the consequence of service and sacrifice has been made.

My father was struck with a very serious illness when he was a very young 43 years old. He suffered a devastating stroke and spent 17 years, the last 17 years of his life, as an invalid. As a result, our family, in particular my brothers and I, recognized and embraced the concept of self-reliance and fortitude, things that this organization stands for.

One time when talking to my father, I lamented to him that I missed the opportunity to serve in the military. He told me, although in a compromised slur, that I was serving my country, that I owned a business, I had many people who were in my care, and I was true to principles and values and good ethics and fairness and treat people well, assist them with raising their families and allowing them to be successful would be better service than I provided for our country.

In this context, it is that you and I have served our country, and we do so with this conviction that has been so eloquently talked about this morning, that conviction of freedom.

In my own company, I employ nearly 10,000 people and my stewardship is counted upon. It is counted upon to do the right thing for all of

our stakeholders and make my contribution. The same thing applies to all of my fellow franchisees.

I can't help but observe that it is freedom that you provided, that you fought for and you projected, which allows me and my fellow Burger King franchisees and, yes, even my competitors who were mentioned, McDonald's, allowing us all to be successful.

In one regard, though, I would say that our very way of life, and in particular our social standards are now being threatened and compromised. Some may even say dismantled.

The reason why we are excited about the VFW is because the people like you, who will stand up and speak, not in a vicious way, but will speak about viciousness.

You have heard two compelling presentations already this morning. The founders of our country believed that religion, virtue and moral all were based on the natural law and were essential to the success of the American experiment.

Today we have a government that has probably reached far beyond its grasp, disrupting what many of us hold dear and casting a shadow over sacred institutions that have been interwoven historically into our families' society and the freedom that we cherish.

As you all know, the foundation of freedom is respect, honor and morality. The bright lines of right and wrong are being attacked, and are being blurred.

I want to remind the clarion call that puts forth evil has no better opportunity to succeed than when good men look on and do nothing. You are the good men and women. We are not looking on any doing nothing, we are doing something. This VFW is one of the few institutions remaining that give reason and leadership for our country's core values, the same ones that you fought and protected for.

As I close, I just want to challenge you with one thing. I am not here to be political, but perhaps provocative, to call to your attention and to remind you of how we who never had the opportunity to serve look at the VFW as such an important voice in our country.

Consider this: Our country allows an individual moral position to be a conscientious objector to engage in war. We respect that right.

On the other hand, our government will soon instruct and require by law that the divine religious organizations, like the Catholic Church, through its schools and universities, and hospitals suspend its morals, subjugate its morals in order to advocate or facilitate such actions of birth control, abortion and more, how a few in our government require this.

There is no moral in our country today. Nearly every amendment of our Constitution is under attack with examples too numerous to mention. We witness extreme and zealot minorities bullying the vast majority. Our society, it has evolved into one of entitlement, I fear.

This great organization, the VFW, stands in stark contrast. This is why you have our support and why we are honored to call you friends and neighbors. I am, though, not a cynic, quite the contrary. I am very confident that our country will right herself. We are indeed a great country with boundless potential. Your service to our country was inspiring to me and to people like me.

Our Burger King community, it is very diverse and large, but a few things exist within our own community for which we have more passion and more agreement about than the VFW and all that you stand for.

As you now stand for what our country holds dear, you know that your friends in Burger King stand with you. We want to serve our country's better interest, which includes our unshakable support for the VFW, the Unmet Needs program, both nationally and in every community in our country now and forever.

Let me close finally now with one quick point. God has shone His grace on us, and it is summed up in the great ending words of the Declaration of Independence, which says, "Their firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence as they pledge to each other their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor."

Ladies and gentleman, thank you for honoring Burger King today. We love this program and we appreciate and respect every single one of you. May God bless the VFW, the United States of America. If you will just remember one thing, if you have an opportunity to eat today, eat a Whopper. It is good for you. (Applause)

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE MIKE DOYLE, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is now my privilege to introduce U.S. Congressman Mike Doyle, who represents Pennsylvania's 14th Congressional District.

As mentioned yesterday, Pennsylvania has the fourth largest veterans' population in the Nation with nearly 940,000 veterans. More than 52,000 of them reside in his 14th District, to include incoming VFW National Commander-in-Chief "Big John" Biedrzycki. This is Mr. Doyle's 11th term in Congress, and his top priorities include revitalizing communities, economic development, high-tech initiatives, jobs, education, and a comprehensive long-term national energy strategy.

Comrades and distinguished guests, please welcome from Pennsylvania's 14th Congressional District, Congressman Mike Doyle. (Applause)

#### GREETINGS BY CONGRESSMAN MIKE DOYLE

CONGRESSMAN DOYLE: Thank you and good morning. It is an honor and a privilege to welcome the VFW back to Pittsburgh for this year's Convention. Now, I am not quite old enough to remember the last time you were here, but I can assure you that we are very pleased to welcome you back, and we hope you have a productive meeting and an enjoyable meeting.

Our city has a lot to offer, the great food, the great music and I don't want to jinx this, great sports teams, and you will find a lot of warm friendly people here. I hope that you will get out and see our exciting city while you are here and spend a lot of money.

Pennsylvania has a long proud history of service in the military, especially the folks right here in Western Pennsylvania. People have either served in the military or they have family and friends who have. Consequently, we greatly respect and appreciate your service to our Nation, and I can assure you that you are going to be warmly welcomed here in Pittsburgh. I am also very proud to see the incoming Commander-in-Chief is from Pittsburgh, our own "Big John" Biedrzycki. I want to congratulate you, "Big John" and wish you well. I am confident that "Big John" is going to do an outstanding job for the VFW. (Applause)

Now, I know I am just a warmup act for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, but I am honored to be invited to address you today and to thank you for your service to the country. I don't know whether my father was a member of the VFW, but he certainly was a veteran of a foreign war.

He served as a forward observer in General Patton's Third Army in Europe in World War II. He saw combat and he was wounded.

My father came home a 100 percent service-connected disabled veteran, and my family saw firsthand the kind of challenges that many veterans face.

Our experience helped us appreciate just what sacrifice for one's country really means on a day-to-day ongoing basis. But also how important the benefits that the VA provides the veterans can be. I get it.

I am proud of my father's service and his sacrifice for his country. I understand that our country takes care of its veterans and their families. That's one of the reasons I work in Congress to make sure that veterans across this country, and especially veterans here in Southwestern Pennsylvania, receive the assistance that they need and deserve. The same goes for our men and women on active duty in the Armed Forces.

I have been honored to serve two stints on the House Veterans Affairs Committee during my time in Congress, and I have made it a top priority to make sure that the VA has the resources, it needs to give prompt, effective service to our veterans, and that it does the job right.

Certainly, one of the ways we can show our thanks to those Americans who have risked their lives in dangerous places around the world is to ensure that they get top quality medical care. I know that is a top concern for the VFW.

As you might imagine, with my family's history, I share that concern and I have always worked to ensure that our veterans get the care when they need it.

You know, given the constant demands of combat service in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last 14 years, the extent of use of IEDs in both of those theaters, and our improved ability to save many wounded personnel who would have died on the battlefield in previous years, we have seen many more complicated medical cases in both the DoD and the VA health care systems in the recent years, especially with regards to loss of limbs and traumatic brain injuries.

The VA does outstanding research on the health care challenges facing veterans, and I have consistently supported increased funding for such research, including research on traumatic injuries to extremities.

This year we co-sponsored in Congress the Toxic Exposure Research Act. It is a bill to establish a VA center for research into the health conditions experienced by descendants of veterans exposed to toxic substances like Agent Orange in Vietnam, or neurotoxins in the Gulf War.

After more than a decade of nonstop work, veterans with posttraumatic stress disorders and other mental issues have exceeded our existing resources for dealing with them.

I supported the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention Act in the last Congress, and again this year to address the current epidemic of suicides among veterans and active duty military personnel.

I was pleased when it was approved and signed into law by the President earlier this year. We also have consistently supported efforts to reduce homelessness among veterans. I believe more needs to be done.

I was frankly pretty angry a year ago when I found out about the long wait times at the VA health care facility across this country, and that a number of local veterans have been waiting on a list for more than a year to get an appointment at the VA.

I demanded that this local VA in Pittsburgh contact everyone on that list immediately, and get them the service they needed. My staff and I had often daily contact with the VA until that backlog was eliminated.

I supported the Veterans Access Choice and Accountability Act last year to reform the VA and provide additional resources to meet our veterans' health care needs in a reasonable period of time. I am pleased to say that over the last year, complaints about long waiting times with access to health care at the local VA here in Pittsburgh has declined significantly.

We need to do more, however, if we want to live up to our obligations to our veterans today. I believe that most VA employees care deeply about the men and women they serve. We can still do better.

Now, 14 years of war in multiple theaters a long way from home have produced the large new generation of veterans who want, need and deserve the VA's help.



As much as the funding has increased since 9-11 for the VA, the demand has increased more. The VA, the federal government and especially Congress must do more to reform an adequately funded VA in order to meet all our veterans' needs.

It will take a long term commitment to properly serve our veterans. More importantly, it is going to take a serious attitude adjustment in Congress. Too many members of Congress seem to think that military actions, the first and best solution to every international problem. A week doesn't go by when we don't hear somebody on Capitol Hill to call for another short pain-free war where it wouldn't be greeted as liberators. I don't know which is worse, if somebody really believes that or if someone doesn't really care.

What I do know is that the cost doesn't end when the fighting stops. A tour of duty in a combat zone can result in decades of disability and health care needs. When the elected leaders of this country send our men and women in the military on such missions, we also take on an inescapable obligation to care for them and their families no matter what the cost. (Applause)

I believe too often members of Congress, and administrations as well, have directed the VA to take an arbitrary inadequate budget, or to tighten eligibility standards for veterans. Is it any surprise, then, that the VA has responded overtly or covertly by creating more hoops that veterans have to jump through and slow walking claims processing in order to keep spending at or below a political convenient level?

Now, in no way am I excusing any negligence, poor performance or law-breaking by VA management or personnel. But I want to make sure that people understand that Congress holds the purse strings and that most of the recent shortcomings of the VA originated with the decisions in Congress.

Until we realize that fact, we are not going to be able to fix the VA and provide our veterans with the benefits that they are entitled to as a result of their service.

I believe the VA needs higher staffing levels today, especially with regards to issues like mental health and homelessness. We need better infrastructure as well, especially with regard to modern systems for tracking cases and keeping records.

The VA needs department wide systematic forms, especially with regard to the prompt, accurate and compassionate administration of VA benefits.

I believe that power and responsibility for achieving those goals lies with Congress. Congress can take a major step forward today simply by repealing the budget sequestration process as VFW Commander-in-Chief John Stroud emphasized in his testimony before Congress in March.

Until it does, the VA, the military and dozens of other essential government programs, from the FBI to food safety inspections will continue to be undermined by inadequate funding paths every year until at least 2021.

Ours is the richest, most technologically advanced country in the history of the world. It is shocking and unacceptable in this day and age with

the resources and technology we possess that it can take a year or more with the VA to schedule a doctor's appointment, evaluate a veteran's claim, adjudicate an appeal, or get a homeless veteran off the street. Our veterans and their families deserve better.

I promise you I will continue to do everything I can to make sure that Congress lives up to its responsibilities to our veterans, to our active duty personnel and their families.

I thank all of you for your service to our country. God bless you all. Welcome to Pittsburgh. (Applause)

#### PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL TO FREDERICK W. BURNS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I am extremely pleased to present you with our next guest, a gentleman who served the VFW and his country for a combined 40 years.

Last year, Fred Burns retired from his position as director of administration and operations in our Washington, D.C. office.

Prior to this, Fred served as assistant director of veterans benefits policy in the National Veterans Service Department.

But this wasn't his first retirement. Fred was first a military retiree. He served 20 years of active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps during which he served in Vietnam and earned the Combat Action Ribbon, the Navy Commendation Medal and the Navy Achievement Medal with the Combat V.

Fred joined the VFW in 1993 and is currently a life member of VFW Post 2562 in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Since his retirement, Fred's professionalism and friendliness is missed by those he worked with and by the veterans he served. While his wife may take exception to this, veterans are the love of Fred's life and his work showed it. His genuine care and compassion for veterans has always been first-rate.

It is a pleasure to present the VFW Distinguished Service Award to our good comrade, Fred Burns, in appreciation for his years of hard work and dedication. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to Frederick W. Burns.

"In lasting appreciation and spirited recognition of more than 20 years of unyielding dedication and stalwart service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"During his tenure, his genuine concern and compassion for America's veterans led to his success while fulfilling the roles of Appeals Consultant, Field Representative for Veterans Health Policy and Assistant Director of Veterans Benefits Policy in the National Veterans Service Department.

"The professionalism with which he performed his duties, along with his unwavering commitment to veterans has earned him the utmost respect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 21st day of July, 2015. Approved by the National Council of Administration.”

This has been signed by John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General. (Applause)

#### REMARKS BY COMRADE FRED BURNS

COMRADE BURNS: Thank you, Chief. Thank you, John. When I first retired from the Marine Corps in 1992, that was a long time ago, I was looking for something to do. A couple of Marines that I had served with over at Headquarters Marine Corps, which was in Arlington at the Navy Annex at the time, had sent their résumés over to Bob Gardner and Jimmy Lee Wallace. They got hired. So, I said I will try that. I sent my résumé over in 1993, in January, and by golly, I got a call, and in February I came for my first interview, then I came in for my second one and I got hired. Fred Juarbe was the Director. Larry Rivers was the Executive Director. I want to say thank you for hiring me.

My first job with the VFW was as a field consultant, representing veterans before the Board of Veterans Appeals. In my opinion, that was the most difficult job out of the three that I have had out of the Washington office, because that job is important.

That veteran has filed a claim, it has been disapproved several times up the chain, and the Board of Veterans Appeals is the last place we can get that claim approved. He has probably been writing for more than 3 years. I would like to thank the folks that prepared me to do that job.

Austin Smith was my original mentor. He taught me service work. In those days, you went through a year of a training program with a one-on-one and, then they moved me over for actual on-the-job training. That's where I met Mr. George Scheetz and some of the service officers out there.

I am sure you guys know him. Royce Richmond was the supervisor then. He is no longer with us. May he rest in peace.

George Ester was the Chief of Appeals. They taught me service work in appeals. Again, I think that was my most important job. Mr. Wallace had taken over the Washington office, and he brought me over to the Washington office and asked me to become part of his team.

I became a field rep. What that meant was I spent a lot of time out in the field surveying various hospitals. I was gone maybe a week and a half out of each month for about five years. My wife didn't like it, but she dealt with it.

That job was very important, because what you are doing there is you are going to the VA hospitals to try to ascertain whether or not veterans are receiving good quality and timely care. That was important. That was very important because we found a lot of stuff that we had to report to our leadership, which eventually gets reported to central office.

Then I got moved over to Assistant Director of Benefits. I supervised the Veterans Board of Appeals in the VFW regional office in D.C.

I would like to thank some of the support staff that assisted me along the way. In this business as an administrator, you are only as good as your backup support staff. I have had several, I hope I remember them all. Theresa Aldana, she is the Manager of Support Operations. I used to consider her my diplomatic advisor. As you know, Marines are not very diplomatic.

Sometimes I would have issues should I approach it this way or should I approach it this way? I would go in there and sit down and chitchat with Theresa. I would say, "Theresa, I have some issues." I would come out feeling good, because she would say, "Fred, you can't do this, you can't do that. You're not in the Marine Corps anymore. You can't go in and scream and holler; you have to calm yourself down." I learned how to calm myself down and be a good supervisor.

Jennifer Malick helped me along the way over the years. Sylvia Betz, she was one of my support staff. Also Meriam Blackwell. I hope I am not missing anybody. I probably am.

Then I moved upstairs with Mr. Wallace. He gave me my first, second and third promotions. I made a couple of mistakes early on in my career in the '90s, but he saw fit to promote me and continued to promote me and keep me around. I guess he thought I had potential. I thank Bob for that.

In that position, I got to interact a lot with the chair officer. That's an honor. Every year I get to deal with the Commander-in-Chief, the Junior Vice, the Senior Vice, and that's a real honor. A lot of folks don't get to work with on a one-on-one like I did.

My biggest worry was one day that they would get stranded overseas based on something that I had done wrong. In that note, I would like to thank John Hamilton and "Gunner" Kent for always having confidence in me that I would get the job done.

Last but not least, my mentor, Director of National Veterans Service, Bill Bradshaw. When you first get out of the Marine Corps, you have got to kind of change your ways. He always had this calming way about it. I have never seen him raise his voice. He would talk to you one-on-one.

I used to chitchat with him, and he helped me make that change from a loud mouth hard-charging Marine to a soft-spoken hard-charging civilian.

So, Mr. Bradshaw, if you are listening, thank you for the guidance over the years. You helped me a lot to become the good VFW employee that I was. Thank you.

I can't leave out my wife. Finally, I would to thank my wife, Brenda. (Applause) For all of the early years in my career, when I was gone from home a lot, you know, I would leave every other Sunday and I would say, "I will see you." I would say, "Do you want to take me to the airport?" She would say, "No." I would say, "Do you want to walk me downstairs?" She would say, "No." I would have to get myself to the airport and go out of town. Thank you for those five years when I was traveling a lot.

She is a good VA employee, and now she is on mandatory overtime, so now I can say good-bye to her on Saturday mornings when she has to leave to go to work.

Then the latter years when I worked for the Executive Director, I had a BlackBerry. I am dealing with the chair officers on the road. Thank you for putting up with me and my BlackBerry on nights and the weekends.

“Gunner” Kent, you know, will email you at 2:00 o’clock in the morning if he is overseas somewhere. “Gunner”, thank you. Finally, thank you for allowing me to work for the VFW over the past 21 years. It has been my honor.

Mr. Bradshaw told me years ago always remember who you work for, you work for the membership. I have always kept that in mind for the last 21 years. As the Marines say, “Semper Fi.” Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF SECRETARY ROBERT A. MCDONALD,  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is now my honor and a privilege to introduce the man with the toughest job in the country, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Robert A. McDonald.

The Secretary hails from Indiana, but grew up in Chicago. He would graduate from West Point in the top two percent of his class of 1975, and serve five years in uniform, primarily with the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg.

He would join Proctor & Gamble in 1980 and literally work his way up the corporate ladder to become chairman, president and CEO of the company.

A year ago the President asked him to take control of a VA in crisis, a nationwide crisis in access to care that severely damaged the confidence that America’s veterans must have in their VA.

Proper leadership, management and accountability are the only requirements the VFW has ever demanded from the VA, and despite a huge plus-up in emergency funding and the passage of the Veterans Choice Program last summer, his department’s challenges are still to: Identify and fix what’s broken;

To hold employees fully accountable to the maximum extent of the law; And to restore the faith of veterans in their VA.

Mr. Secretary, I am impressed with your open door policy, and I promise the VFW will be there to help you fix the VA, just as we will be there to point out necessary course corrections, too, through our nationwide surveys, and the face-to-face meetings you have with our VFW Washington office staff.

Our job as veterans’ advocates is to ensure the VA succeeds, and I appreciate the fact the VFW is able to provide a voice you want to hear.

Comrades and distinguished guests, please welcome the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Bob McDonald. (Applause)

SPEECH BY SECRETARY ROBERT A. MCDONALD,  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SECRETARY MCDONALD: Thank you. I want to thank Commander John Stroud for his leadership in the VFW and his partnership with us in transforming the VA. I also want to thank John Biedrzycki, your now Senior Vice-Commander-in-Chief and soon to be Commander. I look forward working with you, "Big John", and learning from you as well as continuing our transformation in the VA.

Of course, I want to thank Bob Wallace, who we see quite frequently in Washington, D.C. for his help, his counsel, his leadership. I want to thank Bill Bradshaw, director of National Veterans Service.

Members of the VFW, fellow veterans, ladies and gentlemen: Working at the VA is a high calling. It is the highest calling. We have the best, most inspiring mission in government, to care for those who have borne the battle and their family and their survivors.

We have the best, most deserving clients in the world. There are over 22 million veterans in this country, about 9.1 million are enrolled for VA health care.

Some went ashore at Omaha Beach and some answered the call after 9/11. Whatever their age, wherever they served, we honor them. We advocate for them. We care for them when they need us.

Recently, some people in Washington have begun to question the need for the VA. One thing I have learned since my confirmation as the Secretary is there is no substitute for VA. Veterans need the VA, American medicine needs the VA and the American public benefits from the VA.

So many ask about what is so special about the VA health care? Well, the VA health care system is supported by three pillars, a unique system that depends on the strength inherent in all three of those areas: Research, education and clinical care.

VA researchers have made major contributions to medical science earning three Nobel prizes, seven Lasker awards, and many other awards and recognitions.

Among those achievements are the first implantable cardiac pacemaker; the first liver transplant.

The VA invented the nicotine patch to help smokers to quit. There have been multiple advances in prosthetics, in identifying generic risks for numerous diseases, and in treating spinal cord injuries in the Bronx VA.

There have been ground breaking strides in treating the signature wounds of today's conflicts, PTSD and TBI. We are also the first large health care system to develop a system-wide electronic health record and the first to begin bar coding medications to connect patients with medical records with their medicine.

This year the VA won \$1 billion in 2,200 research projects involving nearly 3,400 VA researchers. This research that will help not just veterans, but countless other Americans for generations to come.

We are affiliated with many of the best medical schools and training programs in over 1,800 educational institutions. We train 120,000 health care professionals a year, more than any other medical system in our nation. We train 62,000 medical students and residents, 23,000 nursing students, 33,000 students in other health fields.

We train an estimated 70 plus percent of all U.S. doctors, and we are the largest employer of nurses in the Nation.

We have great people in the VA. One-third of our employees are veterans. We operate 1,900 points of care serving 9.1 million enrolled veterans.

Last year, we completed over 55 million appointments for 6.6 million unique patients of the 9.1 million veterans enrolled for health care.

We are a national leader in tele-health services, caring for 700,000 veterans, over 2 million tele-health visits in fiscal year 2014. We are also a National leader in reducing MRSA infections. Those infections that are occurring in hospitals are down 69 percent since 2007 compared to 30 percent down for non-VA hospitals.

Since 2004, the American customer satisfaction nexus has shown that veterans give VA health care higher ratings than patients at most private hospitals.

VA researchers continue to receive awards for excellence, like the ones you see here. Take a look at the second bullet. 26 years ago, Dr. Bill Bauman was an endocrinologist at the Bronx VA when he hired Ann Spungen, a physiologist, to help test the respiratory functions of paralyzed veterans. When Bauman shared his dream of learning how spinal cord injuries that caused many parts of the body to function poorly, Spungen quit her job to join his research.

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, Drs. Bauman and Spungen were honored with the Samuel Heyman Service to America Medal.

The VA does face some serious challenges. While the total number of veterans is actually declining, the total number of veterans needing VA care is increasing, not because of Afghanistan or Iraq, but because of the aging of the veterans who served during the Vietnam era.

This chart reveals an astounding shift. In 1975, the year I graduated from West Point, there were about 2 million veterans over the age of 65. In 2017, there will be almost 10 million veterans over the age of 65. 46 percent of veterans will be 65 or over in 2017.

If we don't build the capacity today to care for them, we could be facing another access crisis 20 to 30 years from now. We have to build that capacity today.

Simultaneously, the number of claims and medical issues and claims have soared. As this chart shows, in 2009, the Veterans Benefits Administration completed almost 990,000 claims. In 2017, we project we'll complete over 1.4 million claims, a 47 percent increase. But there is more dramatic growth in the number of medical issues proclaim, 2.7 million in 2009 and a projected 5.9 million in 2017. That's a 115 percent increase over just eight years.

As one ages, more issues become more chronic, and more problematic. 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 about 30 percent.

Since 2000, the average degree of disability has risen to 47.7 percent as this chart shows. The percentage of veterans receiving VA compensation follows the same pattern.

From 1960 to 2000 it was stable at about 8.5 percent. But in just 14 years, since the year 2001, it has more than doubled to 19 percent. So, while it is true that the number of veterans is declining and the number of those seeking care and benefits is increasing, and it is increasing for these reasons. As I said, the aging of the veteran population.

More than a decade of war, Agent Orange-related claims, unlimited claims of appeal process, increased medical claims issues, far higher survival rates of the wounded on the battlefield, and more sophisticated methods for identifying and treating veterans' medical issues. Veterans demands for services and benefits as in the past exceeded VA's capacity to meet it.

It is important that Congress and the American people understand why that is happening. Compounding the problem, VA is saddled with some serious aging infrastructure. 900 VA facilities are over 90 years old. More than 1,300 are over 70 years old. 60 percent are over 50 years old. These older facilities don't meet today's standards for hospital construction.

They were designed to produce and provide health care in the 1930s, not in the 2020s. The rooms are too small to accommodate state of the art medical equipment procedures. They lack the privacy, convenience and comfort that veterans, especially female veterans, deserve. They need to be replaced with new facilities, but for that we need funding and we need authorization from Congress.

The independent budget produced by the VFW and our other VSOs estimated that closing the major construction gap will take \$19 billion to \$23 billion over the next ten years. It is costing us money to just keep old buildings on our books.

Here is an example. This is an actual building owned by the VA. It is owned and it is 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 virtually impossible to do, so it is still standing.

The VA currently has 336 buildings vacant or less than 50 percent occupied. That's 10.5 million square feet of space costing the American public about \$24 million a year.

Here is what we could do with that money if we had it. We could hire roughly 200 registered nurses for a year. We could pay for 144,000 primary care visits, or we could support 41,900 days of nursing home care.

The VA is committed in delivering timely high-quality health care to our Nation's veterans. We know we still have too many veterans waiting for care, but we are now providing more care for veterans than ever before in our history, both inside the VA and outside the VA in the community.

To meet the immediate demand for access, we have extended hours. We have had 880,000 appointments completed during the extended hours. That is on the evenings and on the weekends.

We have activated 80 buildings and added 1.3 million square feet of space to our health care footprint, plus another 420,000 square feet in VA owned properties.

We stepped up recruiting of new personnel. We have hired 38,000 in the past ten months for a net increase of 12,000 hospital employees, including 1,000 more physicians and 2,700 more nurses. We have had a 45 percent increase in authorization for care in the community.

Speaking of care in the community, the VA has been referring veterans to care in the community for decades, whenever it has made sense for veterans, and we are very much in favor of making greater use of the care in the community program to meet the access challenge.

But we know that many veterans prefer the VA health care. In fact, in the VFW's own study, veterans show that 47 percent were offered choice elected to wait for their care inside the VA. 78 percent were satisfied with their VA care experience, and 82 percent would recommend VA care to fellow veterans.

But one thing to keep in mind, most veterans already have a choice. 81 percent of veterans had either Medicare, Medicaid, TRICARE or some private insurance. Many come to the VA because of the disparity in out-of-pocket costs between their insurance and VA care.

Let me give you an example. The average Medicare reimbursement for a knee replacement is \$25,000, with the copay of 20 percent. Choosing the VA for your knee replacement saves the veteran \$5,000. We are providing regular updates of patient access data so that you can see how well we are doing.

No private health care system I know of is doing this. No private health care system wants to be measured by appointment wait times. This is not an accepted industry practice, but we are doing it.

Here are the results. We have 7 million more appointments completed by the VA or through the VA in the community in the past 12

months. That is 7 million more completed appointments. 97 percent of the appointments are now completed within 30 days of the veteran's desired date. 88 percent are within 7 days. 20 percent are the same day walk-in appointments.

The average wait time for completing appointments is currently 4 days in primary care, 5 days for specialty care, and 3 days for mental health care.

There has been a 12 percent increase in after-hours of weekend appointments. We have expanded virtual care. 36 percent increase in secure messaging, 19 percent increase in tele-health. 36 percent increase in e-consults. A 93 percent reduction in the new enrollee appointment request list. A 47 percent reduction in the electronic wait list.

Of course, health care is just one of nine VA lines of business. Other lines include life insurance, mortgage insurance, pensions, disability compensation, memorial affairs and education. We have got reason to be proud in those areas as well.

We guarantee 2 million home loans with the lowest foreclosure rate and the highest consumer satisfaction rate in mortgage lending. For the past decade, the American Customer Satisfaction Index has ranked our cemetery system the top customer service organization in the Nation, public or private.

In the past two years, we have cut disability claims backlog about 80 percent. It peaked at 611,000 claims over 125 days in March 2013. It is now down to around 125,000 claims over 125 days. That's the lowest it has been in six years.

On the average of claims already underway, we are at about our 125-day standard. Now, how did we get there? Well, we got there by building a new electronic system for handling claims.

We hired more claims staff, but we need even more. We had the 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. We need the help of Congress, we need to hire more people, and we need the money to fund them. If we don't fund this requirement, we can't be expected to meet our requirements, and that is what I keep telling members of Congress.

As you see here, we have made substantial improvement in veterans' homelessness, which has declined about 33 percent from 2010 to 2014. But any veteran being homeless is one veteran too many. Any homelessness is an effort between the federal government and the local government, so we are working with over 2,000 partners all over the country. Over 700 civic leaders have accepted First Lady's Mayor's Challenge to End Veterans Homelessness by the end of the year, including 550 mayors, 8 governors, 151 counties and city officials.

Last December, New Orleans became the first major city to meet the challenge. Phoenix, Salt Lake City have made major milestones in 2015. Of course, to meet the challenges of the 21st Century, the VA will need adequately funding.

The President's 2016 budget request will provide the funding that we need, \$168 billion, \$73.5 billion in discretionary funds, and \$95.3 billion in mandatory funds for benefits programs.

The discretionary request is an increase of \$5.2 billion, or 7.5 percent above the 2015 enacted level. This will provide resources that continue serving the growing number of veterans seeking care and benefits, and it will help us get ready for the aging of the Afghanistan and Iraq veterans.

The budget will increase access to minimal care and benefits for veterans. It will also address infrastructure challenges, including major and minor construction, modernization and renovation. It ends the claims backlog and veterans' homelessness in calendar year 2015. It funds medical and prosthetics research, and it addresses our aging IT infrastructure and modernization.

However, in the House of Representatives, the budget was cut by \$1.4 billion, and that's what the House voted to do. If we applied that House budget, here is what it could cost veterans. That would be \$688 billion less in veterans medical care, the equivalent of over 70,000 veterans receiving VA medical care.

There would be no funding for four major construction projects or six cemetery inspections. In fact, the House Budget cuts VA construction by 50 percent. It would inhibit hiring and retention of the best people by inhibiting performance awards or bonuses for Title V SCS and other employees.

It denies the VA the budgetary flexibility needed to serve veterans the way they want to be served.

I mentioned earlier that some people in Washington are questioning the need for the VA. Others are attempting to squeeze the needs of veterans within a sequestered budget that artificially constrains the budget regardless of what it means to the programs we are trying to operate within the VA and across the government.

All of this, the lack of flexibility to give veterans real choices, it cuts the discussions about whether veterans actually deserve a medical system to call their own, leads us to the same place, a place where the needs of veterans are secondary to ideology, scoring political points and shortsighted budget policies; a place where the VA is set up to fail. A place where there are no winners and veterans would have sacrificed so much for much nobler purposes are the ones that are suffering.

That's unacceptable to me. It is unacceptable to the President, 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 am here. That's why you are here, and that's why we need to press forward in putting veterans first. It seems hard what veterans, Congress employees and VOS are telling us. What we hear drives us to a historic department-wide transformation, changing the culture and making veterans the center of everything we do.

We call it my VA, because it is what we want you to think about when you think about the VA. We want you to think about it as your own customized for you.

There are five strategies. We want to improve the veterans experience to be seamless, integrated and responsive. We are working with the best private sector customer service companies like Disney, like Starbucks, like Ritz Carlton, to learn how to do that. We want every veteran to be warmly embraced when they walk in the door.

Number 2, we have to improve the employee experience. We have to focus on people and culture to give the veterans the best service they deserve. We have no hope of caring for veterans if we don't care for our employees who provide that care for veterans.

Number 3, we have to improve our internal support services. For example, our computer systems are just too old. The scheduling system that was a problem in Phoenix dates to 1985.

Number 4, we have to establish a culture of continuous improvement, and we are teaching every employee to learn Six Sigma to help us do that.

Number 5, enhance the strategic partnerships. We know we cannot do this job by ourselves, and we have to partner with people who can help us.

The key to improving the veterans experience in the VA is a customer service approach. I call it the Platinum Rule. You have heard of the Golden Rule, treat other people the way you want to be treated. The Platinum Rule is to treat the people the way they want to be treated. That is the rule we are embracing at the VA.

We have changed our policy to allow veterans to stop and start benefits, to add or drop dependents, with a phone call to the BBA Call Center. That is good customer service. We have also designed a pilot program to allow veterans to see audiologists and optometrists without first seeing a primary care physician.

Right now, if you were to change your address in the VA, you would have to do it in nine separate places. We are moving to one database that you can only change it once, and we will take care of the rest. We are working on expanding Wi-Fi service in the VA facilities so veterans and their families can stay connected during visits.

We are launching a major effort to better integrate our different contact centers across the VA. Soon veterans will be able to go to one website rather than the myriad of websites we have today. We will have one single 1-800 number that will have a human being answering the phone.

Our new Undersecretary for Health, Dr. David Shulkin, Business Health Care. He has run health care systems before and we were delighted to get him confirmed by the Senate a couple of weeks ago and on board last week.

No organization can satisfy its customers if it can't satisfy its employees. So, after improving the veterans experience comes improving the employee experience. To do that, we are rolling out a new training course

called VA 101. So, every employee will understand all the benefits available at the VA, not only where they work.

We are also in the process of expanding city liaison officers around the country so that there will be more people on the ground. We are in the process of putting in place community veterans experience awards, so that all areas of the VA will come together in the community and at a much lower level.

My VA support services team has made progress toward improving internal systems in support of the VA operations. They have completed a three-month assessment of IT, HR, acquisition and finance operations. They surveyed veterans and employees to find out how we can improve, and we have consulted with national customer service organizations, like USAA, on best practices in support of services.

We are already standardizing policies for VA in all VA facilities. We will be sending our training teams to teach employees how to deescalate the encounters that could impose a threat to employees or to veterans.

To build conscious improvement in the VA, we have chosen a team-based performance improvement methodology described as Lean, which many companies have been using all over the world for more than 20 years. We will be teaching Lean and Lean Six Sigma to employees to empower them to enable them to change the processes to improve the VA experience for both veterans and employees. We want every VA employee working to improve the system that they work on, to focus on how we can better care for veterans.

Last November, we fielded a new VA web tool called the “Idea House”, essentially an online suggestion box for VA employees. Through the “Idea House”, we have one HR specialist from Tennessee suggest that we stop automatically mailing out paper copies of reports available electronically. We took her suggestion, we stopped printing 20 reports for a savings of \$300,000 a year. That’s the kind of improvement we want from VA employees.

We are making it easier for other organizations to partner with the VA by standardizing our partnership process and making it more partner friendly. We are also working with communications in communities around the country to establish community veterans engaging boards. The first of these, VA Connecticut, held its first meeting in May. We hope to have at least a half dozen in operation by the end of the summer.

Finally, this summer we will be renewing our commitment to America’s veterans, and we are asking others to join in that commitment. We are calling it the “Summer of Service”.

In the next three months we will be turning the spotlight on VA volunteers, to thank them for their work that they do and to show others how they can help. We are starting this summer with about 75,000 volunteers, and by the end of the summer we want to have nearly 100,000, if not more, volunteers helping the VA.

We are also reorganizing the department geographically. In the past, we had nine geographic organization structures, one for each line of business and one with its own middle management.

We have now moved to a unified structure that has one national structure as shown in this chart, with just five districts. We are in the process of aligning the administration to these districts.

There is so much more I could tell you about if we had time, more that we have accomplished, but more importantly, that we will accomplish in the coming months.

We are listening to veterans more. We are listening to employees more. We have been having town hall meetings. We are having open houses and together we are making lasting improvements in the VA so that in the future more veterans will say with pride, "That's my VA."

In closing, the VA has the greatest opportunity to enhance care for veterans in its history. We have an opportunity not only to right the wrongs, but to lengthen our lead in areas where we have always excelled and to take the lead in service delivery areas that are lagging, and to chart new ground in the emerging and evolving areas of health care. But to do this, we need the continued support of Congress, veterans, veterans service organizations and the American people to make the necessary changes to keep moving forward.

God bless our veterans, God bless the VFW, and may God bless all of you. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: He is one of us, he cares. I told him when I first came into office that the VFW has his back and that I wished him every success, because his success means good things are happening for our veterans.

#### PRESENTATION OF TEACHER AWARDS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: For more than a century, the VFW has placed great emphasis on educating our Nation's youth on Americanism, civic responsibility and patriotism. Enacted in 1999, the "Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award" contest as a way to recognize teachers who strive to implement these core values into their daily classroom curriculum.

This year's recipients are exceptionally devoted Americans who have undoubtedly exceeded their responsibilities as citizens of the United States through the art of teaching.

These three honorees were selected from across the Nation for their innovative teaching methods and dedication to citizenship education. They have used unique teaching styles and eye-opening class projects to passionately promote America's history and its traditions. The teachers here today have succeeded by encouraging their students to become better citizens by spreading knowledge of our Nation's history, its institutions and becoming involved in their own communities.

Each recipient will receive the \$1,000 “Smart/Maher VFW National Citizen Education Teacher Award” for personal development and their schools likewise will receive a \$1,000 award.

I would like to take this moment to personally thank these three teachers and all of the teachers of America. They mold the leaders of tomorrow, and we are forever indebted to them for their service to our children and this country. Thank you, teachers, and congratulations on a job well done. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF ANN PARKER KOMARA, OTTOBINE  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, GRADES K-5

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I am pleased to introduce to you the National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year, representing grades K-5, Ms. Ann Parker Komara, of Harrisonburg, Virginia. In the three short years that Ms. Komara has been teaching 5th grade at Ottobine Elementary School in Dayton, Virginia, she has demonstrated a true passion for teaching her students the importance of patriotism, flag etiquette and love of country. A few of her many projects have included visits from active duty service members and VFW members. As veterans shared their experiences from World War II through present day, Ms. Komara inspired her students to do more.

Her guidance led to students selling handmade patriotic windsocks and bracelets, and using the proceeds to support wounded veterans.

Students joined with members of VFW Posts and Ladies Auxiliaries to assemble and mail care packages.

And to ensure our fallen heroes were not forgotten, Ms. Komara encouraged her students to hand make wreaths to place on veterans’ graves in honor of Memorial Day.

Ms. Komara has successfully created an atmosphere where her students and the entire school and surrounding community are encouraged and energized to learn about our country, and all those who have sacrificed to defend our freedom.

Please join me in welcoming Ms. Ann Parker Komara, sponsored by VFW Post 8644 and its Ladies Auxiliary in Bridgewater, Virginia. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: The plaque reads, “Presented to Ann Komara, Ottobine Elementary School Teacher of the Year, grade level K-5, 2014-2015.”

RESPONSE BY MS. ANN PARKER KOMARA

MS. KOMARA: He has covered what I was going to talk about, but I will say something anyway. I would like to start by saying I am a teacher from Ottobine Elementary School, which is a small country school in Dayton, Virginia. We have about 215 students there. So, we are really proud of our small project.

Next, I would like to thank the VFW for this award. I feel so pleased and honored to be recognized and I want to thank Mr. and Mrs. Weekley and Post 8644, because without you this project would not have been successful.

I would to thank those currently serving and those who have served, because as Winston Churchill once said, "People sleep peacefully in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf." So thank you for your courage and bravery.

Our project started to teach the students the difference between Memorial Day and Veterans Day. We advised the students with their 1st grade book buddies and created the page project. I thought it was important to reach all the different types of soldiers, including those serving and deceased. We had all the team create a patriotic windsock which they raised over \$600, and all the proceeds went to wounded veterans. Then we needed a care package to send to active military. We sent 25 care packages this year, and we sent 50 overseas to current soldiers overseas.

Finally, we wanted to do something for the soldiers that were deceased, so we created a flag and took them to a local cemetery on Memorial Day. We had each student lay one on the wreath of a fallen soldier's grave. I just want to say I am humbled by your recognition, because the responses from the soldier's community and veterans has been rewarding enough. Thank for this reward and I appreciate it very much. (Applause)

#### INTRODUCTION OF MELINDA HAMILTON, RIVER BEND MIDDLE SCHOOL, GRADES 6-8

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Next I am pleased to introduce the National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year, representing grades 6-8, Ms. Melinda Hamilton of Claremont, North Carolina. Ms. Hamilton's patriotism and appreciation for our country comes from her father's own military service during Vietnam.

Determined to instill the same citizenship and love of country in her students, Ms. Hamilton has been instrumental in creating and implementing activities that provide students with the opportunity to develop citizenship and leadership qualities.

Coordinating community service projects, hosting voter registration drives, educating students on the election process and organizing trips to Washington, D.C., Gettysburg and Philadelphia are only a few highlights on her impressive résumé.

While her classroom and teaching style encourages and promotes civic engagement on local and worldwide levels, Ms. Hamilton doesn't stop there. Each year she recognizes veterans by organizing Veterans' Day displays which include a wall of photos from area veterans and American flags placed around campus, all in the effort to teach her students about America's wars and its heroes.



Please join me in welcoming Ms. Melinda Hamilton, sponsored by VFW Post 5305 in Conover, North Carolina. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: The plaque reads, "Melinda Hamilton, River Bend Middle School Teacher of the Year, grade levels 6-8, 2014-2015."

#### RESPONSE – MS. MELINDA HAMILTON

MS. HAMILTON: Thank you. I want to begin with just a little bit of school business. One of my 7th grade students wanted me to tell President Obama that Jason Chang says hello, if I get the opportunity to meet him. So, if any of you have the opportunity to speak to President Obama, please tell him Jason Chang, 7th grade student, says hello.

This is such an incredible honor. I am so humbled to be the recipient of this year's Smart/Maher VFW Citizenship Education Teacher for the middle grades.

I would like to congratulate Ann and Craig for winning of their respective grade levels. Congratulations on your achievements.

It is an honor to be in your company today. Receiving this award is an amazing honor, but it is only possible due to the work and the support of a lot other people. The students, teachers, parents, community members and local churches have always been so instrumental to my success, therefore, this award belongs to our entire school community.

I sincerely thank each of them for their role in getting us here today where I can proudly accept this award as a mark of our achievement, the entire River Bend Middle School team.

I would like at this moment to recognize a few people who made it possible for me to be here today. First, I would like to thank the National VFW for your continued support of teachers in public education. I have the greatest respect for all veterans, the brave men and woman who have answered the call to serve our country. You are the real heroes and sheroes.

I would also like to acknowledge your family members. We often forget the sacrifices made by the wives, the husbands, the children and the extended family members who make tremendous sacrifices carrying on at home while our men and women of service are away answering the call of duty. So, to all family members, thank you.

Secondly, I would like to thank VFW Post 5305 in Newton, North Carolina. Over the past few months, the men and women of the VFW Hall have become a second family to me. Under the leadership of Larry Teague, the members at Post 5305 conducted a beautiful awards ceremony in front of the entire school on passion and pride. Dr. Jerry Hemsetter and other VFW members left many of us in tears. I owe a very special thank you to Larry Teague for his friendship and support throughout this process. You have done an amazing job making this a lifetime memory that I will never forget.

I hope I represent North Carolina Post 5305 and the North Carolina District 14 as honoree as you have represented us with your service to this country. So, thank you to North Carolina.

I also want to say thank you to West Virginia. Where is West Virginia? I was born and raised in West Virginia, and my parents and my family are still there today. So, thank you to West Virginia.

I would like to thank the River Bend Middle School family. Thanks to our 7th grade team members for your support and your friendship. Needless to say, I wouldn't be here without the support of all of you.

I need to thank Ms. Stacy Bumgardner. Ms. Bumgardner is one of my best friends and she went behind my back to write the nomination letter to get this ball rolling. I was a little mad at her in the beginning for not telling me, but after seeing what an amazing experience this has been I am so honored and I am not mad at her anymore. She is forgiven.

I would like to thank my family. I have my mother and father, and one of my two sisters here with me today. My two wonderful sisters, Staley and Rose, I love both of you very much. You are the best sisters ever, and I am thankful for the close relationship we have, and not all sisters are as lucky as we are.

To my mom and dad, who I am so proud of, just celebrated their 50th anniversary in May. You have always been there to support all three of us with everything we have ever attempted, and you are the rock that holds our family together. I love you very much. We don't say that often enough.

Growing up in cornfields of southern West Virginia, we always knew that our Dad served in Vietnam, but it was something we never discussed as family. We still have not had a conversation about his experience in Vietnam.

Today, support and respect for returning soldiers is widespread as it should be. However, that wasn't the case for the Vietnam era veterans. They arrived home to a country in political turmoil, and they never received the thanks and the respect that they deserved.

My dad's service and the service of other Vietnam veterans should have been a badge of honor, not a burden to bear. (Applause)

I am proud of Senator Richard Burr from the state of North Carolina, who in 2011 presented a resolution to Congress to celebrate March 30th as National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day. We need to do a better job getting that news out in public.

So, to my dad, without knowing any of the details of your service in Vietnam, our entire family -- I get very emotional -- knows you served honorably and bravely in Vietnam and you are our hero. (Applause)

You are my inspiration and the reason I am so dedicated to honoring all veterans in the United States. We are not very mushy in our family, and I apologize, but I love my family very much.

I would like to say thanks to the entire VFW organization and to the City of Pittsburgh for your awesome hospitality. Next summer, my home state of North Carolina, under the leadership of State Commander Jessie Bellflowers,

and Senior Vice-Commander Doug Blevins, look forward to hosting you with a little southern hospitality for the 117th VFW National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina.

In closing, I would like to say that serving in the military is a sacrifice for those who serve abroad and those who serve at home. Our country owes every veteran a great deal of gratitude, and it is the duty of all American citizens to honor and respect those who answer the call to keep us all safe.

Thank you so much to the National VFW. This is the greatest moment and honor of my life. I sincerely thank all of you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF CRAIG BLACKMAN, TEACHER AWARD,  
INDIAN RIVER HIGH SCHOOL, GRADES 9-12

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is with great pleasure that I introduce you to the National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year, representing grades 9-12, Mr. Craig Blackman from Chesapeake, Virginia.

For almost 30 years, Mr. Blackman has used his classroom to bring history to life. His peers and students have praised him for his ability to teach history in entertaining and memorable ways.

From hiring reenactors to perform war-era skits to delivering the Gettysburg Address dressed as Abraham Lincoln, Mr. Blackman has gone to great lengths to ensure students develop a greater respect for veterans and a better understanding of our Nation's history.

Challenging his students to dig deeper into history is one of his greatest strengths. After spending countless hours of research scouring obituaries, marriage and census records, as well as reaching out to VFW Posts, he selected the names of 25 local soldiers killed during the Vietnam War. His innovative research project required students to discover and tell the soldier's stories by authoring their biographies.

The fallen soldiers and Marines, who had long been forgotten by their home town, were honored in a Memorial Day service that will stay with his students and community for years.

As a published author, Virginia's Social Studies Teacher of the Year and recipient of countless awards, it isn't hard to see that Mr. Blackman is a great example of the difference one teacher can make in the lives of America's future leaders.

Please help me in welcoming Mr. Craig Blackman, sponsored by VFW Post 2894 in Chesapeake, Virginia. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: "Craig Blackman, Indian River High School Teacher of the Year, grade level 9-12, 2014-2015."

RESPONSE BY MR. CRAIG BLACKMAN

MR. BLACKMAN: Thank you. It is an honor to be here. I am a Penn Stater, I want you to know. I know I am in Pitt territory. Do we have any Penn State fans out there?

It has been an amazing year, and I thank you so much for this great honor. I want to thank many people. I want to start with my Heavenly Father, who let me do that. I want to thank Him for His goodness and this great gift because He is a giver of all good things, and He taught me the importance of honoring veterans. I thank Him for that.

I also want to thank my mother, who is here from New Jersey, who studied to be a U.S. cadet nurse at Syracuse University. Mom, will you stand, please? (Applause)

You told me to please honor that great generation. Now, don't sit down yet, Mom. Get back up there. You have to stand back up, Mom. I wanted to personally thank you for teaching me to love my country and to always remember those who suffered and served our country. Thank you. (Applause)

My father also served in the U.S. Army in the Aleutian Radio Corps. I wanted to honor his memory also today.

I also thank my wife who is here. Please stand up, Jolette. Today is our 25th anniversary. (Applause) She has put up with me for 25 years, and that is an award right there.

I have two lovely daughters who are right here. Please stand so I can embarrass you one last time: Brooklyn and Sydney. Thank you for being the joys of my life.

I want to give a shout out to my principal, Nicole Dunbar, in Chesapeake, as well as retired principal James Frye, who has always supported me in my projects of honoring veterans. I also want to give a shout out to Alan Krasnoff, who is the Mayor of Chesapeake, who always encouraged me in all my visions to help out veterans. He is a tremendous man and politician, who I truly love.

Thank you, VFW, for all that you do for your great treatment, you treat us so well at every level. Let me especially thank Chris Mulholland, Post Commander at Post 2894, Virginia, who just embodies the excellence of your organization. He has been just super, a tremendous researcher, professional and a person who serves continually. He has just been an amazing person who has really fought for me in so many ways.

Let me take just a moment and summarize my project. In 2014, the lesson for this project was to honor the warrior, because as we heard in Vietnam, we didn't separate the war from the warrior. This was meant to help my students make an organic connection to make history come to life and to honor that warrior, not just in a textbook, but to understand the real live situation with what families that have to deal with.

So, they wrote biographies of the 25 men from our community, and it was my job to find the surviving family members, the Gold Star Mothers and other individuals who lost a loved one from 45 years ago. No matter what it took, no matter how long it took to find every single one, if possible.

I can tell you this is my 30th year, and there is nothing more meaningful as a teacher than to see your students come together with those individuals in a reception and have them honor them and give them that essay to honor their loved ones.

Let me just tell you a short story that might help you understand the power of this project. In 1970, there was an Air Force Ranger named Ronnie Wayne Jones. On his first mission, he was killed in Vietnam. His mother never really understood the full story of what happened to Ronnie until I kept calling, and I was able to contact Ronnie's CO and his war buddies, and talk to them layer upon layer and the kids wrote his story.

That Gold Star Mother came to our reception and because of that had the strength to call those war buddies. After 45 years to have final closure, and know the full story of her very heroic son.

It was also the Star of Mrs. Elliott, who told me when I contacted her about after five months, she said, "I have been waiting 45 years for someone to honor my only son for his service in Vietnam."

To have my students participate in that and meet with her and to bless her in this way was beyond description. This project was very powerful.

I will just say in closing, you are my heroes. As long as I am in the classroom, I will honor you and the principles that you fought for. God bless you and welcome home, my Vietnam heroes, and God bless John McCain. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: With teachers like this, I would say our youth and our future is in good shape.

#### INTRODUCTION OF PATRICK K. HALLINAN AND PRESENTATION OF VFW COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLD MEDAL AND CITATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Our next award recipient has dedicated his career to ensuring America's fallen heroes are laid to rest with the dignity, honor and respect they deserve.

Patrick Hallinan's service to veterans dates back to 1977. After honorably serving with the Marines in Vietnam, Patrick worked his way up from a temporary laborer at Long Island National Cemetery in New York to his current position as Executive Director of the Army National Military Cemeteries.

For more than 36 years, Patrick has been instrumental in ensuring all veterans are laid to rest honorably. After an Arlington National Cemetery scandal in 2010 revealed grave sites had been mislabeled and remains mishandled, Patrick played a key role in updating cemetery operating procedures, improving facilities and ensuring staff members were properly

retrained to meet the high service standards our veterans and their families deserve.

Throughout his tenure, Patrick has been responsible for five Memorial Service Network Offices, 131 National Cemeteries, involving 3.1 million grave sites and 19,000 acres of sacred burial grounds. Because of his dedication to paying tribute to our fallen comrades, the VFW can rest easy knowing every veteran laid to rest in our National Military Cemeteries will receive the care, professionalism and attention to detail their service has earned them.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is now my honor to present Patrick Hallinan with the VFW Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: "Commander-in-Chief Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded to Patrick K. Hallinan.

"In esteemed recognition and heartfelt appreciation of his dedicated service to the Army National Military Cemeteries, as well as to the entire veteran community. For more than 36 years, he has dutifully honored our Nation's fallen heroes and provided compassionate assistance to their families during times of grief and beyond. His diligent leadership efforts have greatly contributed to the improvement of burial services and removal of red tape on behalf of our Nation's veterans and their families.

"His long-time dedication to treating America's fallen heroes and their families with the respect they deserve has justly earned him the highest level of admiration, respect and gratitude of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 21st day of July, 2015."

It has been signed by John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General.

#### RESPONSE BY MR. PATRICK HALLINAN

MR. HALLINAN: Good morning, fellow veterans, family members, distinguished guests. Semper Fidelis to my fellow Marines in the audience.

I would like to thank Commander-in-Chief John Stroud, the senior leadership of the VFW, and all the members who have taken time to honor those who have continued to serve and promote service to the Nation and patriotism and honor.

I am honored to be here. When I started out many, many years ago, it is about 42 years, over four decades, and I will not bore you with 40 years of coming through the ranks and being an overnight success after 42 years.

But I will say this: To receive an award by the people you respect the most, my four decades of service for the people I respect the most, the Nation's true heroes. Not the ball players, not the football players, not the entertainers. My heroes and my family's heroes are the people who have worn the uniform, which I have done and my son has done. (Applause)

This has not been a career for me. It has been a calling. I have passion about the mission. I have had a job for 40 years where I get to say thanks on behalf of the American people to the people that served this Nation. I have done it during difficult times and I have done it at times when it was not as facile.

When you are interring KIA's on the recent conflicts, when you are interring people who may be the last son or daughter of a family, when you are standing on a grave site with a widow with a baby in her arms, will not grow apart, you never fail to move, you never fail to remind me of what a great Nation is and who the true heroes are.

I have spent a lifetime treating our Nation's heroes with dignity and honor, and their families with respect and compassion. We have spent a lifetime training many people within our ranks to do the same.

We face many challenges together, and I have been fortunate and I am honored to be recognized by the VFW at this Convention. I would not be here if it wasn't for the hard work of many people, some of whom are with us today. I see my own ladies up on the stage, you bring comfort to the families during funerals. I see Mike Linnington, retired general, in the audience. Thank you, Mike, for the support for many years.

I have my wife also, who I have been married and we just celebrated our 39th anniversary. Honey, thank you for everything you have done. I hope we have another 39 years. (Applause)

The people in the audience know who have worn the uniform that your families serve also. They deal with the hardships, they deal with the challenges, they deal with the loneliness, and they deal with the stress and the fear.

I know I was concerned when my son decided he was going to join the Marines. I am sure many people in this audience who have served had family members come and say, "Hey, Mom, hey, Dad, I want to wear the uniform and I want to serve the Nation." That is the greatest thing you can do.

I believe everybody should serve this Nation in some capacity. The VFW continues to serve. (Applause) I know it has been a long morning, but in my mind's eye, I feel that people I served with over those 40 years are still serving and some have made the final muster and have passed on. I remember the hard work, I remember the dedication, and I feel blessed that I was able to lead them in providing service to this country.

It has been an honor to deal with the people at the cemeteries, definitely at Arlington. I also have members of my staff manning a booth here at your convention, and I have more at work today.

The Arlington Cemetery is our Nation's Shrine. It is holy ground, and it has been hallowed by the service and the service interred there. You can't buy a plot at Arlington National Cemetery. You earn the right to be interred in Arlington National Cemetery. (Applause)

With that honor comes a responsibility, a tremendous responsibility I take personally, to make sure it is run properly, to make sure that families are

treated with respect and compassion. To make sure those grounds are truly maintained as a National Shrine.

So, when you do visit, and I know the VFW has, they are actively engaged. Many soldiers are and many families are. We have 3,000 ceremonies a year and over 4 million visitors a year, and yet we are still one of the most active cemeteries in the Nation.

There are a lot of moving parts, a lot of complexities. It is the type of work you only get one chance to do it right, and there are no do-overs and no second chances when it comes to what we do at the National Arlington Cemetery. I am honored and I am thankful, and I accept the award on behalf of the people that I have been proud to lead and serve. God Bless the United States, and may he always protect our troops in the field. (Applause)

#### PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF WILLIAM THIEN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is truly a privilege, and my honor to present our next guest with the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation in recognition of his many years of dedicated service to the VFW.

A former sailor, William A. "Bill" Thien served with the United States Navy from 1969-1974, and served five years in the Indiana National Guard. His many decorations include the Vietnam Service Medal with three stars, Vietnam Campaign Medal with 1960 bar, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Korea), National Defense Service Medal and several others from his service with the National Guard.

His participation and membership with the VFW began in 1971 after joining VFW Post 3281 in New Albany, Indiana, where he still maintains his Gold Legacy Life Membership.

Bill has served the VFW in many different capacities throughout his 44-year tenure. His many leadership positions include All American Post Commander, All State District Commander and All American State Commander. He has also held positions on numerous National Committees, including Vice Chairman of Citizenship Education and Community Service, and as Chairman of National Scholarship and Recognition.

Bill was elected Commander-in-Chief on July 24, 2013, at the VFW's 114th National Convention held in Louisville, Kentucky.

His tenure as Commander-in-Chief faced many challenges from fighting against the one percent COLA penalty and news of a secret VA waiting list scandal that rocked the VA system to a government paralysis that closed VA regional offices and paused military, VA disability and death assistance payments. But despite the challenges, Bill rolled up his sleeves and got to work.

He helped lead our organization's successful fight to repeal the one percent COLA penalty, spearheaded the VFW's demand for an outside investigation into the VA's procedures and subsequent demand for VA reform,



and pressured Washington bureaucrats to put aside their differences to ensure they fulfill their promises to the service members and veterans of our great country.

His loyalty and commitment to veterans and our organization's mission has been extraordinary, and his contributions will never be forgotten.

Please join me in honoring William A. "Bill" Thien with the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to William A. Bill Thien.

"In lasting appreciation and spirited recognition of his 44 years of exceptional and intrepid service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. As an involved and active member, his loyal and successful tenure has included leadership roles as an All American Post Commander, All State District Commander, All American State Commander, numerous National Committees, and culminated with his election to Commander-in-Chief.

"His energetic commitment and benevolent concern for America's veterans, service members and their families, combined with his faithful dedication to the VFW mission have rightly earned him the highest level of admiration and gratitude of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 21st day of July, 2015."

This has been signed by John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General.

#### RESPONSE BY PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THIEN

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THIEN: Anybody that knows me knows that it is a rare occasion that you catch me speechless. You are in for a treat today, so I am speechless.

Let me just say thank you for each and everything that each one of you do out there, because of your work in the trenches that does the important work of this organization at the Post level especially.

It is why folks like me can get awards like this. I will wear this proudly with each and every one of you. Thank you so much. (Applause)

#### PRESENTATION OF THE JAMES E. VAN ZANDT CITIZENSHIP AWARD TO THE ARLINGTON LADIES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is my pleasure and honor to welcome our next guests and award recipients. While they may not be veterans themselves, they have dedicated years to honoring the lives of veterans and service members, and are ever-deserving of our next award.

The Arlington Ladies were first established in 1948 when the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and his wife noticed that at some military funeral services, only a military chaplain was present.

Believing all Airmen's lives needed to be honored, the Chief of Staff's wife and her friends started attending the services on a regular basis. The Army formed a similar group in 1973, with the Navy following in 1985, and the Coast Guard in 2006.

Today these four branches of the military all have Arlington Ladies, and one gentleman, dedicated to attending funeral services for service members and veterans. They are there to pay tribute to those who fought and gave their lives protecting our freedom by ensuring no hero is buried alone.

Further, they share in the grief and offer condolences to the next of kin on behalf of the military service chief, spouse and service family.

These dedicated volunteers make sure that no service member or veteran is alone when put to rest, often attending five services a day regardless of heat, rain or snow.

Ladies, we are so grateful for everything you do to honor the lives of every soldier, sailor, airman and Coast Guardsman. The VFW holds you in the highest regard.

Comrades, I present to you the recipients of the 2015 VFW James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award, a truly wonderful group, the Arlington Ladies.

Representing the Army, Margaret Mensch; representing the Navy, Paula McKinley; representing the Air Force, Jean Anderegg; representing the Coast Guard, Maggi Paar. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award and citation awarded to Arlington Ladies.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation of their unwavering devotion to honor the lives of every veteran and service member by ensuring no soldier, sailor, airman or Coast Guardsman is alone when laid to rest.

"Their selfless efforts to pay tribute to those who gave their lives for our freedom has had a significant impact on the lives of countless veterans, service members and their families.

"The Arlington Ladies' unwavering commitment to those the VFW exists to serve aligns with each ideal, tradition and value of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, thus earning them our deepest respect and gratitude.

"IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 21st day of July, 2015. Approved by the National Council Administration."

It has been signed by John W. Stroud, Commander-in-Chief, and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General.

#### RESPONSES BY THE ARLINGTON LADIES

MS. MARGARET MENSCH: I will be brief. On behalf of the 63 dedicated volunteers in the Army, I want to thank the National Veterans of Foreign Wars for its wonderful acknowledgement. Thank you again. (Applause)

MS. PAULA MCKINLEY: Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Navy Arlington Ladies, I want to thank you very much for this tremendous honor, and I am talking about not just the award itself, but it is a tremendous honor for us to be able to be here among our American heroes. Thank you very much for your service and thank you for the award. (Applause)

MS. JEAN ANDEREGG: Thank you so much, members of the VFW, all of you out here, for this tremendous honor and this award. The Air Force ladies have been at Arlington since 1948. Gladys Vandenberg is a hero and she will be a hero for all of you.

We are just so honored to be able to serve our Airmen and our Air Force families for such a very long time. There have been 550 women, 27,000 or 28,000 services. We have lost track. Thank you so much. We are determined that every airman is laid to rest in honor and respected, and their families are thanked for their service and sacrifice. (Applause)

MS. MAGGI PAAR: On behalf of the Coast Guard Arlington Ladies, there are nine of us. I would like to thank you all for this honor. It is our honor to be present at Arlington for every burial, both service members and their dependents. I wish you all fair winds following seas. Semper Paratus. (Applause)

#### INTRODUCATION OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHAEL S. LINNINGTON, DIRECTOR OF THE DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is now my privilege to introduce the new Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, retired Lieutenant General Mike Linnington.

The General hails from New Jersey and is a 1980 graduate of West Point. His 33 years as an infantry officer had him stationed in California, Kansas, a divided Berlin, Kentucky, South Korea, and to the Pentagon at both Army and Joint Staff.

As a member of the 101st Airborne Division, he would command the 3rd Brigade Combat Team in both Afghanistan and Iraq. He would also be the Deputy Commanding General at Fort Benning, the Commandant of Cadets at West Point, and returned to Afghanistan with the International Security Assistance Force, and command the Army's Military District of Washington.

His final uniformed assignment would be as the military deputy to the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

He now leads the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency that was created for merging the three largest organizations that used to comprise the government's full accounting community.

His job is the same as his predecessor organizations, to recover, identify and return as many missing Americans as possible back home to their families.

But along with the mission challenges he inherits is the added challenge of successfully building one team from what used to be three teams that had unity of purpose but not a unity of command.

That the mission continues is what is important to the VFW, and that's why we are very glad he could join us in Pittsburgh today.

Comrades and Sisters, please welcome a member of VFW Post 5343 in Villas, New Jersey, the new Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, Mike Linnington. (Applause)

#### SPEECH BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHAEL LINNINGTON

LIEUTENANT GENERAL LINNINGTON: On April 17, 2013, as the Commander of the U.S. Army Military District of Washington, I presided over the funeral for Medal of Honor Recipient Lieutenant Colonel Don Faith at Arlington National Cemetery.

Attending the ceremony was Lieutenant Colonel Faith's daughter, Ms. Bobbie Broyles, and several family members and long-time friends. Lieutenant Colonel Faith was killed on December 2, 1950, by Communist forces in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir while he was in command of the 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division.

Like so many of his soldiers, Lieutenant Faith's remains were never found after the war. It would take decades until his remains were finally recovered from North Korea and identified.

In speaking with Mrs. Broyles, now 67 years young, she said she was only four years old when her father left for Japan and Korea, and although she was young she still remembers her father's laugh, the fact that he loved life and that he really loved the Army.

In the decades that followed the Korean War, thousands of remains of service members missing in action in Korea were recovered and returned home. In September 2004, some remains were excavated in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir by the Joint Prisoner of War Missing in Action Accounting Command, or J-PAC.

Among those remains were those of Lieutenant Colonel Faith. Once his remains were recovered, they were sent to J-PAC's laboratory on what is now Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam Military Base, Hawaii for identification. They confirmed his identity using DNA, dental anthropological and physical evidence.

Positive DNA matches came from samples donated by Lieutenant Faith's brother and daughter. It is because of Mrs. Bobbye Broyles, his daughter who I mentioned earlier, and hundreds before her and the hundreds after, that I am reminded of how important the mission is to recover our

service members from all that were there and all lands and bring them home to the families who are still missing and are awaiting answers.

Being a part of an organization responsible for this mission is a great honor, and I am pleased to be a part of it.

Commander Stroud, thank you for inviting me to speak at the VFW's 116th National Convention, and a special thanks to Bob Wallace with whom we would not have had such a collaborative and strong relationship as we do with the VFW especially over these last four years.

I would like to give a quick shout out to VFW Post 5343 of Villas, New Jersey, a few miles from the southern tip of New Jersey.

Post 5343 is dedicated in honor of Lieutenant Charles E. "Buddy" Lewis, and it is a place of fellowship, support, camaraderie and rest as all our VFW posts across the country.

The VFW in particular has been supportive of our continuing efforts on every major front within the Department of Defense, but in the POW/MIA space your unconditional and instrumental support in garnering the resources we need to be successful, both today and the years to come. It is especially noteworthy.

You also hold us accountable for resolving the fate of thousands of missing service members in past conflicts. It is an accounting I welcome. That's why I am here today to inform you of our current state of affairs, our ongoing initiatives, and the focus of the Department's efforts going forward.

As many of you know, and as Commander Stroud mentioned earlier, last spring Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel directed the reorganization and consolidation of the past conflict accounting effort in the Department of Defense.

In January this year, the Defense POW/MIA Personnel Office located in Washington, D.C., the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command in Hawaii, and the Air Force Life Science Equipment Lab at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base were combined into one organization, called the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, or DPAA. You know we love acronyms in the DoD.

Since that time our new defense agency has operated under a single chain of command and it has been held by a single director, Vice Admiral Mike Franklin, who was brought in as the interim director to start our reorganization in January and has since been assigned to Stuttgart, Germany. I am privileged to have been selected by Secretary of Defense Ash Carter as the first permanent director of DPAA.

I was announced just days after I retired from the Army after 35 years on active duty at the end of June, and started to work the very next day.

Including my 35 years in uniform, I view my current duties as the greatest and most important mission for which I have ever been assigned. To be responsible for researching, investigating, finding and accounting for men and women from across our country who fought our Nation's wars and never came home to their loved one is the greatest responsibility I have ever been given.

As a soldier, I, like all my fellow soldiers, learned respect and lived by the Soldier's Creed. The Soldier's Creed has 13 lines, and all of those lines are important, but one line in particular is internalized by soldiers and other service members of all ranks and carried out on battlefields around the world. It says, "I will never leave a fallen comrade." That's what this mission and that's what the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's mission is all about. I am ready to pursue that mission vigorously on your behalf, on behalf of all the families who patiently wait for answers and on behalf of all our American citizens.

As we reorganize our accounting effort, I want to assure you of two things that will not change. One, and that is our mission, and second, that is our values.

Our mission, as Commander-in-Chief Stroud said, is to provide the fullest possible accounting for our mission personnel, to their families and the Nation. My first priority for everyone in our agency, which I have reiterated, over my first three weeks on the job is that as we work our way to reorganization, we will maintain a constant and consistent focus on our mission and on our ongoing operations and to ensure nothing we do as part of our reorganization disrupts what we are currently doing.

Our values are straightforward, but reinforcing those values serve to keep our compass steady. Our first value is compassion. We conduct our accounting mission and affect all communications with compassion and empathy.

The second value is integrity. We live our lives and conduct our operations with truthfulness and objectivity. We will also tell the truth.

Third is teamwork that is important. We partner with family organizations, veterans organizations like the VFW, public and private entities, foreign governments and academia to achieve our mission.

Fourth is respect. We always demonstrate the utmost regard for one another, our partners, our veterans and our missing service members and their families.

Our last value is innovation. We will apply fresh thinking and continuously improve in everything we do.

Before I talk about a few of our initiatives, I want to give everyone an update on current operations and events taking place over the next few months.

First, as I mentioned, we will continue our focus on continuing operations worldwide. In that regard, I am pleased to report we currently have teams on the deployment recovering service members in the Solomon Island, Germany, Tarawa and Papua, New Guinea.

Teams have recently returned from Vietnam, Laos and Pulau. Next week we will be sending eight more teams to Vietnam to conduct operations there, and additional teams will be deployed to Italy, Poland, Malaysia, China and Germany later this summer to conduct investigations and recoveries.

Our summertime is our busiest time, as it should be. Earlier this year, VFW Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki and Washington Office

Executive Director Bob Wallace traveled to Thailand, Vietnam and Laos to gain firsthand knowledge of our operations there and while we were deployed.

During that time they visited recovery sites in Vietnam, which are a team of military-civilian professionals greatly appreciated. They shared their trip report with me, and I am impressed by the level of commitment and expertise on the issues as this visit is an annual objective of the VFW.

The end of this month, on July 27th, less than a week from today, we will dedicate our new operations facility in Hawaii. The center named after Senator Daniel Inouye, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency Center of Excellence is an 85,136,000 square foot, three-floor facility lab that has been in the works since its location was selected on the Hickam Air Force Base in October 2005.

I visited this facility earlier this month and it is a beautiful and fitting tribute to the mission that is conducted there. It is designed to honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice while also noting an appropriate and necessary sense of purpose.

Please join us if you are ever in the area of our new facility in Hawaii and want to see the important work we conduct every day.

Coming up in September, the United States National POW/MIA Recognition Day is observed on the third Friday of September of each year. This year on September 18th.

This year many Americans across the United States pause to remember the service and sacrifice of those who were prisoners of war as well as those who are still missing in action and their families.

National POW/MIA Recognition Day posters will be displayed at VFW halls and college and university campuses, and public buildings across the country. Please visit our website if you would like to order a POW/MIA poster for this year's POW/MIA remembrance event.

We also have regularly scheduled family update events to family members of our missing. Next month, DPAA will host the annual Korean War and Cold War, and POW/MIA annual government briefing in Arlington, Virginia, on August 13th and 14th.

We will also be conducting family updates in several locations across the country. The next one is Norfolk, Virginia, in September, and seven more scheduled next year.

In addition to our emphasis of continuing the investigation and recovery operations, as well as interacting with family members, I have several other priorities from the agency which include completing our reorganization by the end of this year, beginning the hard work of streamlining and modernizing the way we maintain and share information, improving communications with families of our missing personnel, family support groups, veterans service organizations like the VFW and others. And finally, expanding partnership efforts with external organizations in order to rapidly expand our capabilities.

I would like to touch for just a few seconds on each of those. First, our reorganization effort is ongoing and moving ahead with great urgency. We have released our new chart, our new organizational structure, and we will align our resource and analysis operations in a regional area focus similar to what our combatant commanders have been doing successfully for many years.

Our team in Hawaii will focus on the Asian Pacific, and our team in D.C. will focus on Europe and the Mediterranean.

Second, to better share information, we will focus on the development of a web-based collaborative list of the missing and a family friendly case management system. The single list is complete and is going to internal review in coordination with other stakeholders across the DoD.

Our case management system is still in development and is a work in progress. It represents the future of how we will perform our mission, from the hard work done in the archives to the work that is done in the field and the identification work that is done in our lab.

Right now we are investigating the foundational elements of this system. As you might imagine, with regular intrusion attempts into government web-based tools, developing a complete yet secure software system will not be easy, but we are committed to getting it right. As we continue to work on our web-based interface with the public, we are also striving to enhance our internal communications.

We are on a great path to improving communications with family members, family service organizations, veteran organizations like the VFW, and Americans at large.

My final priority for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency is to develop strategic partnerships. It is another area where the Secretary of Defense and our Congress told us to focus and expand our efforts. Such partnerships are not meant to replace government work, but rather to greatly increase our capacity and capabilities to carry out our mission worldwide while permitting federal agencies partner Nation, nonprofit and even private organizations to help us in our accounting efforts.

A number of the department's successes in finding the remains of our missing personnel from past conflicts have come from private citizens, private groups and nongovernmental organizations. I applaud these groups and am eternally grateful for their help. We want to expand collaboration with private researchers, to large nongovernment organizations, to universities and foreign government agencies.

Our partnerships will be established by a voluntary non-contractual and contractual partnerships and agreements, voluntary work agreements, grants and collaborative agreements, and all of these efforts will be overseen by government officials.

Potential partner organizations will undergo a thorough screening and validation process. Why is this important? It is important because recovery operations and investigation teams are limited resources and partnering will allow us to expand our capability in searching for European World War II losses,



which will free up capability and capacity in our organic teams to continue to pursue recoveries in Southeast Asia.

Finally, where can we use the VFW's help?

As part of our partnering efforts, we continue to seek out ideas on how to improve our operations and research, collaboration with analysts, ways to link with our veterans and ways to work and move forward together.

Please invite me to your future events and I will do my best to be there. We especially appreciate strong relationships and strong support with all of our other veterans' service organizations. The VFW does, however, stand out in that regard.

Bob Wallace, VFW Executive Director of the Washington Office, regularly meets with me and other DoD senior officials on POW/MIA efforts. The VFW is also directly engaged with other nations and their veterans groups who urge their cooperation and assistance to obtain information about missing Americans.

The VFW National Officers make annual trips to Asia and European countries where they meet with senior host country officials to stress the importance of conducting investigation and recovery operations, as well as gaining access to documents, archives and witnesses to American losses.

You are the only veterans service organization to be throughout Southeast Asia every year since 1991. Russia has been since 2004, and China for the past few years. I offer a round of applause on your behalf. (Applause)

Building relationships with foreign countries greatly help our collective mission by opening doors that might otherwise have been left slightly ajar if not completely shut. Hosting veterans foreign organizations delegations at your National Conventions and other events also helps show how America honors and takes care of its heroes.

In closing, I share with you our challenge about crucial reorganization as well as our priorities as we focus our efforts in the coming months. As a new agency continues to revolve, please know that we remain dedicated to this mission, the families, the veterans and our Nation. Our mission has not changed and it will not change. In my guidance as the new director, I have not been given a mission end date. I've been told to continue our mission unabated and provide answers to families to the absolute best of our Nation's abilities.

I am grateful to the VFW for your consistently steadfast and stalwart support to our POW/MIA Accounting Mission. You will continue to be one of our most valuable partners, and I look forward to our continuing cooperative efforts.

Commander-in-Chief Stroud, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you, my comrades and your members today. I can only see our longstanding partnership getting stronger in the years to come. Thank you, and Army strong, Hooah. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Certainly, the remarks that the General made were so pointed and filled with a lot of good

information about the VFW's stalwart position that we will account for everyone and no one will be left behind. (Applause)

At this time it is my duty, because our Chief is gone, our special guest is on the way and will be here very shortly. So, let's just be a little patient. Some arrangements have to be made, of course, and we certainly will welcome him. I hope that everyone is seated comfortably and that you are ready to give him a rousing VFW appreciation, and listen to what he has to say to enlighten us on the events of the day and the events to come in the future of our great Nation. So, we are going to leave you a few minutes to talk amongst yourselves. I will not give you a topic of discussion, but just be patient and we will be back to you in just a moment or two. Thank you.

(Recess.)

#### INTRODUCTION OF PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It is now my honor and privilege to introduce someone who is no stranger to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

He served in his State Senate for eight years before becoming a United States Senator from the Prairie state of Illinois in 2004.

He would become a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and co-sponsored a number of VFW-supported legislation, like the post-9/11 GI Bill and the Traumatic Injury Insurance Supplement for seriously wounded Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

He would attend the VFW Washington Office Legislative Conference reception, speak at our National Convention for two years in a row as a candidate for our Nation's highest office, then again in 2009 and 2012 after he got the job.

As president, he would sign into law advanced appropriations for the VA, a New Stolen Valor Act, the Veterans Choice Act, a New VFW Charter, and provide every VFW National Commander an opportunity to meet privately with him to discuss the issues that are important to all veterans, service members and their families.

Comrades, Sisters and distinguished guests, please welcome the 44th President of the United States of America, Barack Obama. (Applause)

#### SPEECH BY PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Thank you. (Applause) Thank you so much. Thank you. Please, please have a seat. Hello, VFW! (Applause)

Thank you, Commander Stroud. John, as you complete your tenure, we want to thank you for your service to the Air Force, to the VFW, and to our Nation. And I look forward to working with your next Commander, John

Biedrzycki, a proud Army veteran, and, as always, your outstanding Executive Director and Vietnam vet, Bob Wallace, who's doing a great job. (Applause)

I ask you all to join me in saluting Ladies Auxiliary President, Ann Panteleakos; your next president, Francisca Guilford; and everybody in the Ladies Auxiliary, because our military families serve right alongside those in uniform.

I want to acknowledge Mayor Bill Peduto, our host here in Pittsburgh; County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, and the people of Pittsburgh, who are hosting us in their beautiful city. And I'm pleased to be joined by our Secretary of Veterans Affairs, who you just heard from, Bob McDonald. (Applause)

Like a true Army Airborne Ranger, Bob is tireless. Like the outstanding business leader that he is, he's bringing new reforms to the VA. At one press conference, Bob even gave out his personal cell phone number. Call him anytime, he said. I think he got some calls. On behalf of all of us, I want to thank you, Bob, for your outstanding service. (Applause)

So it is a great honor to be back with the VFW. And I want to start with the simple message, thank you. As so many of you remember, there was a time, back during the draft, when virtually every American had, at some point, a loved one or a friend in the military.

Today, it's an all-volunteer force. So a lot of folks don't always have direct contact with our troops and with our veterans. One of the great privileges of my office is that I do. And that's why, as President, I consider it my obligation to help make sure that, even though less than one percent of Americans wear the uniform, that 100 percent of Americans honor your sacrifices and your service.

As we mark the 70th anniversary of the second end of the -- or the end of the Second World War, I want to offer a special salute to all of our World War II veterans. (Applause) As communities across our country continue to mark 50 years since the Vietnam War, we say once more, welcome to all our Vietnam vets. (Applause)

As I think you heard this morning, we have a new POW/MIA agency, new leadership. We're building stronger partnerships with veterans' groups like the VFW. Because bringing home Americans taken prisoner or who've gone missing is a sacred mission, and we are stepping up our efforts for all wars, to never leave a fallen comrade behind, ever.

The VFW, when I took office, you were the very first veterans' convention I addressed, and I talked with you about how we needed a new vision of American leadership in the world. For too long, there had been a mindset where the first instinct when facing a challenge in the world was to send in our military, and we have the greatest military in human history.

But we learned, painfully, where that kind of thinking can lead, that rushing into war without thinking through the consequences, and going it alone without broad international support, getting drawn into unnecessary conflicts and spreading our military too thin actually too often would play into the hands of our enemies. That's what they wanted us to do.

And who paid the price? Our men and women in uniform. Our wounded warriors. Our fallen heroes who never came home. Their families, who carry that loss forever.

And so I said then that our brave troops and their families deserve better. We cannot expect our military to bear the entire burden of our national security alone. Everybody has to support our national security.

And so today, we're pursuing a new kind of leadership, a smarter, broader vision of American strength, one that relies not only on our outstanding military, but on all elements of our national power. And that starts with the recognition that our strength in the world depends on our economic strength here at home. And as Americans, we can be proud of the progress we've achieved together. We've now seen more than five straight years of private sector job growth, nearly 13 million new jobs, which is the longest streak on record.

The unemployment rate is near the lowest level in seven years. American manufacturing, our auto industry are booming. Our exports "Made in America" have been at record levels. And wages for American workers are finally rising.

The stock market has more than doubled, which has restored 401(k)s for millions of Americans. More than 16 million Americans have gained quality, affordable health care who didn't have it before. We are producing more American energy here at home, which is reducing our dependence on foreign oil. And we've done all this while we've cut the deficit by two-thirds. So that's progress, that's strength, and that's American leadership. That serves as the foundation for our national security.

Real leadership also means using our power wisely, especially our military. That's why we refocused our fight in Afghanistan, pushed back the Taliban, trained up Afghan forces so they could take the lead for their own security. Today we can say that our combat mission in Afghanistan is over. We brought America's longest war to a responsible end. And we salute every member of this 9/11 generation who has sacrificed to keep us safe. (Applause)

As Commander-in-Chief, my greatest responsibility is ensuring the security of the United States in what is still a dangerous world. That means keeping our military strong. Yes, our Armed Forces are drawing down after two major wars, but some of the reckless budget cuts, under the name of sequestration, that's going on in Washington right now, that's not the way to keep our Armed Forces ready, or to take care of our troops and their families. Or to keep America strong with the education and infrastructure and research and development that we need to thrive. These mindless cuts have to end.

There are two ways forward right now. On the one hand, we can keep this sequester, trying to fund our military with gimmicks, shortchange national security programs like counterterrorism, increase risk to our troops. I have got to be honest, that's what the Republican budget does. But I've got a better idea, which is to end sequestration, increase the defense budget, and invest in America's strengths. And I'm calling on Republican leaders in Congress to come

to the table with Democrats, sit down, negotiate a budget that protects our national security and our economic security

We shouldn't be playing partisan politics when it comes to national security. There's no good reason we can't get it done, and I've said I will veto any budget that locks in the sequester. It is not good for our country.

Now, every ally and every adversary needs to know around the world the United States has and will continue to have the strongest, most capable fighting force the world has ever known. No one can match our Army, the greatest land force on Earth. Nobody can match our Navy, the largest and most advanced battle fleet in the world. Or our Coast Guard, safeguarding our shores and ports. Nobody can match our Air Force, its reach and precision are unequalled. Nobody can match our Marine Corps, the world's only global expeditionary force. Nobody can match our Special Operations Forces, our remarkable, quiet professionals. (Applause)

And I've shown I will not hesitate to use force to protect our Nation, including from the threat of terrorism. Thanks to the skill of our military and counterintelligence professionals, we've struck major blows against those who threaten us. Osama bin Laden is gone. Anwar Awlaki, a leader of the al Qaeda affiliate in Yemen, gone. Many of al Qaeda's deputies and their replacements, gone. Ahmed Abdi Godane, the leader of the al Qaeda affiliate in Somalia, gone. Abu Anas al-Libi, accused of bombing our embassies in Africa, captured. Ahmed Abu Khattalah, accused in the attack in Benghazi, captured. The list goes on. If you target Americans, you have no safe haven. We will defend our Nation. (Applause)

When threats emerge, real leadership means the United States rallies the world to action. We're stronger when we stand with allies and partners. No other nation in the world can match the alliances that we have. It's another source of our strength; it's a force-multiplier. And I want to take the opportunity to commend Prime Minister David Cameron and our great British allies and their friends, their recent decision to increase their defense spending to two percent. That's what every NATO ally should do. They've got to meet their commitments to our collective security so that we stand together.

When we stand together, things happen. Right now we've got a coalition of some 40 nations in Afghanistan. The war may be over that our ground troops fight, but that country is still dangerous. So we'll persevere in our new mission, which is training and assisting Afghan forces, remaining relentless in our counterterrorism operations against al Qaeda.

Likewise, we stand together, a coalition of some 60 nations, including Arab partners, in the fight against ISIL. I firmly believe that the United States should not be engaged in another major ground war in the Middle East. That's not good for our national security and it's not good for our military.

But what we can do and what we are doing is to pound ISIL from the air, more than 50,000 (5,000) air strikes so far, while training and supporting local forces on the ground in Iraq and Syria as they fight to push ISIL back.

Recent losses on the battlefield show that ISIL can be defeated. We're a long way from being finished. I've said this is a long campaign; it will take time. But have no doubt, we will degrade and ultimately destroy this barbaric terrorist organization. We've got the coalition and we've got right on our side, and it will happen. (Applause)

At the same time, we have to remain vigilant in protecting our homeland. Our law enforcement and Homeland Security professionals are tireless. They have arrested individuals across the country for attempting to join ISIL or for plotting terrorism. They've thwarted attacks; they've saved American lives.

We don't yet know all the details behind the attack in Chattanooga, but we do know that al Qaeda and ISIL have encouraged attacks on American soil, including against our service members. And this threat of lone wolves and small cells is hard to detect and prevent. So our entire government, along with state and local partners, we are going to keep doing everything in our power to protect the American people, including our men and women in uniform.

And we honor our five service members killed so senselessly in Chattanooga. We are grateful to the courageous police who stopped the rampage and saved lives. And we draw strength from yet another American community that has come together with an unmistakable message to those who would try to do us harm: We will not give in to fear. You cannot divide Americans. You can never change our way of life or the values of freedom and diversity that makes us Americans. (Applause)

Now, as we defend our Nation, real leadership also means something else, having the courage to lead in a new direction, the wisdom to move beyond policies that haven't worked in the past, having the confidence to engage in smart, principled diplomacy that can lead to a better future.

That's what we're doing in Cuba, where the new chapter between our peoples will mean more opportunities for the Cuban people. Today, with our American embassy open in Havana for the first time in 50 years, we reaffirm that we will speak out for freedom and universal values around the world.

But we're not scared to engage. We also see the strength of American diplomacy in our comprehensive nuclear deal with Iran, because we must prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. And we're now engaged in an important debate, which is a good thing. We are a democracy. Unfortunately, you may have noticed there's already a lot of shaky information out there. So even as I make the case of why this is a critical deal to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, we're going to make sure the people know the facts. And here are some basic facts.

With this deal, we cut off every single one of Iran's pathways to a nuclear program. Iran is prohibited from pursuing a nuclear weapon, permanently. Without a deal, those paths remain open and Iran could move closer to a nuclear bomb. With this deal, we gain unprecedented access to Iran's nuclear facilities, and monitor them 24/7. Without a deal, we don't get

that. With this deal, if Iran cheats, sanctions snap back on. Without a deal, the sanctions unravel.

With this deal, we have a chance to resolve the challenge of Iran trying to get a nuclear weapon, peacefully. Without it, we risk yet another conflict in the Middle East.

Now, if Iran tries to get a bomb despite this agreement, 10 years from now, or 20 years from now, the American President will be in a stronger position to take whatever additional steps are necessary, including any option of military action, to prevent that from happening. And those are the facts. That's the choice. And for the sake of our national security and the sake of future generations, we need to make the right choice on this critical issue.

And I also want to make a broader point. In the debate over this deal, we're hearing the echoes of some of the same policies and mindset that failed us in the past. Some of the same politicians and pundits that are so quick to reject the possibility of a diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear program are the same folks who were so quick to go to war in Iraq, and said it would take a few months. And we know the consequences of that choice and what it cost us in blood and treasure.

So I believe there's a smarter, more responsible way to protect our national security, and that is what we are doing. Instead of dismissing the rest of the world and going it alone, we've done the hard and patient work of uniting the international community to meet a common threat.

Instead of chest-beating that rejects even the idea of talking to our adversaries, which sometimes sounds good in sound bites, but accomplishes nothing, we're seeing that strong and principled diplomacy can give hope of actually resolving a problem peacefully.

Instead of rushing into another conflict, I believe that sending our sons and daughters into harm's way must always be a last resort, and that before we put their lives on the line, we should exhaust every alternative. That's what we owe our troops. That is strength and that is American leadership. (Applause)

Of course, even with this deal, we'll continue to have serious differences with the Iranian government, its support of terrorism, proxies that destabilize the Middle East. So we can't let them off the hook. Our sanctions for Iran's support for terrorism and its ballistic missile program and its human rights violations, those sanctions will remain in place. And we will stand with allies and partners, including Israel, to oppose Iran's dangerous behavior.

And we are not going to relent until we bring home our Americans who are unjustly detained in Iran. Journalist Jason Rezaian should be released. Pastor Saeed Abedini should be released. Amir Hekmati, a former sergeant in the U.S. Marine Corps, should be released. (Applause) Iran needs to help us find Robert Levinson. These Americans need to be back home with their families. (Applause)

There's one more aspect of American leadership I want to discuss because, even more than sending Americans to war, real strength is measured by how we take care of our veterans when you come home. VFW, working

together, we've made real progress. We've won historic increases in veterans funding. We've made VA benefits available to more than two million veterans who didn't have them before, including more Vietnam vets exposed to Agent Orange. That was a commitment I made when I ran for office; we're keeping that commitment.

We're devoting unprecedented resources for mental health care. We've helped more than 1.4 million veterans and their families pursue their education under the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill. We've reduced the number of homeless veterans by about a third. We're helping more veterans and military spouses find good civilian jobs. And the veterans' unemployment rate continues to go down, it's now lower than the national average. And that's all good news.

When problems arise, we work to fix them. Here in Pittsburgh, an outbreak of Legionnaire's disease at the VA a few years ago killed six veterans and infected others. That was a tragedy, and whenever there are any missteps, there is no excuse. So our hearts go out to the families of those who lost loved ones. And know that there is new leadership now at the Pittsburgh VA. The safety measures now in place are some of the strongest in the nation, and patient safety is a top priority at VA hospitals, because we have to prevent anything like that from ever happening again. (Applause)

Last year, of course, the full magnitude of broader problems also came to light, long wait times, veterans denied care, some people inexcusably cooking the books. It was unacceptable. And I made it clear I wanted those problems fixed. I brought in Bob McDonald, and I went down to the Phoenix VA to see and hear for myself. I know Bob gave you an update earlier.

The VA reached out to vets across the country to get them off those wait lists and in for care. Bob is bringing energetic new leadership. He is working to hold people accountable and make sure the whistleblowers are protected instead of punished.

With the new resources of the Choice Act, the VA has hired thousands of new physicians, nurses, and staff. They're opening more clinics. So to all the veterans who spoke up, I want you to know we heard you, we changed the rule. Now, if it takes you more than 40 miles to drive to a VA facility, we'll help you go to a doctor outside of the VA. (Applause)

Today the VA is handling million more appointments, inside and outside the VA, and delivering more care. On average, veterans are waiting just a few days for an appointment. And that's all good news. Veterans continue to tell us that once they get through the doors, the care is often very good.

A lot of folks across the VA, many of them veterans themselves, work hard every single day to do right by our veterans, and we thank them. But we've got to acknowledge our work is not done, we still have a big challenge. Even with all these new resources, the VA is still struggling to keep up with the surge of veterans who are seeking care.



The fact is, our veterans are getting older. With the end of the most recent wars, more veterans are now coming home. Our veterans are seeking more care. Our veterans are getting the new lifesaving treatment for Hepatitis C. You put it all together, and in some places, wait times are higher than they were last year.

So I want you to know, I'm still not satisfied, Bob is still not satisfied. We are focused on this at the highest levels. We are not going to let up. And we're going to keep pushing forward on the five priorities of our veterans' agenda.

Number one, we're going to keep fighting for the resources you need. To help deal with this surge, we've sent an urgent request to Congress: Give the VA more flexibility so it can move funds to where they're needed most right now. (Applause)

I'm calling on Congress to approve this request, quickly, this month. Our vets need it and our hospitals need it. And let me just add, we've protected VA funding from sequestration in the past, and I've proposed another increase in veterans funding for next year.

And I would point out that the Republican budget falls short, and it's another reminder that the best way to protect VA funding going forward, and, VFW, we need you to keep raising your voice on this, is to get rid of sequestration for good. That's how we're going to make sure that our veterans have the resources they need.

Number two, we're going to keep fighting to make sure you actually get the health care you've been promised. We'll keep improving care for our growing number of proud women veterans. We've got to make good on the promise of the Clay Hunt Act, improving care for veterans with post-traumatic stress, increasing outreach and peer support, and recruiting more psychiatrists and mental health counselors. We've got to make sure veterans who are already struggling don't fall through the cracks.

And we've also got to end the stigma and shame around mental health once and for all. And every American can help by learning the five signs that someone may be hurting so we can all reach out. Our troops and veterans were there for us. We need to be there for them 100 percent. We've all got a role to play.

Number three, we're going to keep cutting the disability claims backlog. I can report that since its peak two years ago, we've now cut the backlog by 80 percent -- by 80 percent. And we're going to keep bringing it down. Instead of all that paper, the VA is now handling almost all your disability claims electronically.

And by the way, the accuracy of claims is up as well. But I know that it still has taken too long to get a final answer on your appeals. So one of our next missions has to be fundamental reform of the claims appeals process so that it works for you, our veterans, and you can actually get answers faster -- final answers faster. We've recruited some of the best talent from Silicon Valley and the private sector. We're going to put them on the case.

Number four, we'll keep fighting to uphold the dignity of every veteran, and that includes ending veterans' homelessness. As part of their Joining Forces Initiative. Michelle and Jill Biden are helping to lead the charge. They've teamed up with hundreds of elected officials, governors, mayors, local leaders.

New Orleans and Houston have become the first cities to effectively end veterans' homelessness. They deserve their congratulations for that. We're seeing major progress in cities like Salt Lake City and Louisville. So this has become a national movement. And we stand by our pledge: We are going to keep at it until every veteran who has fought for America has a place to call home in America. (Applause)

And finally, we're going to keep fighting to give our troops and veterans every chance to enjoy the American Dream you helped defend. Now, there's already a law to protect our troops and military families against unscrupulous predatory lenders. But I have to tell you some of the worst abusers, like payday lenders, are exploiting loopholes to trap our troops in a vicious cycle of crushing debt. So today, we're taking a new step. The Defense Department is closing those loopholes so we can protect our men and women in uniform from predatory lenders. It is the right thing to do. (Applause)

And since today also marks five years since I signed historic Wall Street reform into law, let me say I will not accept any efforts to roll back this law or its strong protections for our economy and the American people, including our military families.

And we're going to keep helping our newest veterans transition to civilian life. All 50 states have now taken steps to recognize the skills of our veterans when issuing civilian credentials and licenses. So we've got to make sure these laws are working so our veterans actually get those credentials. We'll keep helping our veterans and their families choose the school that's right for them under the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill, and that now includes the surviving spouses of our fallen heroes. (Applause)

In 43 states, veterans now pay in—state tuition. We're working to make sure that happens in all 50 states. I don't know what the other seven states think they're doing, we have got to go ahead and make that happen.

We'll keep partnering with communities that step up and welcome our veterans home with jobs and opportunities that are worthy of their skills. And as long as I'm President, I'm going to keep telling every business in America, if you want somebody to get the job done, hire a vet. (Applause) Hire a veteran, because they know what sacrifice means, and duty means, and responsibility means.

Let's do more nation—building here at home. That's part of our strength, part of our American leadership.

VFW, as I look around this auditorium, I see that the love of country and the devotion to duty spans the generations. That spirit endures in those who wear the uniform today. We saw that, once again, last week in Chattanooga.

Back in Massachusetts. Tom Sullivan cheered for his Boston teams. In battle, said a comrade, "Sully" "was just everything that a Marine should be." In two tours in Iraq, he earned a Combat Action Ribbon; for his wounds, two Purple Hearts. When he was warned that a gunman was there in Chattanooga, he ran in so that others could live. Today we echo the words of his community: Gunnery Sergeant Thomas J. Sullivan "was our hero and he will never be forgotten." "Thank you for protecting us." (Applause)

Growing up in Georgia, Skip Wells was a true servant leader, devoted to God and to his friends, quick to lend a hand or put you on his prayer list. During his hometown's Fourth of July parade, he was so proud to be a Marine that he went in his dress uniform. Just 21 years old, a year out of boot camp, easy going, always smiling, even during the hardest drills. A friend said, "Skip is the kind of kid you want on your team." As Americans, we are forever grateful that Lance Corporal Squire K. Wells was on our team.

As an Eagle Scout in Arkansas, David Wyatt would race up a mountain to be the first on top. He was determined to do his part for our country, found his calling in the Marines. He led with courage in Afghanistan and Iraq, and with compassion as a mentor to comrades with post-traumatic stress. It's said he was a "gentleman and a gentle man." And no one knew that better than his wife Lorri and their three young children. Today we see, as they did, why a friend would say that Staff Sergeant David A. Wyatt was "the kind of man this country needs more of."

Back home, Carson Holmquist was an embodiment of the spirit of Grantsburg, Wisconsin, population 1,300. He loved country music, loved to fish, to hunt, to play football. And he loved the Marines, showing up at his old high school in his dress blues. He, too, served in Afghanistan; was devoted to his family, his wife, Jasmine, and their three-year-old son. Said his old coach, Carson "always did the best he could." Today, our Nation is stronger because America saw the best of Sergeant Carson A. Holmquist.

And in his hometown in Ohio, Randall Smith is remembered as the high school baseball star with the fierce pitch. He was a fun and outgoing guy, the guy they said, you just wanted to be around. His buddies in the Navy knew it. He had just reenlisted, and his family knew it, too. His wife, Angie, who he liked to call "the most beautiful woman in the world," and their young daughters, who he called his "little princesses." Today, we join the people of Paulding, Ohio, including VFW Post 587, with five flags flying in honor of Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Randall S. Smith.

VFW, our Nation endures because citizens like you put on the uniform and serve to keep us free. We endure because your families serve and stay strong on the home front. We endure because the freedoms and values you protected are now defended by a new generation, Americans just like our five patriots who gave their lives in Chattanooga. As a grateful Nation, we must stand up for them and honor them, now and forever.

God bless these American heroes. God bless all our troops and all of our veterans. God bless the United States of America. Thank you, VFW. (Applause)

(Whereupon, the convention was duly recessed at 1:00 o'clock p.m., to reconvene Wednesday, July 22nd, 2015, at 8:00 o'clock a.m.)

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THIRD BUSINESS SESSION  
WEDNESDAY MORNING, JULY 22, 2015

(The Third Business Session of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was called to order at 8:00 o'clock a.m. with Commander-in-Chief John Stroud presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will now reconvene the 116th VFW National Convention.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will please conduct the Opening Ceremonies.

SALUTE TO COLORS AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander—in—Chief. Comrades, please rise.

(Whereupon, Sergeant-at-Arms O'Brien led the Convention in the Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance.)

OPENING PRAYER

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade National Chaplain.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN COBB: Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we ask your blessing upon the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its work across our remarkable Nation. We gather this week at this Convention to not only learn what we are doing to support our veterans and their families, but also what we must do to continue as effective servants of our veterans, our God and our Nation with all our communities.

Teach us anew the importance of working together as a team with a common goal. Guide our thoughts and our decisions that we may effectively serve You, this Nation, and our fellow veterans upholding the legacy bequeathed to us by those who have led this organization in the past.

May we know the blessings of Your presence in our deliberations. All this we ask in the name of Lord God Almighty. Amen.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief your orders have been obeyed, Sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. Everyone please be seated. I would now like to call on Betty Gripp for the final report of the Credentials Committee.

## FINAL REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE GRIPP: Good morning. At the close of business at 4:00 p.m. yesterday, July 21st, 2015, the total delegates registering their credentials are: Total delegates, 13,166. Total Department Commanders, 44. Total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 26. National Officers, 51. This is for a grand total of 13,221. Total registered for the 116th National Convention, 2,254.

Commander-in-Chief, this is my final credentials report and it has been an honor to serve with you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Thank you, Betty, for your usual tremendous work. We look forward to seeing you next year. At this time I will call on the Adjutant General.

## INTRODUCTION OF SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Comrades, standing behind me are the elite, our VFW National Sergeants-at-Arms. I want to express my appreciation to this group of comrades we see annually at our National Convention and our Washington Conference. They are the first ones in the hall and among the last to leave. They work long hours in order to ensure the success of our national meetings.

These folks are strictly volunteers, so obviously, this is mostly a labor of love for them. I am sure that everyone recognizes what an outstanding job they do for the VFW.

It is now my privilege to introduce the National Sergeants-at-Arms.

Bryan O'Brien is a life member of Post 2394, in Melrose, Massachusetts. He has been a member of the Sergeants-at-Arms for 16 years. He is a Past All-State Post Commander, Past District Commander and Past County Council Commander. He is the Department of Massachusetts state surgeon for 2015-2016. In 1982, Bryan was named the VFW's National Young Veteran of the Year.

He is a member of the Massachusetts Policemen's Association and has worked for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation for 31 years as a senior controller and supervisor in Boston. He is simply an outstanding leader with ultimate character and integrity. Thank you, Bryan.

Gary Barringer has been a Sergeant for 20 years. He is a life member of the VFW, Military Order of the Cootie, DAV, Am Vets, VVA, NRA and the National Guard Association. He is also a member of the American Legion.

He is retired from the North Carolina National Guard after 34 years of service. Gary is also retired from Norfolk Southern Railroad after 22 years. Gary is the VAV's representative for the Department of North Carolina at the W.G. "Bill Hefner" VA Medical Center in Salisbury, North Carolina.

He is a Past Department Commander of North Carolina, and the State Sergeant-at-Arms. Plus, he has been the Quartermaster of Post 9134 in Rockwell, North Carolina, for over 30 years.

Gary is a member of the Rockwell Rural Fire Department where he is also a medical responder. He also works as a security guard part—time. Thank you, Comrade.

Joy Ausman has been a member of the Sergeant-at-Arms for 19 years and is a life member of Lewiston, Idaho, Post 10043 and Cloquet, Minnesota VFW Auxiliary to Post 3979. She is a Past District Commander and Quartermaster, and Past Post Commander. She is employed by Clearwater Paper Corporation as the Director of Health and Safety. Thank you, Joy.

Joe Schirmers is not here, but Joe has been a Sergeant for 53 years of service. (Applause) Keep Joe in mind. I think he has a health issue and had to stay home, so we will excuse him this year. For 53 years Joe has been with us. You might keep him in your thoughts and prayers.

Jim Galen has been a Sergeant for 14 years and is a life member of Post 6802 in Richmond, Michigan. He is a Past All-State Post Commander and a Past All-State Post Quartermaster. He served as the Post Quartermaster for 18 years. He is also a Past District 5 Commander. He retired after 30 years of service from General Motors. Thank you, Jim.

Lonnie Garza has been a Sergeant for 10 years and is a life member of Post 3413 in San Marcos, Texas. He earned All-American Post Commander honors four times and the National Recruiter Century Award 18 times.

Lonnie retired from the Army as an infantryman. He presently works for the National Guard's Company "C", First Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group, Camp Bullis. Thank you, Lonnie.

Keith MacDonald has been a Sergeant for 21 years and a life member of Post 2275 in El Cajon, California. He is retired from the United States Navy after 23-1/2 years as a Senior Chief Petty Officer. Keith is a Past All-American Post and Past All-American District Commander. Thank you for your service.

George Lott has been a Sergeant for five years, and is a life member and Past Commander of Lieutenant Robert A. Madden Post 10152 in Ogdensburg, New Jersey, and a Past New Jersey District 21 Commander.

He is an Army combat veteran and a former United States Army Drill Sergeant, and taught basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey.

George currently serves as the Department of New Jersey's Sergeant-at-Arms and has held that position for the last 25 years. George was employed as a police officer in Ogdensburg for 34 years and retired in 2008 as the Chief of Police. Thank you, George, for your service.

These are the comrades we depend on so much. Sometimes, we forget to express our gratitude, so at this time I want to publicly say "thank you" to each and every one of you. All of you do a superlative job for all of us.

I am proud of the professional way in which you always conduct yourselves and I am honored to have the opportunity to serve with you. On behalf of the entire organization, let me say once again, Sergeants, thank you for your service. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF LADIES AUXILIARY  
NATIONAL PRESIDENT ANN PANTELEAKOS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Now, I am extremely pleased that here to visit our convention today is a woman with whom I was proud to serve with during the past year.

Ann Panteleakos has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Ladies Auxiliary for many years and has left an incredible legacy for others to follow in years to come. I admire her deeply. She is a true compatriot and an outstanding leader. Please welcome a wonderful woman from Plainville, Connecticut, Ann Panteleakos, National President of the Ladies Auxiliary.

GREETINGS: LADIES AUXILIARY  
NATIONAL PRESIDENT ANN PANTELEAKOS

PRESIDENT PANTELEAKOS: Commander-in-Chief Stroud, National Officers and VFW members: It is a privilege for me to be with you this morning, and have this opportunity to greet you one more time as the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. (Applause)

My great thanks go to each and every one of you who helped make this year so amazing for me and for the members of the Ladies Auxiliary VFW.

Just as I am sure our Commander—in—Chief has seen, I have witnessed our incredible membership up close all year. You have done amazing things together. Together we have provided scholarships to students. Together we have helped provide aid and assistance to military personnel and their families. Together, we have reminded our communities that freedom is not free. We have so enjoyed doing all of this with our VFW counterparts.

I just want to give a special thanks to John Stroud's team. I want to thank you. When I came to our Departments, I was well received and you always made an effort to be at the visit or send a VFW representative. I want to thank you for that. We will continue to stand by the VFW now.

We can do even greater things. Thanks to your delegates for passing the change to our eligibility. We are looking forward to embracing all the family members who have served our country and all family members: I mean all the male family members of all the eligible veterans, not just the female veterans.

A lot of people think in order to be eligible for the Ladies Auxiliary you have to be a spouse. Well, I joined under my father, which now means my brother will be eligible to also join under my father.

VFW members, we ask you to go home and shake those family trees, because we want to see our membership grow. Thank you for that.

Commander-in-Chief, congratulations on a job well done. We have truly worked together this year on many important topics, and I am proud to have served with you this year.



John, a personal note. I could not have hand-picked a better Commander-in-Chief to serve with. (Applause) To all the VFW members in this room, I have been a member of this organization for 39 years. Yes, I joined when I was 2 (laughter). I have truly enjoyed working with each and every one of you, meeting you all, and I look forward to spending time with you in the many years to come.

I want to thank you so much for your service then and I want to thank you for your service now. May God bless you all, may God bless our troops, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you so much. (Applause)

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE VFW NATIONAL HOME REPRESENTATIVES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: One of the standout icons of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary is the VFW's National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan. The National Home is a profound example of veterans helping veterans.

This morning, we have with us the Home's terrific leaders, Board President Jim Mueller of Missouri, Executive Director Patrice Green, and most importantly, our 2015 Buddy Poppy Child, Zane Kemp, who resides in the Pennsylvania house.

Once again, in keeping with one of our great time—honored VFW traditions, our 2015 Buddy Poppy Child will circulate among all the generous comrades in the meeting room and “pass the hat” on behalf of the National Home. So, please, stick around and reach deep into your pockets. Your donation to such a worthy cause will help put a big smile on Zane's face this morning.

#### REMARKS BY VFW'S NATIONAL HOME FOR CHIDLREN PRESIDENT JIM MUELLER

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Good morning. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief, for inviting the National Home here today. It is an honor for me to serve as President of the VFW National Home Board, along with the Board of Trustees, during this special year, the 90th anniversary of the National Home.

The Board is made up of 12 elected Trustees who serve their National Home Districts, and there are five ex officio Trustees who include Adjutant General Hamilton, Quartermaster General Greene, and Commander-in-Chief John Stroud. We are all dedicated to the National Home, and I thank you for your expertise, your guidance and your leadership.

At this time we have a short video of pictures.

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

This year Commander-in-Chief Stroud and the President of the Ladies Auxiliary, Ann Panteleakos, took on a very special project for the National Home. These 90 years there have been many alumni in the Home who served in our Armed Forces, and who made the ultimate sacrifice. They joined together to present this beautiful bronze plaque for the tribute park. It reads, "In honor of all alumni who served in the United States military and the alumni who made the ultimate sacrifice." It is a fighting tribute. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Stroud.

We thank all of our VFW comrades for the good work being done at the VFW National Home for Children, for our veterans and their families. It is possible because of your dedication and support.

As members of the VFW and The Ladies Auxiliary, we can all be very proud of what we have achieved in the National Home these past 90 years. At this time, I would like to introduce the National Home Executive Director Patrice Greene. (Applause)

#### REMARKS BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PATRICE GREEN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREEN: Thank you, Jim. At the National Home, we appreciate Commander-in-Chief Stroud for his service to our veterans and to our country and his support and value at the National Home.

Thank you, Jim. This year the Home is celebrating its 90th year of caring for children and families of our Nation's veterans. That is a wonderful tribute to all of you. Without you, it wouldn't be possible.

For those of you who have yet to make the National Home, I really invite you to come during the extremely special 90th anniversary year.

At the National Home, we believe in and we educate our youth about patriotism and community service. We provide opportunities for the children and families to volunteer and to give back in honor of our veterans.

The National Home residents are regularly involved in a variety of volunteer activities, but in addition throughout this year in support of our Commander-in-Chief and our National President, and their special project, Operations Changing Lives, the children have been involved in several fundraising activities from craft sales to car washes, to bottle drives.

They have raised money so they can make their own personal donation.

I would like now to invite the 2015-2016 Buddy Poppy Child, Zane Kemp, to join me and Commander-in-Chief Stroud.

Commander-in-Chief Stroud, on behalf of all the children at the VFW Home, Zane would like to present you with a check for \$1,200.40 for Operation Changing Lives. (Applause)

Now, I would like to introduce to you formally our 2015-2016 VFW National Buddy Poppy Child, Zane Kemp, for his remarks.

#### REMARKS BY 2015 BUDDY POPPY CHILD ZANE KEMP

BUDDY POPPY CHILD KEMP: Good morning. My name is Zane Kemp, and I am 11 years old. I live at the National Home for Children in the Pennsylvania House. I live with my brother Zack, my sister Courtney, and my mother Robin.

I just passed the 5th Grade and on the student honor roll. I will be starting 6th Grade in the fall. I like baseball and enjoy fishing, camping, hiking and building forts. I will do anything outdoors.

My goal is to be Marine or a Navy Seal.

I am blessed to live at the National Home. I feel comfortable and safe there. I have my own room so I don't have to share it with my brother.

My father is working hard so we can buy a house of our own someday. There are tons of kids to play with and lots of room to ride my bike. I like to ride on the trails.

The cabin is big enough for me to fix things. We go on a lot of fun trips with other kids and families. I like it when the veterans come to visit us. My great-grandfather was in the Army and fought in the Philippines. He was with a 500 parachute regiment combat team in World War II.

My great-uncle, he was in the Army and served in Vietnam. My grandfather was a Marine and a member of the VFW. I am glad to have all three of them in my life.

I am proud to be this year's Buddy Poppy Child because I get the chance to tell you that we appreciate you for all that you do and your fight for freedom. Thank you very much. (Applause)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREEN: Lastly, but I hope not least, we hope that this brick in the walkway at the National Home will hold a special place in your heart. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: It certainly will, Patrice. Thank you so much. (Applause)

Now to announce the 2015 winners of the National Buddy Poppy Contest and Silent Auction Results, Kevin Jones, Director of Programs and Veterans and Military Support Programs.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS OF THE NATIONAL BUDDY POPPY CONTEST

COMRADE KEVIN JONES: The Buddy Poppy is, without question, one of the most recognizable symbols around the world. To VFW members, it symbolized the commemoration of our war dead and our service to living veterans.

For decades, VFW members have distributed the beloved Buddy Poppy to millions of Americans each year. Today we are taking a few moments to honor those who have taken Buddy Poppies to the next level.

These are individuals in Posts who have used our Buddy Poppies in the creation of inspirational and exceptional works of art and display.

The entries were judged by the National VFW Programs Committee members John Brenner, Karla Eaton, John Boardman, Kelly Goddard, and Charles Sutter, as well as Cheryl Sutter, and the 2014-2015 Ladies Auxiliary Veterans and Families Support Director, Leona McDermott, and that Program's 2015-2016 Ambassador, Laurie Dale.

The displays were judged on effectiveness, clarity of theme, suitability, originality, beauty and the number of poppies used.

Category 1 is for the public promotion of a poppy campaign.

Honorable mention goes to Ladies Auxiliary to the Lacy Kelly Post Number 3036, Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Third place, Ladies Auxiliary to the Tri-City Evergreen Post Number 2298, Dundee, Illinois.

Second place goes to Millstadt Post Number 7980 and Ladies Auxiliary, Millstadt, Illinois.

First place in Category 1 goes to Annapolis Post Number 304, Annapolis, Maryland.

Category 2 is for the use of poppies in a memorial or inspirational display.

Honorable mention goes to Lieutenant Harold R. Cornwell Post Number 1298 and Ladies Auxiliary, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Third place is Ladies Auxiliary to the MacKenzie-Webster Post Number 790, Barre, Vermont.

Second place goes to Bloomingdale Post Number 7539, Bloomingdale, Illinois.

The first place winner is Hugo Matejcek Post Number 3723 and Ladies Auxiliary, Owatonna, Minnesota. (Applause)

Category 3 is for the artistic or decorative use of poppies.

Honorable mention goes to Bob Milby Post Number 6450 in Oak Glen High School, Chester, West Virginia.

Third place is the Ladies Auxiliary to the Merrimack Post Number 8641, Merrimack, New Hampshire.

Second place is West St. Charles Post Number 3750, Luling, Louisiana. First place goes to the Kyle/Buda Post Number 12058 and Ladies Auxiliary, Kyle, Texas.

Category 4 is for using poppies in a memorial or inspirational display by a junior girls or sons of the VFW unit.

Honorable mention goes to the Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary and Foreign Service Post Number 1857, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Third place, Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the John J. Michaels Memorial Post 5207, Daleville, Pennsylvania.

Second places goes to Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the Robert R. Tuck Post Number 912, Baytown, Texas.

The first place winner is Junior Girls Unit Ladies Auxiliary to the Mechanicsburg Memorial Post Number 6704, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

The Director's Award is given to the Buddy Poppy display that, in the judges' opinion, most creatively and effectively represents the intent of the Buddy Poppy Program. This year's recipient of the Director's Award is Robert "Shane" Pugh Post Number 12124 and Ladies Auxiliary, Meridian, Mississippi.

Comrade, this marks the 15th consecutive silent auction we have had at the Convention. This year 53 Departments donated items, many reflective of their home states and commonwealths. The purpose of the auction is to raise money for issues that are close to the hearts of the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary. And this year's recipient will be the VFW National Home for Children.

I am very proud to announce this year's auction garnered a total of \$8,210, and I am pleased to present this check to the 2015 Buddy Poppy Child Zane Kemp and Patrice Green from the VFW National Home for Children. (Applause)

#### INTRODUCTION OF MOC SUPREME COMMANDER DAVID WIMMER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: A trip to almost any VA hospital will reveal the importance of the work of the Military Order of the Cootie. Each year, the Cooties spend thousands of hours bringing comfort to our hospitalized veterans. Their commitment to "keep 'em smiling in beds of white" is a grand tribute to the service and sacrifice of all veterans.

Our next guest was elected Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie at the organization's 95th Supreme Scratch held in Louisville, Kentucky, last July.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States of America, David Wimmer, from the great state of New Mexico. (Applause)

#### REMARKS BY MOC SUPREME COMMANDER WIMMER

SUPREME COMMANDER WIMMER: Commander-in-Chief, thank you for letting me serve with you this year. We came up the chairs together, and he probably beat me again. But to go along with what the Chief said about hospital work, I just want to pass on a few numbers if you don't mind, Chief.

This is what we accomplished this year. I say "we", because it is all about us and not about one person. Our goal was \$3,118,000. That was what we strived for. We visited 324,810 patients. We drove over two million miles. We gave another million dollars in gifts, and, Chief, we ended the year shooting for that goal of \$3,118,000. We ended the year with \$5,119,000. I can't tell you how proud I am to stand up here and be able to give you those numbers.

There is one little thing I need to do. Will all the Cooties in the room stand up? These are the ones that made all this happen. (Applause)

Membership: I decided I might want to stand away from that subject, Chief. We ended the year at 94.3 percent. Along the line, we lost 19 Pup Tents

and two Grands, plus a pretty healthy number of deaths. It was pretty hard to make that up.

I am from the grand of New Mexico, which is over there, and I don't know if B.J. is here? One of the things being the Supreme Commander and coming from the Department of New Mexico, because I have told my Cooties all year long we are VFW first and that is the way we are going to live.

But I am extremely proud to know that in 2016 your Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief is not only from my Department, from my Post, he is from my Pup Tent. He is a life member. B.J., we are proud of you and thank you so much.

Along those lines, I really don't have a lot more I want to stress in what we did in the hospital to go along with what the Chief said. One more little note I will share with you is that in December, we went to the VFW National Home for Children for their Christmas party, and I was honored to present Patrice Green with a check from the Supreme Organization for their scholarship fund for \$150,000. (Applause)

Commander-in-Chief, other than that, it was a lousy year, but it is over. I want to thank all the comrades out there so much for the support, whether you are a Cootie or not a Cootie. We are all here for one thing and one goal, and I think between the Commander-in-Chief and my crew, we got that this year. So, Chief, we made it to the end. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I now call on the Adjutant General for introduction of the Past Commanders-in-Chief.

#### INTRODUCTION OF PAST COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: The following Past Commanders-in-Chief are attending this Convention. Thank you, Chief.

1976-1977, R.D. "Bulldog" Smith from Georgia.

1985-1986, John S. Staum from Minnesota.

1988-1989, Larry W. Rivers, Louisiana.

1989-1990, Walter G. Hogan from Wisconsin.

1991-1992, Robert E. Wallace, New Jersey.

1992-1993, John M. Carney, Florida.

1993-1994, George R. Cramer, Illinois.

1994-1995, Allen F. "Gunner" Kent from Arizona.

1995-1996, Paul A. Spera from Massachusetts.

1996-1997, James E. Nier from Texas.

1997-1998, John E. Moon from Ohio.

1999-2000, John W. Smart from New Hampshire.

2000-2001, John F. Gwizdak from Georgia.

2003-2004, Edward S. Banas, Sr. from Connecticut.

2004-2005, John Furgess from Tennessee.

2005-2006, James Mueller from Missouri.

2006-2007, Gary L. Kurpius from Alaska.

2007-2008, George J. Lisicki from New Jersey.  
2008-2009, Glen M. Gardner, Jr. from Texas.  
2009-2010, Thomas J. Tradewell from Wisconsin.  
2010-2011, Richard L. Eubank from Oregon.  
2011-2012, Richard L. DeNoyer from Massachusetts.  
2012-2013, that is me, John E. Hamilton, from Florida.  
2013-2014, William A. "Wild Bill" Thien from Indiana.  
Chief, thank you.

#### INTRODUCTION OF PRASAD REDDY, TWISTED X BOOTS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Over three decades ago, our next guest experienced first-hand the kindness, support and encouragement VFW members are so well known for. The VFW members who greeted him with a smile, congratulatory words and a copy of the Constitution after obtaining his citizenship left a lasting impression on him.

Now, as president and CEO of Twisted X Boots, Prasad Reddy is repaying their kindness and giving back to the VFW in support of our country's brave service members, veterans and their families.

Twisted X Boots uses the newest technology, stronger and lighter weight components, and newer and more consistent manufacturing techniques because they are dedicated to making the highest quality traditional and authentic cowboy, western and work boots.

Joining us on stage today, I am pleased to introduce Mr. Prasad Reddy, president and CEO of Twisted X Boots. Please give him a warm VFW welcome. (Applause)

#### PRESENTATION AND REMARKS BY PRASAD REDDY

MR. PRASAD REDDY: It is a true honor and pleasure to be here amongst all of you who are the true heroes of this great Nation. I am so honored to be a part of this.

In 1980, when I first got my citizenship, the first people that talked to me after I took the oath was the VFW members and gave me a flag of America, and with the flag they said, "Welcome to America."

They gave me a book of the Constitution. Since that day, it has been in my heart and I wanted to somehow help the organization. This year we are four sponsor, and we are doing this with the first promotion. We contributed \$52,691. Besides that, because I got a gift of the U.S. Constitution book, I decided I am going to distribute that to as many people as possible.

This month at Memorial Day and July 4th, we distributed 50,000 copies of the U.S. Constitution. (Applause)

Thank you very much for this honor, and it is a pleasure to be here. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: I want you to understand, he contacted us. We reach out and we are always trying to raise funds. He called us and said I want to give something back to the VFW. I want to do something for a country that gave me a chance. How good is that story? (Applause)

Some of our native people born in America can take a lesson from this guy. He gets it. So, if you need boots, which is going to be an ongoing relationship with boots, go to Twisted X Boots, go to Burger King for a whopper and others, and please support those people. (Applause)

#### NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL HOME TRUSTEES

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: I will now read the nominations for the National Home Board of Trustees.

There are three nominations for District 3 for 2015-2021 term, representing Delaware, District of Columbia and Pennsylvania.

Cortina Barnes has been a VFW National Home life member since December 1999. She is endorsed by the Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW Department of the District of Columbia.

Mark Newman has been a VFW National Home life member since March 2000. He is endorsed by the VFW Department of Delaware.

Ronald Stensland has been a VFW National Home life member since January 2001. He is endorsed by the VFW Department of Pennsylvania.

There are two nominations for District 4 for 2015-2021, representing Maryland, Ohio and West Virginia.

Merton "Sam" Compton has been a VFW National Home life member since February 1996. He is endorsed by the VFW Department of Ohio and the Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW Department of Ohio.

Carl F. Vogt has been a VFW National Home life member since August 2007. He is endorsed by the Department of Maryland.

#### PRESENTATION OF LEGION OF HONOR BRONZE MEDAL FROM THE CHAPEL OF FOUR CHAPLAINS

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: At this time we will have a presentation by Past National Chaplain Ted Bowers to Commander-in-Chief Stroud.

COMRADE TED BOWERS (Past National Chaplain): Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Comrades and Sisters:

On January 3rd, 1943, the U.S.A.T. Dorchester carrying troops left New York Harbor bound for Greenland. Just after midnight on February 3rd, an enemy submarine fired a torpedo that struck the Dorchester, destroying the electrical supply and releasing clouds of steam and ammonia gas.

Many on board died instantly, some were trapped below deck. The testimony of the survivors tells us that the fragment of hope during this chaos came from four chaplains who calmly guided everyone to the boat stations.



They opened the storage locker and distributed the life jackets. When the supply of life jackets was exhausted, the four chaplains either gave away or forced upon other young men their own life jackets.

As the Dorchester sank, the Chaplains gathered the men around them in prayer, and again they linked their arms together in brotherhood and with their heads bowed in prayer, they sang "Beneath the Waves." It was a heroic act and was especially significant because of the identity of these four young men, two Protestant ministers, a Catholic priest and a Jewish rabbi.

The Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia serves the memory of these brave men. It carries their message of interfaith, cooperation and selfless service to every part of our country, to recognize an encourage acts also of volunteerism, brotherhood and sacrifice among Americans of every age and station in life.

The Chapel established the Legion of Honor program. The Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion is awarded and given in recognition of exceptional selfless service on the part of an individual that contributes to the well-being of his or her community, to the well-being in national and world affairs, and to a spirit of interfaith cooperation.

It is my proud honor to present the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion Award to our Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, John W. Stroud. (Applause)

#### PRESENTATION OF 2014-2015 DEPARTMENT COMMANDERS GIFT TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: The 2014-2015 Department Commanders are now gathering here on the stage for a special presentation. Past Nevada State Commander David Sousa is the representative who will speak on their behalf.

COMRADE DAVID SOUSA (Department of Nevada): It is my honor to be serving with you this year. We had a great time as your "Dream Team." We want to present the Western Conference Pin which we have etched, and it is an honor for me to do it.

Then the next thing is, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, on behalf of everybody out there who enjoys themselves eating ice cream which they are here. My wife, Rita, and I decided we would do a little 50-50, and what we did, we wanted to make a donation to Operation Changing Lives, and I have a check for \$623 to present to you, Chief.

I really want to thank everybody for their support. We did it a dollar at a time. Thank you so much.

On behalf of all of the Departments, the Commanders of the "Dream Team," this is for you for all of your support, this .45 automatic pistol. It was from one of my member's father who passed away, and was a VFW Member. He is very honored to give that to you.

MOTION THAT PROCEEDINGS BE SUBMITTED  
TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: I move that the proceedings of the Veterans of Foreign Wars 116th National Convention be submitted to the Speaker of the House for printing as a House document in accordance with Public Law 620, of the 90th Congress, approved October 2, 1968, and entitled Title 44 United States Code, Section 1332.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I have a motion. Is there a second?

COMRADE JERRY NEWBERRY: Commander-in-Chief, I am Jerry Newberry from Post 2492, Department of Michigan, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have got a motion and it has been duly seconded that the Convention proceedings be submitted to the Speaker of the House. Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any discussion on the motion?

Hearing none, all in favor of the motion will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". The motion carries.

NOMINATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will now open nominations for Commander-in-Chief. Are there any nominations for Commander-in-Chief? I recognize microphone number 2.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Comrades, Sisters and Friends: I am Paul Spera, a delegate from North End Post 144 and a Past Commander-in-Chief.

I rise to place into nomination the name of an individual of whom we in the Eastern States Conference are extremely proud. Two years ago, we brought him to the Convention, presented him as our candidate for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

Last year, we repeated that to the Office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. I proudly stand here to tell you that John Biedrzycki far exceeded our expectations for leadership. Each of us in every part of our life come to an endeavor, and the question that we ask is what do you bring to the table? What do you bring, whether it is your family life or your professional life? What qualities do you bring that make you qualify for that position?

In our organization, we ask the same thing. What do you bring to the table? John Biedrzycki is a United States Army veteran. He served in the Republic of Korea thereby gaining his eligibility not only for the VFW but to run for this high office.

He has excelled at every level of our organization, from the Post to the County, to the District, to the All-American Department status he holds, and now up to the National stage.

What does he bring to the table? What makes him special? Why are we so proud of him in the Eastern Conference? Why is he our candidate for the job of Commander-in-Chief?

The answer to that question is in three words, three words that he used when he was the State Commander and three words that he would use now as our Commander-in-Chief: Loyalty, honor, service.

There is no doubt of his loyalty to his family, to his country and to this organization. There is no doubt of the honor that this man has carried through his life, through his career in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

There is absolutely no doubt that every single day he provides service, service to America's heroes, service to this organization, service to this wonderful Nation.

I am extremely proud and honored to be the individual to stand at this microphone to utter those words that will send him on his way to the next step in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It is my pleasure to place into nomination for the high office of Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, from the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, John Biedrzycki. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 2.

COMRADE ALLEN JONES (VFW Post 21-Pennsylvania): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Allen Jones, Past National Council Member, Past Department Commander of Pennsylvania, and a member of VFW Post 21. I am proud to second the nomination of John Biedrzycki for Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 2.

COMRADE ROBERT EILER (Department of Pennsylvania) Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Robert Eiler, a delegate from Post 8805. I am here to talk about "Big John". Big John and I have traveled over 100,000 miles throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In his travels, he is a people's person, a veteran's advocate. We would travel across the state and we would go through people's town and he would say I know somebody from this town. He would get on the phone and call them and congratulate them, and thank them for being a veteran. That showed in his All-American status. He worked tirelessly.

He instituted a program for the homeless in the state of Pennsylvania, a sock drive. You may laugh about that, but working with the homeless, we saw a need for fresh socks. They couldn't hock them, they would wear them not only on their feet, but wear them for gloves. He initiated that program.

The first year we acquired through our state midwinter conference over 50,000 pairs of socks to donate to the needy and the homeless, and the Veterans' Homes of Pennsylvania. That program is still in existence today. It is greatly needed.

I could go on and on, but at this time I would like Pennsylvania to stand. Every delegate from Pennsylvania, please stand. His proud grandson and daughter Max and Molly, on the stage, and, Bette Jean, I love you to death.

I am proud to second the nomination of John Biedrzycki as Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.  
(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Are there any other nominations for Commander-in-Chief? Any other nominations for Commander-in-Chief? Hearing none, I will recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE GLENN UMBERGER (Department of Pennsylvania): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Glenn Umberger, Jr., a delegate from Post 7155 and the State Commander of the Department of Pennsylvania. I make a motion that the nominations for Commander-in-Chief for the year 2015-2016 be closed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion. Is there a second? I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE RUTH FAIRCHILD (Department of Pennsylvania): Commander-in-Chief, I am Ruth Fairchild, Past Department Commander from the state of Pennsylvania and a member of Post 315, New Castle, Pennsylvania, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion and a second that nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for John A. Biedrzycki as Commander-in-Chief. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. Comrade Adjutant General, you will do your duty.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Thank you, sir. As the Adjutant General, I cast one unanimous ballot for John Biedrzycki as Commander-in-Chief, 2015-2016 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Comrades, I present to you the Commander-in-Chief-Elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, John A. Biedrzycki.

(Whereupon, a prolonged standing ovation was given at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Would you like to say a few words, Commander-in-Chief-Elect Biedrzycki?

#### REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BIEDRZYCKI

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BIEDRZYCKI: Well, I have to say my heartfelt gratitude to the delegates to the 116th National Convention for the honor and trust and the confidence you have placed in me. I want to congratulate our new Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect, Brian Duffy from Kentucky, and the new Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect, Keith Harman, from Ohio. It will be a great team.

The new VFW Auxiliary President, Francisca Guilford, will be from Alaska, and all the new line officers from all of the Departments, the Districts and our Post leadership.

You know, I would like to recognize a couple of individuals, it will only take a second. They have enriched my life and given me the spirit and strength to join and serve and commit myself to our nation's veterans, our service members and all their families, both past, present and, of course, the future.

I want to thank Past Commander-in-Chief John Stroud of Nevada. I want to thank Past Commander-in-Chief Bill Thien of Indiana for welcoming me aboard their teams.

To the officers and delegates of the Eastern States Conference, and the Past Chiefs, Rich DeNoyer, George Lisicki, Ed Banas, John Smart, Bob Wallace, and especially Cliff Olson and Paul Spera, who will be my installing officer. Thank you for your support, guidance and your friendship.

A special thanks to my Post, VFW Post 418 in McKees Rock, District 29, all the Pennsylvania officers, delegates, Past State Commanders and State Presidents.

I want to especially recognize Past State Commander Allen Jones, and Past State Commander and Past National Council member, Bob Eiler, for their guidance, their wisdom and their friendship.

You know, one thing about being elected Commander-in-Chief in your home town is your family doesn't have to travel too far. I would like to take this opportunity to show you how proud I am of my family and recognize them.

My younger brother, Paul, and his wife, Louise, came all the way from North Carolina. My youngest brother, David, and his guest, Kim. My son, John, his lovely wife, Beth, and Max and Molly. Happy birthday, Max.

To my partner in this journey of life, my partner, Bette Jean. Her unconditional love and support over the past 46 years of marriage is more than any man could ever deserve. It is one that I am smart enough to acknowledge, and I certainly appreciate.

Bette Jean is a Past State President and a Past National Council member from Pennsylvania. She truly is the "Wind Beneath my Wings."

Finally, to all of you, my comrades and sisters here and those watching online around the world, who I had the extraordinary opportunity to meet and spend time with during my travel these many years, thank you for your kindness, thank you for your courtesies, and thank you for allowing me to learn and share in your many activities that serve our Nation's Military service and veterans communities. Thank you very much.

Let's continue with the elections. I will lead the parade and I will be back shortly. (Applause)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief-Elect, it is an honor for the National Sergeants to escort you and your lovely wife, Bette Jean, and your son and children around the Hall as the next Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Mr. Maestro, the United States Army.

#### ELECTION OF SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will now open nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Is there any nomination for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK: Commander-in-Chief, officers, delegates to this Convention, I stand before you today as I did a year ago to bring to you an individual who has worked hard for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

He has been a VFW member for over 25 years. He has served his fellow veterans in the community in all levels of the VFW. The multiyear recipient of the Century Award for Recruiting 100 or more members in the VFW. As a Gold Life Legacy of Middletown, Kentucky, VFW Post 1170 since 1988, he eagerly dedicates his volunteer efforts to benefit our warriors, fellow veterans and their families.

His dedication and leadership goes to programs such as Wounded Warriors, Honor Flight and Habitat for Humanity has been recognized both locally and nationally.

His service is continuous. That is multi-eligibility. However, I want to talk about a little that is important. Our candidate's service and his concept is based on three words or three mottos: "One vision, one voice, one VFW."

The success and growth of the VFW depends on our ability to communicate our core vision and mission of our service, to warriors, veterans and the community.

Once they know our mission, they, too, will embrace the VFW's spirit of enthusiasm and service, a firm believer that dedicated people working together can accomplish anything.

I look forward, as he does, to earning your support and endorsement. I am John Gwizdak, Past Commander-in-Chief, a member of Post 5080, and a delegate from Lake City, Georgia.

At this time it is my honor to place in nomination for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Brian Duffy of the great state of Kentucky. (Applause)

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JACK CARNEY: I am Jack Carney, a delegate and Past Commander-in-Chief from Florida. It is a rare opportunity to come before this distinguished group to place in nomination a dedicated individual, a strong veterans advocate, a believer in the student outreach program and how important that is to the success of this organization.

Brian has worked hard and dedicated himself so many years, and he is certainly going to be pleased to join the Commander-in-Chief-Elect, the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect as a strong team to go forward in 2015-2016.

Now, he may not play hockey anymore, but he certainly is one that watches the results. You win some, you lose some, and in electing Brian Duffy as the next Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief you and I will win something. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Are there any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Any other nominations? Any other nominations? Hearing none, I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE RANDALL MCCOMAS (Department of Kentucky): I am, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Randall McComas, Commander of the Department of Kentucky, and a delegate to the Veterans of Foreign Wars from Post 6423 in Kentucky. I move that nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief be closed and the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for Brian Duffy for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the 2015-2016 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion. Is there a second? I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE CARL KAELIN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Carl Kaelin, Post 1170. I proudly second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have got a motion duly seconded that nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief be closed and the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for Brian J. Duffy for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. Comrade Adjutant General, perform your duty.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Yes, sir. Comrades, as Adjutant General, I cast one unanimous ballot for Brian Duffy as the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the year 2015-2016. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Comrades, you have elected Brian Duffy as Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Would you like to say a few words, Senior Vice Commander Duffy?

#### REMARKS BY SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ELECT DUFFY

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Please, Chief. Thank you, Comrades. And to Past Commander-in-Chief John Gwizdak and Past Commander-in-Chief Jack Carney, I thank you once again for your trust, and to all the delegates of the 116th National Convention, thank you also for your trust in me.

I can promise you, as I have in the past, I will do my utmost to continue to lead the great team of Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki from Pennsylvania, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Keith Harman from the great Buckeye state of Ohio. I really truly look forward to the team effort in the ensuing year.

To you, Commander-in-Chief John Stroud, it has been a great honor to serve with you not only on the Department level but also at the national level.

Unless I make a mistake, John Biedrzycki certainly did not make, let me acknowledge first and foremost my family. My wife, Jean, and with her today is our daughter, Tara. I thank them also.

As you know, it takes the grace, it takes the sacrifice of the family to allow you the opportunity to serve the veterans, to serve the military, to serve the families of both of them through all of our endeavors in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

I thank both you and in addition our son, Andrew, who could not be with us. He is out in Colorado on a summer college course. To him as well, I thank him for his sacrifices and support along the way.

To the National Council members, to the Department of Kentucky, the Southern Conference, District 6 in Kentucky, and, of course, my home Post, Middletown Post 1170, thank you for your support along the way.

Today, what a privilege, I have got three folks with me that started the journey in the VFW along with me, and actually they started the journey with me in service to the United States as we were all in uniform. At that I could fit in a flight suit. Some of them still can, three squadron mates from the former 514 Military Wing. Thank you for being here today to share in this moment.

To the 2016-17, the Senior Vice Commanders this year as we are calling them the Irish Brigade, I look forward to working with you equally with the 2016 class of the Auxiliary. I ask for your support, not only that year, but I ask for your support this year to make sure that the VFW and the Auxiliary as we go through this historical change can do so and prove to everybody that we are speaking with one vision, one voice, and we are finally one VFW. Thank you. (Applause)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect, it is an honor for me and the National Sergeants to escort you and your lovely wife and your daughter around the Hall as the next incoming Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the ensuing year. Mr. Maestro, let's play the United States Air Force.

#### ELECTION OF JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will now open the floor for nominations for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Are there any nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN MOON: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Past Commanders-in-Chief, officers and delegates to this 116th National Convention, my name is John Moon, VFW Post 2873, Grover Hill, Ohio, a delegate and Past Commander-in-Chief.

I am deeply honored and privileged and proud to nominate Keith Harman for the high office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Keith Harman is a Vietnam veteran having served in the U.S. Army from 1966 to 1969. His duties included crew chief and door gunner on helicopters as he was attached to the 101st Airborne Division.

His decorations include the Air Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with two Bronze Service Stars, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and the Aircraft Crew Member Badge.

Keith joined the VFW in 1983 at Post 3035 in Delphos, Ohio where he remains active today as its adjutant and service officer.



He served three terms as Post Commander, twice gaining All-State honors. He continued to serve his Post level in different activities as he proceeded through the chairs to become All-State Commander in 2004-2005, and gained the award and honor of All-American Commander.

He has served on the National Council from 2006 to 2008. Keith is a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the National Home, the Military Order of the Cootie, the Am Vets, Disabled American Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, and is a member of the American Legion and the Alpha Association.

Keith is retired now after 22 years of service as a County Veterans Service Officer for Van Wert County, Ohio.

He attended Griffin Junior College and also Kansas State Teachers College. Keith and his wonderful wife, Mary Lou, have been married for 47 years and are the proud parents of Adam and Carrie, and they are very proud of the five grandchildren they have.

Keith Harman's efforts on behalf of all veterans has yielded great distinction, trust and admiration at every level of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, delegates to this 116th National Convention, I am proud to nominate Keith Harman from the great state of Ohio, the Big Ten Conference, for the high office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the 2015-2016 year. Thank you. (Applause)

COMRADE ROGER FRYE (Department of Ohio): I am Roger Frye from Post 8487, Ohio, a delegate and a Past Department Commander. It is an honor and pleasure to be able to second the motion today. I have known Keith for over 20 years. I was able to travel with him over the last five or six years while he was campaigning for this great office.

We were friends from the very beginning and our friendship has only grown stronger. I have a great respect for this man.

He has shown great leadership in every office he has held, and I am confident that he will continue to serve this great organization.

At this time, I second the nomination for Keith Harman for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the 2015-2016 year. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Are there any other nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Hearing none, I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE CHRISTOPHER HAYNES (Post 7670 Delegate and Department of Ohio): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Chris Haynes, State Commander. I make a motion that the nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief be closed and that the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for Keith Harman for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the year 2015-2016.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion. Is there a second? Is there a second? Is there a second? I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE RONNIE DAVIS (Department of Ohio): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion and a second. All in favor of the motion will signify by the usual sign of “aye”; those opposed “nay”. The Adjutant General will do your duty.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: As Adjutant General, Commander-in-Chief, I cast one unanimous ballot for Keith Harman as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the 2015-2016 year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Comrades, you have elected Keith Harman as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Would you like to say a few words, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Harman?

#### REMARKS BY JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT HARMAN

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT HARMAN: They didn't give me the opportunity to decline the nomination, and I certainly wouldn't have ever done that. Thank you, Comrades.

What a humbling experience this is for me, and I thank you for the confidence that you have placed in me to serve as your Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I would also like to thank my Department, the Department of Ohio, my Post 3035 in Delphos Ohio, the Big Ten Conference, for all the support you have given to me over my campaign and the years of service in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I have two very special individuals that I would like to recognize very briefly. I joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1983, and probably I am not sure if I would have joined had it not been for a very persistent individual, my brother-in-law, John Williams. I know John is out there somewhere over there in that group.

Every time I would see John, he had an application and he kept sticking it in my face to fill this out and submit it. I said, yeah, I will do that. It took him a while. I finally got so tired of seeing that application stuck in my face, I said here is my dues money, my 214, and I will join.

Then my wife of 47 years told me, you really don't have any extra outside interests, and you belong to the organization now, so you certainly need to go and find out what is going on and what the organization is about.

I fell in love with it immediately. I want to thank both my brother-in-law, John Williams, and my lovely wife, Mary Lou, of 47 years. They are the reason I am here today.

I feel very privileged to be a part of the team of John Biedrzycki and Brian Duffy, the “Quality Honor Service Team.”

I pledge my whole-hearted support. It will be a pleasure to visit all of your Departments. Thank you, Comrades. (Applause)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect Keith Harman, it is an honor for the National Sergeants to escort you, your lovely wife and your entourage around this Hall.

Mr. Maestro, the United States Army.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will call on the Adjutant General for an announcement.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: You will note that we have changed the format a little bit. What we are doing now, just so you know, the three top chairs, obviously we want them to have their special songs as they march around to and be recognized individually. The rest of the elected officers will march collectively. We will honor all the branches of service by their song or hymn. That helps to speed things up for you.

I want to mention to you before I forget, don't forget to get your ticket as you leave so you can get into the reception tonight.

#### ELECTION OF QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will now open the nomination for the office of Quartermaster General.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: I am not nominating, but I am here to read a letter addressed to the Commander-in-Chief John Stroud. It says, "Dear John: This is my notice that I intend to vacate my position as Quartermaster General and retire from the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States on the 22nd day of July 2015.

"It has been an honor to serve the National Organization since 1978. I want to thank the Chair Officers, their predecessors in the Chairs for all the help they have given me over the years.

"I also want to thank members of the Council of Administration. Most of all, I want to thank my Executive Assistant, Judy McNeel, and all the Quartermaster General employees at Kansas City and Washington.

"It has been a privilege to manage such a talented, dedicated, hard-working group of folks. They are the behind-the-scene backbone of the organization." That is signed by Robert Greene.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Are there any nominations for Quartermaster General? Are there any nominations for Quartermaster General?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES NIER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, delegates to our 116th National Convention, I am Jim Nier, Past Commander-in-Chief and a delegate from Post 8919 in Texas.

Comrades, I am truly honored this morning to place in nomination for the position of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States the name of a comrade who previously served in this position for seven years.

Larry M. Maher was elected Quartermaster General by the National Council of Administration in March 2005, and served until his retirement in

March 2012. Prior to that he served as Assistant Quartermaster General from 1995 to 2005, and as legal counsel to the VFW National Headquarters since 1979.

He graduated magna cum laude from Rockhurst University in Kansas City in 1968 with a Bachelor of Science degree in industrial relations.

Following graduation, he entered the United States Navy, receiving his commission in March 1969. He served over a year and a half as Assistant Fleet Administrative Officer with the Commander's Seventh Fleet staff aboard the USS Oklahoma City in and around the Vietnamese waters. He was released from active duty in March 1972, but continued to serve in the U.S. Naval Reserve until 1992, earning the rank of Commander.

During his service, he received the Navy Achievement Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, and the Vietnam Campaign Medal. He returned to Kansas City after leaving active duty where he attended law school at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, earning his juris doctorate with distinction in 1975.

He is a member of the Missouri Bar, the Kansas City Metropolitan Bar, the American Bar Association. He was a partner in the Swanson Midgley law firm until accepting a position with the VFW in 1995.

He is a Gold Legacy Life Member of VFW Post 7356 in Parkville, Missouri. Larry served as Quartermaster General with distinction and with the confidence of the expertise to perform the myriad of duties of this most important position, earning the respect and trust of his fellow employees and the general membership.

I think we all would agree that with the challenges that we face in the VFW, both today and tomorrow, it is imperative that we have a Quartermaster General with the experience and the leadership capabilities to meet those challenges and turn them into opportunities.

Larry Maher has that experience, 36 years at the National level of our organization, to include his Quartermaster General and legal counsel duties, his passion for the success of our organization, his vision for the future, his personal attributes of loyalty and integrity, along with his professional on-the-job expertise making him uniquely qualified for this position.

We need to recognize how complicated and sometimes difficult the financial and operational issues we face are, and how important continuity and experience will be going forward.

Therefore, it is with pleasure and personal pride that I nominate Comrade Lawrence M. Maher, Post 7356, Missouri, for the position of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2015-2016. Thank you. (Applause)

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES MUELLER: My name is Jim Mueller, Past Commander-in-Chief and a delegate from Post 5077 in Missouri. I am pleased and honored to second the nomination of Lawrence M. Maher, an individual who has served not only his country in Vietnamese waters in the United States Navy, but has served this great organization of ours, the Veterans

of Foreign Wars, with 36 years of the VFW financial and legal experience for the betterment of the VFW.

Larry has a strong work ethic. He is honest and trustworthy, and I trust Larry to guide this organization of ours to the best of his ability. We face some tough times ahead, and this is the best individual to help us face those changes in the future.

It is my high honor and my pleasure that I second the nomination of Lawrence M. Maher for the high office of Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year of 2015-2016. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Hearing none, I recognize microphone number 2.

COMRADE PHIL PIPPINS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Phil Pippins, Past Department Commander of Missouri and a delegate from Post 2593. I move to cease the nominations for Quartermaster General and have our Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Lawrence Maher for the position of Quartermaster General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: There is a motion on the floor. Is there a second?

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN CHARLENE COBB: Commander-in-Chief, I am Charlene Cobb, National Chaplain, a delegate from Post 10173, Wisconsin. I second the nomination of Larry Maher as Quartermaster General for 2015-2016.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: You have heard the motion and the second. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". Adjutant General, you will do your duty.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: I rise to cast one unanimous ballot for Larry Maher as the Quartermaster General for 2015-2016. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Comrades, you have elected Larry Maher as Quartermaster General. Would you like to say a few words, Quartermaster General Maher?

#### REMARKS BY QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT MAHER

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT MAHER: I am back. First, those nominating speeches were very humbling. I am not really that good, but I do want to thank you comrades in the building this morning for the trust you have placed in me by electing me Quartermaster General again.

I will try not to let you down and I will do everything in my power to assure that the organization has a secure financial future. I look forward to working with John Biedrzycki and the rest of his team, Brian Duffy and Keith Harman, as well as John Hamilton, the Adjutant General.

To the delegates, again thank you for the opportunity to serve as Quartermaster General. Thanks to the Department of Missouri and my Post 7356 in Parkville, Missouri.

As I always end any comments I make to any VFW group, if you have any questions, comments, complaints or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me or the members of my staff. We are here to serve you and we will do everything in our power to continue to earn your trust. Thank you very much. (Applause)

#### ELECTION OF NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will now open the nominations for the office of Chaplain. Is there any nomination for National Chaplain?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RICHARD EUBANK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief John Stroud, officers and delegates to the 116th National Convention, I am Richard Eubank, a delegate from VFW Post 9448 in Bonita, California, and a Past Commander-in-Chief.

I stand before you today and proudly place the name of Nick Guest for the high office of National Chaplain. Nick Guest served this great country in Vietnam in 1968 and '69 with the U.S. Army, and he is a highly decorated veteran.

He continues to serve the veterans in this great Nation and the state, and is a Past All-American State Commander from the great state of California. He serves as the state of California Veterans Service Officer and is currently the Quartermaster/Adjutant General for the state.

Nick is an ordained minister. He is supported by his family, the state of California, as well as the Western Conference.

Again, Comrades, I am honored to place in nomination the name of Nick Guest for the high office of National Chaplain for 2015-2016. Commander-in-Chief, I move his nomination. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE DENIS WELLS (Department of California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Denis Wells, VFW Post 8327, a delegate. I have known Nick ever since he became active in the VFW and I watched as he advanced through the offices at the Post, District and State levels.

As the Chaplain of California, he was not only concerned with conducting his business sense at meetings, he also provided assistance and spiritual guidance in times of crisis to the veterans and/or their families.

If he was not able to attend because of other commitments, he ensured that the VFW was present and provided those assistance. He has also been known during that time to perform a couple of marriages of fellow veterans in California.

He has set an example of high values and integrity, treating everyone with respect and courtesy. It is my pleasure and honor to second the nomination of a fellow comrade and friend, Nicholas "Nick" Guest. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Thank you. Any other nominations for National Chaplain? Are there any other nominations for National Chaplain? Are there any other nominations for National Chaplain? Hearing none, I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE WAYNE WRIGHT (Department of California): Commander-in-Chief, I am Wayne Wright, a delegate from Post 1468, Junior Vice Commander from the Department of California. I move we close the nominations for National Chaplain and instruct the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot for Nick Guest as National Chaplain.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion. Is there a second? I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE ROBERT MAGNER: Commander-in-Chief, I am the Department Commander of California, and my name is Bob Magner, a delegate from Post 2266. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have got a motion and a second that the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot for Nick Guest as National Chaplain. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". The motion carries. Comrade Adjutant General, perform your duty.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: As Adjutant General, I rise to cast one unanimous ballot for Nick Guest as the National Chaplain for 2015-2016.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Comrades, you have elected Nick Guest as National Chaplain. Would you like to say a few words, Chaplain Guest?

#### REMARKS BY NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT GUEST

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT GUEST: Comrades, I will be really brief as I usually am. I want to thank my Post, my District, and most of all my Department who has supported me all the way through. I would like to say thank you to Comrade Charlene and all the other Past National Chaplains who have pledged their support and helped me since I was nominated. I really appreciate it. I definitely will be calling on you.

To my good friend Dave Norris, who had an emergency and couldn't be here, he has helped me along the way. Our careers have paralleled. He has been a Past National Chaplain and now I am.

To my friend Richard Eubank, Past Commander-in-Chief, thank you so much. Thank you, Comrades. (Applause)

#### ELECTION OF JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will now open the nominations for the office of Judge Advocate General. Is there any nomination for Judge Advocate General?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE CRAMER: Good morning. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, my colleagues, Past Commanders-in-Chief and delegates to the 116th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, my name is George Cramer, a delegate from VFW Post 3873 in Naperville, Illinois, and a Past Commander-in-Chief.

I rise to place in nomination the name of Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic for the high office of Judge Advocate General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the year 2015-2016.

"Fritz" as he likes to be called, joined the Missouri Air National Guard in 1989. He was activated for federal service, serving in Desert Shield and Desert Storm from 1990 to 1991 as a security policeman.

In recognition of his service, he received the Southwest Asia Service Medal with two devices, both Kuwait Liberation Medals from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, National Defense Service medal, Air Force Achievement Medal and the Air Force Outstanding Unit award with V device.

He joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1991, and he currently maintains his Gold Legacy life membership at Post 6504 in Waterloo, Illinois. He has served Illinois as its Judge Advocate General from 1999 to 2011, and last year served as our Department Commander, achieving All-American status.

He has also served multiple terms as the National Parliamentarian, and on three separate occasions has been elected National Judge Advocate General.

"Fritz" received his bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois in 1982, and graduated from the St. Louis University School of Law in 1985.

He currently serving as Senior Information Law Attorney with the United States Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois.

"Fritz" is also a member of the Military Order of the Cootie and the Disabled American Veterans. It is my honor and privilege to stand before you and place in nomination the name of Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic for the high office of Judge Advocate General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year.

COMRADE PHIL MAUGHAN (Department of Illinois): Commander-in-Chief, I am Phil Maughan, a delegate from Post 3873 and the state of Illinois Commander. It is my pleasure to stand here in front of you and second the nomination of Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic.

Those of us that have known him over the years have all benefitted from his wisdom, his counsel and we have enjoyed his sense of humor. His dedication to this organization is unmatched, and we will all be well served by him assuming this position once again.

So, it is with great enthusiasm that I second the nomination of Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic for the Judge Advocate General position for the coming year. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Are there any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Any other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Any other nominations for Judge Advocate General?



Hearing none, I will recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE TERRY VANCE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Terry Vance, a delegate from Post 9789 and the Adjutant/Quartermaster from Illinois.

I move that the nominations for Judge Advocate General be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for the election of Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion. Is there a second?

COMRADE RICK FRANK (Department of Illinois): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Rick Frank, A delegate from Post 1461, Illinois. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion and a second. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". The motion carries. Comrade Adjutant General, you will do your duty as Adjutant General.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: I cast one unanimous ballot for "Fritz" Mihelcic as the Judge Advocate General for 2015-2016. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Comrades, you have elected Matthew M. Mihelcic as Judge Advocate General. Would you like to say a few words, Judge Advocate General Mihelcic?

#### REMARKS BY JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT MIHELICIC

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT MIHELICIC: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief, Comrades from the great state of Illinois, the Big Ten and mostly the Comrades who are all here from the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I thank you so much for your continued support as I carry out this important job to keep my comrades straight.

I look forward to working with you this year. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. (Applause)

#### NOMINATIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF SURGEON GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will now open the nominations for the office of Surgeon General. Is there any nomination for Surgeon General?

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: I rise to place in nomination a good friend of mine, a good friend of yours, Curtis O. "Doc" Bohlman, M.D.

He served as the Surgeon General, I believe, six times before. I have got all the notes, but I know "Doc" and you guys know when I talk from here, the reason why I am nominating "Doc" is "Doc" is with me here.

He was raised in rural Oklahoma, went to the local high school in Watonga, Oklahoma, graduated from there in 1958, went on to the University of Oklahoma, for premed and medical college there, and did some internships in that area, and was the outstanding intern in his class.

Additionally, he was in the Naval Reserve and became a flight surgeon, went to Vietnam, the First Marine Air Wing, served with Marines in a Hue Helicopter Unit.

When you talk to “Doc” about his service in the Marine Corps, those guys that were doctors with the rank considered themselves brains. Doc does as well, I think.

When I talk to him, you know we had an occasion to sit down one time and have a serious conversation. We talked about actually some of my failures to duck and my Purple Hearts.

We talked about his Marines, his Marines as he referred to them. He talked about a couple that didn’t make it home. I saw the look on his face, I recognized the tears in his eyes.

He loved his Marines. I can tell you this. He became my real friend from that conversation. I want you to know from my heart he is your real friend. He did a great job as Surgeon General. He would wake up in the middle of the night and bring you an aspirin if you needed it. He is dedicated to the VFW. He is dedicated to the mission and he is an asset to this organization.

I am proud to rise and place in nomination for Surgeon General my friend, your friend, “Doc” Bohlman. (Applause)

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN SMART: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, officers and delegates to the 116th National Convention. May I take a point of privilege to say to each and every one of you in this audience here today, thank you for your service to our veterans and to the men and women who serve today. You are an asset to this organization by being here, and I know the Commander-in-Chief appreciates all the support you have given him this year.

My name is John Smart, Past Commander-in-Chief and a delegate from Post 1503, and I rise to second the nomination of “Doc” Bohlman.

You know, I may not be a Marine, but like John said, those that know me, I talk from the heart. First of all, after holding this position for six years, I don’t know what pushes you to want to have seventh term as Surgeon General, but I can’t think of any better person than you, “Doc”, to continue in this service.

When you think of the challenges that we face today with our men and women who are coming home with TBI, PTSD and many medical issues they have to face, who better than “Doc” Bohlman would you want to represent this organization when we engage with the VA medical system to ensure that the veterans of this country are given the very best care and needed care they need.

I can assure you that “Doc” Bohlman will be our eyes and ears and ensure that we go down the right path in directing those issues and caring for those that serve today. I am indeed honored to second the nomination for Curtis “Doc” Bohlman for the office of Surgeon General.

COMRADE TROY HENSCH (Department of Oklahoma): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Troy Hensch, State Commander from the

Department of Oklahoma. I am honored to second the nomination for Curtis "Doc" Bohlman for Surgeon General. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Are there any other nominations for Surgeon General? Are there any other nominations for Surgeon General? Are there any other nominations for Surgeon General? Hearing none, I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE RON GIMONDO (Department of Oklahoma): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Ron Gimondo, Quartermaster/Adjutant of Oklahoma and a delegate from Post 1719, Chandler, Oklahoma. I move the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Curtis "Doc" Bohlman as Surgeon General for 2015-2016.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion on the floor. Is there a second? I recognize microphone number 3.

COMRADE JAMES DOCKEMEYER (Department of Oklahoma): Commander-in-Chief, I am James Dockemeyer, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Department of Oklahoma, and a delegate from Post 1317. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We have a motion duly seconded. All those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; those opposed "nay". Comrade Adjutant General, you will do your duty.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Thank you, sir. It is my pleasure to rise and cast one unanimous ballot for Curtis O. "Doc" Bohlman as the national Surgeon General for 2015-2016. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Comrades, you have elected Curtis O. Bohlman as Surgeon General. Would you like to say a few words, Surgeon General Bohlman?

#### REMARKS BY SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT BOHLMAN

SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT BOHLMAN: Thank you. Commander-in-Chief, Past Commander-in-Chief, Hamilton, Past Commander-in-Chief Smart, State Commander Hensch, thank you for your kind words in my nomination. I want to thank my comrades in Oklahoma and the Southern Conference for their support.

Assuming this position again is an exhilarating feeling I get. It is also a feeling of real true humility.

I want to think back again to the people I served with in Vietnam in 1967-'68 with the 1st Marine Air Wing. Those Hue pilots were the greatest guys I have ever been around, and they also truly have been in my heart ever since.

Also, I want to thank my wife, Juanita, Past National Soloist, my wife for the last 22 years, for her support. Thank you again, Comrades. I will do my best this year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Having no further responsibility, it is now my pleasure to dismiss the Committee on General Resolutions. As always,

a job well done by you, Chairman William Thien, Vice Chairmen Richard DeNoyer, George Lisicki, John Moon and the good members of your Committee.

And my thanks to all the chairmen, vice chairmen and to all the members of each committee for your time and dedicated efforts. We will now have the march of the other elected officers.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, Quartermaster General, Surgeon General, Judge Advocate General and Chaplain, it is an honor for the National Sergeants to escort you around the Hall.

Mr. Maestro, a cavalcade of the United States Armed Forces music.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW ELECTED COUNCIL MEMBERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will now call upon the Adjutant General to announce the newly elected National Council of Administration members.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: All newly elected Council members will please rise.

The Commander-in-Chief-Elect will now present caps and badges to the newly elected Council members. They are:

John Davin – Illinois  
Gregory Baker – Indiana  
Darrell Blasberg – Iowa  
Harry Croyle – Michigan  
Gary Anderson – Minnesota  
Phil Pippins – Missouri  
Eric Williams – Nebraska  
Chuck Keller – Ohio  
Darold Couch – South Dakota  
John Giese – Wisconsin

#### ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENTS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Let me please call on Commander-in-Chief-Elect John Biedrzycki for his announcement of appointed officers for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BIEDRZYCKI: My appointments for the terms for which I am elected are:

As Adjutant General, John E. Hamilton of Florida.  
As Chief of Staff, Allen Q. Jones of Pennsylvania.  
As Inspector General, William J. Schmitz of New York.  
Sergeant-at-Arms Bryan O'Brien of Massachusetts.

I want you to know I appointed one from each branch of the service, so, we have a Marine, Army, Navy and Air Force. (Applause)

## INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: We will now proceed with the Installation of Officers. National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will escort the installing officer to a position on my right.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I have the honor to present Comrade Past Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera who has been officially appointed for the Installing Officer.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: The term for which you and your subordinate officers were elected or appointed has now expired. It is my duty to ascertain the following. Have officers for the ensuing year been duly elected?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: Have the books of the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General been examined and approved by the National Council of Administration?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: Does the Adjutant General have on file proof of eligibility for all officers to be installed during this installation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: He does.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: Are the funds in the hands of the Quartermaster General and ready to be turned over to his successor when duly installed?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: They are.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: Have you the charter in your possession?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I have.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: You will now surrender the gavel to me.

Commander-in-Chief John W. Stroud, you have now been relieved of your duties as Commander-in-Chief of this organization. It is proper to remind you that in assuming the chair of Past Commander-in-Chief, it will be your duty and privilege to counsel and otherwise assist your successor through the experiences you have gained during your term of office. You will now station yourself to my right.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now present the officers-elect at the altar as the Assistant Adjutant General reads the list of officers to be installed.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL NEWBERRY:

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Brian J. Duffy.

Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Keith E. Harman.

Adjutant General John E. Hamilton.

Quartermaster General Lawrence M. Maher.

National Chaplain Nick Guest.

Judge Advocate General Matthew M. Mihelcic.

Surgeon General Curtis O. Bohlman.

Chief of Staff Allen Q. Jones.

Inspector General William J. Schmitz.

Sergeant-at-Arms Bryan O'Brien.  
Newly elected Council members.  
John Davin – Illinois.  
Gregory Baker – Indiana.  
Darrell Blasberg – Iowa.  
Harry Croyle – Michigan.  
Gary Anderson – Minnesota.  
Phil Pippins – Missouri.  
Eric Williams – Nebraska.  
Chuck Keller – Ohio.  
Darold Couch – South Dakota.  
John Giese – Wisconsin.  
Commander-in-Chief – John A. Biedrzycki.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Installing Officer of the National Convention, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the officers-elect are in proper position for installation.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: National officers-elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I will administer to you the officers' obligation. Comrade Commander-in-Chief you will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand, those of you behind will touch the shoulder of the man either in front of you or to the side, and you will repeat after me.

(Whereupon, the officers' obligation was administered at this time.)

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN COBB: Almighty God, our guide and divine protector, give Thy blessings upon these, our comrades, who now become fellow officers. We beseech Thee, O Lord, who art ever present amongst us, grant wisdom unto them, so that in their deliberations they continue to favor Thee, our glorious country and to better our organization. May Thy strength sustain them. May Thy power preserve them. May Thy hand protect them in the faithful and fruitful performance of their duties. Amen.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: As you were. National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now escort the officers to their respective stations.

National officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, you now occupy the position of honor to which your comrades have elected you. Learn well the responsibilities entrusted to you so that you may intelligently discharge the duties you are to undertake.

The by-laws and ritual of our organization prescribe in detail the duties of your respective offices. By virtue of the confidence placed in you, through your election or appointment, we assume that you will acquaint yourselves thoroughly with your duties. You may be seated.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will escort the Commander-in-Chief to my station.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief-Elect, John A. Biedrzycki, before administering your obligation it is proper to remind you of certain duties. You will be held personally responsible for the charter of this organization and at the end of your term of office you will deliver it to the officer appointed to install your successor.

It is your duty to see that all National officers perform their duties to the best of their ability. You shall keep yourself informed on all proposed legislation which may affect the welfare of potential and actual comrades of this organization. Strive for adoption of only those measures which will be beneficial.

You will be required to devote all of your time to the many duties of your office. You are expected to make a special study of the Congressional Charter, by-laws and ritual of this organization so that you may render firm and impartial decisions on important questions referred to you.

As Commander-in-Chief, you will be regarded by your comrades and by the general public as typifying wise and vigorous leadership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. May all your efforts and accomplishments bring credit to your administration and to our organization.

Comrade John A. Biedrzycki, are you willing and ready to assume your solemn obligation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BIEDRZYCKI: I am.

(Whereupon, Installing Officer Spera administered the obligation to Commander-in-Chief-Elect Biedrzycki at this time.)

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I now place in your possession our Charter. Also, I present you with this gavel, which is the emblem of your authority. Use it firmly but with discretion.

All National Officers, please stand, stretch forth your right hand and repeat after me: "Comrade Commander-in-Chief John A. Biedrzycki, to you I pledge my sincere allegiance."

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, officers and delegates of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I now proclaim the national officers duly installed and this organization in working order for the ensuing year.

#### PRESENTATION OF PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LAPEL PIN AND GOLD LIFE MEMBERSHIP CARD

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Commander-in-Chief Stroud, I would like to present to you, now soon to be the immediate Past Commander-in-Chief, this Gold VFW membership card and illustrious pin that some of us wear proudly, the Past Commander-in-Chief's pin. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Commander-in-Chief Stroud, as a symbol of your service, the new Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief and I would like to present you with something very special. This is your Commander-in-

Chief's hat that we stole out of the office and Bette made sure she had it bronzed. John, it is a pleasure to give this to you. It is engraved with your years of service and signed by myself and Comrade Duffy wishing you the very best.

Thank you for everything that you have done these past three years. They used to just give bronzed baby shoes. (Applause)

#### ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BIEDRZYCKI

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT BIEDRZYCKI: Comrades may I once again express my heartfelt gratitude to all the delegates of this 116th National Convention for the honor, trust and confidence you have placed in me.

Like many of you, I joined the VFW because someone asked me to join when I came home on leave from Korea in 1969. That someone was a World War II veteran who just happened to be my father-in-law, Jack Kinneman.

I joined because someone dear in my life asked me. I stayed because I found the VFW to be an organization that shares my values of Loyalty, Honor and Service.

Loyalty to country;

Honor to America's heroes and institutions; and

Service to our veterans, their families, our communities and Nation.

The VFW supports the tenets of a strong nation that espouses the values of freedom, and the rights of all to pursue a life of fulfillment. We support the rights of individuals to choose their own destinies, limited only by their own personal willingness to work and persevere through hardships.

When I speak about the VFW, I brag about the services we provide to so many, such as:

Thousands of care packages sent overseas to deployed troops that we've never met;

Personal handshakes with the men and woman charged with bringing home our fallen soldiers from their battlefields long ago;

Supporting first responders during natural disasters at home;  
Promoting patriotism in our schools through Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen sponsorships;

Our Adopt-a-Unit programs that help ensure our troops get a proper send-off, and equally important, a hearty welcome home;

The expert assistance provided by our Veterans Service Officers to all honorably-discharged veterans seeking to file or appeal a VA claim; and

The wise counsel our National and local VFW legislative efforts bring to Congress and inside state houses across the country.

The VFW lifts spirits because we and our families have been there and done that, which is one thought I want to share with everyone: "If not for the VFW, who?"



If not for the VFW, who in our communities will help organize and participate in patriotic salutes to our Nation and remember those who serve or fell?

If not for the VFW, who will promote patriotism in our youth? If not for the VFW, who will help America's veterans and troops navigate the complex VA claims system, or ensure their individual needs are properly taken care of?

If not for the VFW, who will be that collective voice on Capitol Hill against all the noise generated by 30,000 registered lobbyists who, other than lip service, don't have the best interest of veterans, service members and families first on their agendas?

If not for the VFW is something I hope you will consider deeply, because there are some in our great organization who I believe have lost focus on why we exist, something we should be more of a social organization than the veterans service organization we were created to be.

Less than three miles from here at what used to be the old Schenley Hotel is where members of the Veterans of Foreign Service met in 1914 to adopt the name Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Today we meet again in Pittsburgh to take stock of ourselves and chart our course for the future.

We must rededicate our goals and objectives to the concept of service that was envisioned by our early leaders when they returned home to an America that they felt couldn't relate to their service, and to a government that was unable and often unwilling to care for their sacrifices.

Not believing anyone can relate has been said by every generation of returning veteran -- from our founders' wars in Cuba and the Philippines, through Iraq, Afghanistan, and every contingency operation or lousy overseas duty posting in between.

But our founders did something about it instead of just complain about it, they created an organization that welcomed all who would serve in our wars and conflicts. They created an organization that would treat current and future generations with dignity and respect, regardless of when or where they served. And they created an organization that would do its part to take care of veterans, service members and their families, and to constantly teach the rest of America about what service to country truly means.

My challenge is what are you going to do to keep their vision alive? My challenge is how are you going to keep their VFW our VFW and tomorrow's VFW relevant to generations of veterans still to come?

Comrades, this September will mark 14 years since that horrible Tuesday morning when radical Islamist terrorists hijacked four planes and murdered nearly 3,000 Americans in New York City, the Pentagon and in an open field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, about 80 miles southeast of here.

In the ensuing days and years, well over three million men and women would raise their right hands to defend America against a new threat.

In the ensuing days and years, hundreds, if not thousands of nonprofit organizations large and small would also be created to help support the troops, their families, our wounded, and their survivors.

That's why the VFW was created, to take care of veterans, our troops and their families, but some of these new organizations offered something different, opportunities to get physically involved in their communities, from building housing for the homeless, to sponsoring environmental cleanups, and staying physically fit through wholesome family sporting events.

And these new organizations provided these opportunities without any membership requirement or further obligation to participate in future events. Invitations were extended through social media, and event organizers simply learned to adjust on the fly.

Our founders wrote about emerging a new era of Veterans Organizations. That the Old Boy's network or day of Bar Room Commandos has come and gone.

This is where we are losing our relevancy with the new generation, Comrades. World War II veterans were a generation of joiners, but Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are a generation of doers, who prefer getting their hands dirty instead of discussing things to death in monthly meetings.

I am not suggesting that our By-Laws and Manual of Ritual are out of date, but I am suggesting that successful VFW Posts recognize and adapt. They've learned that in order to catch fish, you have to go where the fish are.

Take VFW Post 1435 in Spokane, Washington, for example. Their city sponsors what's billed as the largest 3-on-3 basketball tournament in the world, with 225,000 fans watching 7,000 teams play on 450 courts spanning 42 city blocks. The Spokane Hoop Fest also had a Team VFW in matching jerseys to prove that we can do more than just sponsor Little League teams.

VFW Post 1115 in Hillsville, Virginia, created a "Young Guns" committee, led by a two tour Iraq vet, to get the Post more actively and physically involved in the community, as well as a way to recruit younger members.

One of the greatest challenges is convincing younger veterans about the value of being a VFW member. We have a proven record of 116 years of service to veterans and veterans advocacy. We are like an insurance policy, that you may never need, but one that will still continue to help those in need.

Take VFW Post 7369 in Naples, Florida, for example. They took it upon themselves to restore part of a civilian cemetery after the graves of nearly 70 veterans were discovered hidden in the underbrush.

The success of America was built on the service and sacrifice of many Americans, but our continued freedom falls squarely on the shoulders of those who wear the uniform. Everyone in the VFW understands that. But unfortunately, as our Nation's population continues to increase, and the size of our military continues to shrink, the rest of America doesn't get it.

That's why I need you to continue to tell America's story, so that it's not lost to rewritten history books by authors who never served, or worse by authors who just don't care.

Here in Pennsylvania, the saying "Freedom isn't free," means something. My state has the fourth largest veterans population in the country, yet no active duty military installations to speak of. It also has the largest VFW Department membership with 87,000 members.

We know that it requires the citizenry to secure and maintain the blessings of liberty for themselves, their families and their Nation. We know that patriotism is not a short demonstration on the 4th of July -- it's a lifelong commitment. America may have its faults, but no country has done more for the world than the United States of America. We are a shining example to those who desire to live in freedom and opportunity.

I also need you to continue telling the VFW's story of loyalty, honor and service, how we were founded to serve others, and how we will continue to extend a helping hand to all veterans, service members and their families.

Share the VFW's story through your veteran and military support programs, and don't forget to recognize the work of our own volunteers as well as others. That's why we present National awards during convention, and that's why you should recognize excellence in your own communities, especially local VA hospital volunteers, who often touch more lives in a day than others do in a lifetime.

Never pass up the opportunity to give a hearty handshake and thank you from the VFW, and never pass up the opportunity to let people know that **THE VFW STANDS FOR A STRONG AMERICA!**

Serving others is my number one goal, but right behind that is a strong and vibrant membership.

A strong membership opens doors in Washington, not just because you are veterans, but also because you vote in every congressional district.

We don't always vote for the same candidate, but every candidate knows where we stand for a strong Nation, and we stand strong for veterans. (Applause)

As I previously mentioned, we compete in Washington against 30,000 registered lobbyists who see the world differently. That's why a strong and vocal membership who is engaged and united in purpose is so important on Capitol Hill and in your state capitals and legislatures.

I wish to congratulate the 17 Departments who exceeded 100 percent in membership this past year. I also wish to salute the seven women veterans who will serve as Department Commanders in the coming year. I encourage all of you to reconsider how you can and must evolve to maintain your relevancy in this new millennium.

I need everyone to reflect on the future of our VFW, and the challenges that our Nation faces. First and foremost, our overseas conflicts are not over, and our government faces a return to mandatory sequestration that

threatens not only our Nation's readiness and security, but every military quality of life program the VFW helped to create.

I hope that my year as Commander-in-Chief will be remembered as a year of renewing our pledge to the VFW's commitment of service.

We need membership to stay strong to support our numerous programs, and to remain relevant in Congress and to America. We also need Departments, Districts and Posts to create more opportunities that better serve our Nation's veterans and military communities.

Here in Pittsburgh the VFW teamed up with academia, industry, and the nonprofit world to create "Pittsburgh Hires Veterans." I hope many of you took the opportunity to visit their convention booth.

The idea behind "Pittsburgh Hires Veterans" is simple: We match veterans who are seeking jobs and careers with employers. Companies, who at last count have hundreds of vacancies in the manufacturing. What we aren't doing in Pittsburgh is relying on the federal government to solve local issues.

I also highly encourage you to reinvest in the VFW programs and services that benefit veterans, service members and their families. Yes, some of us can generate large sums of money that greatly benefit local communities. All I ask is for you to remember the VFW's charities are important. After all charity begins at home.

In closing, I would be remiss if I didn't rededicate our support to the government's Full Accounting Mission, to the families of the 83,000 American MIAs, and to the dedicated troops and DoD civilians who perform these investigations and recoveries in some of the most arduous places on earth.

I had the opportunity to visit with many of them earlier this year in Thailand, Laos and Vietnam, and I still cannot adequately express my pride in their commitment to return America's fallen to their families.

Comrades, that's my VFW, a VFW that is recognized for the great work we do, whether it's championing veterans issues on Capitol Hill or simply shaking the hands of American MIA searchers at the bottom of a muddy Vietnamese mountain in a torrential downpour.

What our founders knew a century ago has not changed. Action, not words, will lead the way for our great organization.

Someone has to be America's conscience to keep patriotism and the history of our great country alive. Someone has to ensure we are strong, safe and secure, and someone has to make sure our Nation's commitments to those who serve her in uniform never fail.

With your support, Comrades, I am proud to say that someone will be the men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

May God bless our great country and our great organization. And remember, no one does more for veterans than the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation to Commander-in-Chief-Elect Biedrzycki.)

## CLOSING OF THE CONVENTION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: At this time, we will entertain a motion to adjourn the Convention. I recognize microphone number 1.

COMRADE DAVID PROHASKA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am David Prohaska, a delegate from Post 4434, Department of Michigan.

There being no further business to come before this convention and the officers having been duly elected and installed for the ensuing year, I move that the 116th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States be closed sine die.

COMRADE BETTY HILLIARD: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Betty Hilliard, State Commander from South Carolina and a member of Post 3433. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Comrades, you have before you a motion properly seconded to close the 116th VFW National Convention. Is there a question on the motion? Is there a question on the motion? Is there a question on the motion? Hearing none, all those in favor will signify by the usual sign of "aye"; all opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. The motion carries. Sergeant-at-Arms, you will proceed with the closing ceremonies.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, Sir. Commander-in-Chief. Captain of the VFW National Honor Guard, advance and retrieve the flag of the United States of America.

Comrade Chaplain Cobb, the benediction, please.

## BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN COBB: Oh, Lord, we thank for the year we have completed, for Commander John Stroud and his leadership team. We thank them for a job well done.

Now we seek your blessings for the coming year. Heavenly Father, this is our prayer, a prayer of guidance for these newly elected officers.

Bless them and guide them in the performance of their duties. Bless them with the knowledge they will need. May they have tolerance toward those whose opinions may differ from their own, but provide them with the words to persuade everyone on the proper course of action to further our great organization and its mission of "no one does more for veterans".

As we face this year together, give us wisdom in our decisions and Thy aid in building a stronger Veterans of Foreign Wars. Walk with each of us in heart and mind, day by day, so that we may continue to serve God, our country and this premier veterans organization. We ask this in Thy holy name. Amen.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the closing ceremonies for the 116th National Convention have been completed.

## ADJOURNMENT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Thank you. On the way out, don't forget to get your tickets for this afternoon's reception. The 116th National Convention is closed. We are adjourned sine die.

(Whereupon, the Convention was duly adjourned at 11:30 o'clock a.m.)

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**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE  
& RITUAL CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF  
PROCEDURE AND RITUAL  
116<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL CONVENTION, JULY 18-22, 2015  
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA**

**B-1** *(Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the  
Commander-in-Chief)*

*Amend the Sections below in the National By-Laws, by removing or  
replacing “he, him, his or himself” and the word(s) after (if appropriate) with  
the following, in the order they appear in each Section.*

**ARTICLE I – MEMBERS**

**Sec. 102 – Applications – Affiliation of New Members.**

*In the second paragraph, third sentence, replace “his” with “their”. In  
the fourth sentence, remove “his”.*

**Sec. 104 – Member Dues.**

*In the second sentence, replace every “his” with “their”.*

**Sec. 108 – Challenging Members Eligibility.**

*In the second paragraph, remove “his”.*

**Sec. 110 – Rights of Members.**

*Remove every “his” and replace “he” with “the member”.*

**ARTICLE II – POSTS**

**Sec. 217 – Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.**

*In the second paragraph, replace the first “his” with “an”. Replace the  
second “his” with “a”.*

**Sec. 220 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.**

*Under **Removal.**, in the second paragraph, remove “his”.*

**ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS**

**Sec. 404 – Governing Body; Composition.**

*Under no. 4., in the second paragraph, replace the first “he” with “the  
Commander”. Replace the second and third “his” with “the”. Replace  
the last “he” with “the District Commander”.*

*Under no. 6., in the second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

**Sec. 417 – Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.**

*In the second paragraph, first sentence, remove the first and second “his”. Replace the second “his” with “a”. In the second sentence, replace “he forfeits” with “they forfeit”.*

**Sec. 420 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.**

*Under **Removal.**, in the second paragraph, remove “his”.*

**Sec. 421 – Voting.**

*In the second paragraph, first sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

**ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS**

**Sec. 504 – Governing Body; Composition.**

*Under no. 3., in the second sentence, replace “his” with “the Senior Vice Commander’s”.*

*Under no. 4., in the second sentence, replace “his” with “the Senior Vice Commander’s”.*

**Sec. 517 – Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.**

*In the second paragraph, first sentence, replace the first and second “his” with “a” and “the”. In the last sentence, replace “he forfeits” with “they forfeit”.*

**Sec. 520 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.**

*Under **Removal.**, in the second paragraph, remove “his”.*

**Sec. 521 – Voting.**

*Replace all “his” with “their” throughout the Section.*

**Sec. 522 – Council of Administration – Composition, Powers and Duties.**

*Under **(a) Composition.**, in the fourth sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

**ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL**

**Sec. 604 – Governing Body; Composition.**

*Under no. 3., in the second sentence, replace “his” with “the Department Senior Vice Commander’s”.*

**Sec. 617 – Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.**

*In the second paragraph, first sentence, replace “his” with “a”.*



**Sec. 618 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.**

Under **(a) Commander-in-Chief**, replace “he” with “the Commander-in-Chief”.

Under (a)(4), replace “his” with “the”.

Under **(b) Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief**, in the first sentence, replace “his” with “the Commander-in-Chief’s”.

Under **(d) Quartermaster General**, replace “he” with “the Quartermaster General”.

Under (d)(4), in the first sentence, replace “his” with “the Quartermaster General’s”. In the second sentence, replace “He” with “The Quartermaster General”.

Under (d)(13), replace “his” with “the”.

Under (d)(14), remove “his”.

Under (d)(15), in the fifth sentence, replace “he” with “the Quartermaster General”.

Under (d)(17), remove every “his” and add “of said office.” at the end of the sentence.

Under **(e) Assistant Quartermaster General**, replace “he” with “the Assistant Quartermaster General”.

Under (e)(1), remove “to him”.

Under (e)(3), replace “his” with “the Quartermaster General’s” and replace “he” with “the Assistant Quartermaster General”.

Under (e)(4), replace “his” with “the”.

Under **(f) Adjutant General**, replace “he” with “the Adjutant General”.

Under (f)(2), in the second sentence, remove “his” with “the”.

Under (f)(4), replace “his” with “the Adjutant General’s”.

Under (f)(6), in the second sentence, replace “He” with “The Adjutant General” and replace every “his” with “the Adjutant General’s”.

*Under (f)(10), remove “his”.*

*Under (f)(12), remove every “his” and add “of said office.” at the end of the sentence.*

*Under (i) **Judge Advocate General**;, remove “his” and “of him”.*

*Under (j) **Chief of Staff**;, remove “his” and “of him”.*

*Under (k) **Inspector General**;, remove “his” and “of him”.*

*Under (l) **Surgeon General**;, remove “his”.*

**Sec. 619 – National Committees.**

*In the second paragraph, second sentence, replace “his” with “the Commander-in-Chief’s”.*

*Under (a) **National Veterans Service Advisory Committee**., (1) **Composition**;, in the second sentence, replace “his” with “the” and “he” with “the Commander-in-Chief”.*

**Sec. 620 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.**

*Under **Removal**;, in the second paragraph, remove “his”.*

**Sec. 621 – Voting.**

*In the third sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

**Sec. 623 – National Council of Administration, Department Members – Election, Vacancies and Removal.**

*Under **Removal**;, in the first paragraph, remove “his”.*

*Under **Notification of Removal**;, in the second sentence, replace “his rights” with “their right”.*

**ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS**

**Sec. 703 – Bonds.**

*In the first paragraph, first sentence, replace “he” with “they”. In the second paragraph, second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

**Sec. 710 – Inspection.**

*In the first and second sentences, replace every “his” with “their” and “he” with “the Commander-in-Chief or Department Commander”.*

**Sec. 719 – Past Officers.**

*In the first paragraph, remove every “his” and replace “he” with “they”.*

## **ARTICLE IX – DISCIPLINE**

### **Sec. 901 – Discipline of Members.**

*In the first paragraph, remove “against him”.*

### **Sec. 902 – Offenses.**

*Under no. 6., replace “his” with “their”.*

### **Sec. 903 – Procedure for Disciplinary Actions.**

*Under **No Hearing Requested.**, no. 2., replace “he” with “the Department Commander”.*

*Under no. 4., replace “he” with “the Commander-in-Chief”.*

### **Sec. 904 – Appeal.**

*Under **Computation of Time.**, in the third paragraph, remove “his”.*

### **Sec. 906 –Prima Facie Case.**

*Remove “him”.*

### **Sec. 908 – Administrative Actions.**

*In the second and third paragraph, replace every “his” with “their”.*

## **ARTICLE XII – MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE**

### **Sec. 1202 – Eligibility.**

*In the first sentence, replace “his or her” with “their”. (Approved)*

**M-1** *(Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)*

*Amend the Sections below in the Manual of Procedure, by removing or replacing “he, him, his or himself” and the word(s) after (if appropriate) with the following, in the order they appear in each Section.*

## **ARTICLE I – MEMBERS**

### **Sec. 101 – Eligibility.**

*In the third paragraph, second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

### **Sec. 103 – Election.**

*Under **Rejection of Applicant.**, in the second sentence, replace “he” with “the applicant”.*

*Under **Notification.**, in the first sentence, replace “his” with “their” and “he is” with “they are”.*

**Sec. 106 – Former Members.**

*In the first paragraph, first sentence, replace “his” with “their” and “he” with “they”.*

**Sec. 108 – Challenging Members Eligibility.**

*In the first paragraph, second sentence, replace “he” with “they”.*

*In the second paragraph, second sentence, replace “he” with “they”.*

*In the third sentence, replace “his or her” with “their”.*

**Sec. 109 – Right of Appeal.**

*Under **Notification of Appeal**:, replace “his” with their”.*

*Under **Computation of time**:, in the fourth sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under **Appeals to the District Commander**:, in the first paragraph, second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

*In the second paragraph, first sentence, replace “he deems” with “deemed”.*

*Under **Appeals to the Department Commander**:, in the second paragraph, first sentence, replace “he deems” with “deemed”.*

*Under **Appeals to the Commander-in-Chief**:, in the second paragraph, first sentence, replace “he deems” with “deemed”. In the second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under **Appeals to the National Council of Administration**:, in the second paragraph, first sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

**Sec. 111 – Life Members.**

*In the first paragraph, replace “his” with “their”.*

**ARTICLE II – POSTS**

**Sec. 203 – Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.**

*In the third paragraph, second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

**Sec. 211 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter.**

*Under **2. Actions by the Commander-in-Chief-Revocation**., f., replace “his” with “their”.*

**Sec. 216 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.**

*In the first paragraph, second sentence, replace “he deems” with “deemed”. In the third sentence, add “these” before “officers” and remove “appointed by him”.*

**Sec. 218 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations.**

*Under (a) **Officers. (1) Commander.**, replace “he” with “the Commander”.*

*Under (a)(1) e., in the second and third sentences, replace every “He” with “The Commander” and every “his” with “their”.*

*Under (a)(1) k., replace “he” with “the Commander” and “his” with “their”.*

*Under (a)(3) **Junior Vice Commander.**, replace “him” with “the Junior Vice Commander”.*

*Under (a)(5) **Quartermaster.**, replace “he” with “the Quartermaster”.*

*Under (a)(5) a., replace “he” with “the Quartermaster”.*

*Under (a)(5) b., in the first sentence, replace “his” with “their”. In the second sentence, replace “He” with “The Quartermaster”.*

*Under (a)(5) c., in the third sentence, replace “he” with “the Quartermaster”.*

*Under (a)(5) i., replace every “his” with “their”.*

*Under (a)(5) j., replace “him” with “the Quartermaster”.*

*Under (a)(6) **Adjutant.**, replace “he” with “the Adjutant”.*

*Under (a)(6) a., replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under (a)(6) b., replace “him” with “the Adjutant”.*

*Under (a)(6) f., replace every “his” with “their”.*

*Under (a)(6) g., replace “him” with “the Adjutant”.*

*Under (a)(8) **Judge Advocate.**, replace “him” with “the Judge Advocate”.*

*Under (a)(9) **Surgeon.**, replace “him” with “the Surgeon”.*

Under **(a)(10) Officer of the Day.**, replace “him” with “the Officer of the Day”.

Under **(a)(12) Service Officer.**, in the first sentence, replace “widows” with “surviving spouses”. In the third sentence, replace “He” with “The Service Officer”.

## **ARTICLE II – POSTS**

### **Sec. 219 – Relief Fund.**

Under (a) and (b), replace “widows” with “surviving spouses”.

### **Sec. 220 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.**

Under **Removal.**, no. 1., replace “himself” with “themselves”.

Under **Notification of Removal.**, in the second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

### **Sec. 222 – Delegates, District Convention & Meetings, Department and National Conventions.**

Under (b), in the third paragraph, replace “him” with “the Quartermaster”.

## **ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS**

### **Sec. 402 – By-Laws.**

In the third sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

### **Sec. 403 – Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.**

Under **Special Meeting.**, in the third paragraph, second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

### **Sec. 416 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.**

In the first paragraph, second sentence, replace “he deems” with “deemed”. In the third sentence, add “these” before “officers” and remove “appointed by him”.

### **Sec. 417 – Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.**

Under **Nomination.**, in the third sentence, replace “he has” with “they have”.

### **Sec. 418 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.**

Under **(a) Officers.**, **(1) Commander.**, replace “he” with “the Commander”.

*Under (a)(1) f., replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under (a)(1) k., in the second sentence, replace “He” with “The Commander”.*

*Under (a)(3) **Junior Vice Commander.**, replace “him” with “the Junior Vice Commander”.*

*Under (a)(5) **Quartermaster.**, replace “he” with “the Quartermaster”.*

*Under (a)(5) a., replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under (a)(5) b., in the third sentence, replace “he” with “the Quartermaster”.*

*Under (a)(5) c., replace “his” with “their” and every “he” with “the Quartermaster”.*

*Under (a)(5) f., replace every “his” with “their”.*

*Under (a)(5) h., replace “him” with “the Quartermaster”.*

*Under (a)(6) **Adjutant.**, replace “he” with “the Adjutant”.*

*Under (a)(7) **Trustees.**, replace “he” with “the Trustee”.*

*Under (a)(9) **Judge Advocate.**, replace “his” with “their” and “he” with “the Commander”.*

*Under (a)(10) **Chief of Staff.**, replace “his” with “their” and “him” with “the Chief of Staff”.*

*Under (a)(13) **Surgeon.**, in the first sentence, replace “his” with “their”. In the second and third sentences, replace “He” with “The Surgeon”.*

**Sec. 420 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.**

*Under **Removal.**, in the second paragraph, no. 1., replace “himself” with “themselves”. In the third paragraph, first sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under **Notification of Removal.**, in the second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

**ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS**

**Sec. 502 – By-Laws.**

*In the second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

**Sec. 511 – Suspension and Revocation of Charter.**

*Under 2. Actions by the Commander-in-Chief – Revocation., f., in the first sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

**Sec. 516 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.**

*In the first paragraph, second sentence, replace “he deems” with “deemed”. In the last sentence, add “these” after “remove” and delete “appointed by him”.*

**Sec. 517 – Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.**

*Under Nomination., in the third sentence, replace “he has” with “they have”.*

**Sec. 518 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.**

*Under (a) Officers. (1) Commander., replace “he” with “the Commander”.*

*Under (a)(1) e., replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under (a)(3) Junior Vice Commander., replace “him” with “the Junior Vice Commander”.*

*Under (a)(4) Quartermaster., replace “he” with “the Quartermaster”.*

*Under (a)(4) a., replace “he” with “the Quartermaster”.*

*Under (a)(4) b., in the first sentence, replace “his” with “their”. In the second sentence, replace “He” with “The Quartermaster”.*

*Under (a)(4) h., replace “He” with “The Quartermaster” and every “his” with “their”.*

*Under (a)(4) i., replace “him” with “the Quartermaster”.*

*Under (a)(5) Adjutant., replace “he” with “the Adjutant”.*

*Under (a)(5) a., replace “his” with “the Adjutant’s”.*

*Under (a)(5) g., replace every “his” with “their”.*

*Under (a)(5) h., replace “him” with “the Adjutant”.*

*Under (a)(7) Judge Advocate., replace “his” with “their”.*



Under **(a)(8) Chief of Staff.**, replace “his’ with “their and “him” with “the Chief of Staff”.

Under **(a)(10) Surgeon.**, in the first sentence, replace “his” with “their”. In the third sentence, replace “He” with “The Surgeon” and “his” with “their”.

Under **(a)(11) Service Officer.**, in the first sentence, replace “widows” with “surviving spouses”. In the second sentence, replace “His” with “Their”. In the third sentence, replace “He” with “The Service Officer” and “his” with “their”.

**Sec. 520 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.**

Under **Vacancies.**, no. 2., in the fourth sentence, replace “him” with “the Commander”.

Under **Removal.**, no. 1., replace “himself” with “themselves”.

Under **Notification of Removal.**, in the second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

**ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL**

**Sec. 617 – Nomination, Election, Installation and Term of Office.**

Under **Nomination.**, in the third sentence, replace “he has” with “they have”.

Under **Installation.**, in the third sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

**Sec. 620 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.**

Under **Vacancies.**, in the second paragraph, fourth sentence, replace “him” with “the Commander-in-Chief”.

Under **Removal.**, in the first paragraph, first sentence, replace “he is” with “they are”. In the second paragraph, first sentence, replace “him” with “the Commander-in-Chief”.

**ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS**

**Sec. 704 – Relief Fund.**

Under (a) and (b), replace “widows” with “surviving spouses”.

**Sec. 706 – National Home for Children Funds.**

In the fourth paragraph, first sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

**Sec. 711 – Buddy Poppy.**

In the third paragraph, replace “his” with “their”.

**Sec. 712 – National Honor Guard.**

Under **Inspection.**, replace “he” with “the Commander-in-Chief”.

**ARTICLE IX – DISCIPLINE**

**Sec. 901 – Discipline of Members.**

In the first paragraph, first sentence, replace “him” with “them”. In the second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

**Sec. 903 – Procedure for Disciplinary Actions.**

Under **(i) Procedure – Disciplinary Hearing Requested., 1.**

**Appointment of Panel., b. Prosecutor.,** in the second sentence, replace “He” with “The Prosecutor”. In the fourth sentence, replace “He” with “They”.

Under **(i)1 c. Defense Counsel.,** in the first and second sentence, replace “his” with “their”. In the fifth sentence, replace “He” with “They”.

Under **(j) Procedure at Hearing., 2. Plea to the Charges.,** in the first sentence, replace “he” with “the accused”.

Under **(j) 5. Order of Presentation.,** in the first sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

Under **(j) 10. Findings and Sentence (DA-4).,** in the second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

**Sec. 904 – Appeal.**

Under **(a) Appeals From Post Actions.,** in the second paragraph, first sentence, replace “him” with “the Commander”. In the third, fourth and fifth sentences, replace every “his” with “their”. In the third paragraph, first sentence, remove “to him”. In the fourth paragraph, third sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

Under **(b) Appeals From Department Commander Actions.,** in the second paragraph, first sentence, remove “to him”. In the third sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

Under **(c) Appeals From Commander-in-Chief Actions.,** in the third paragraph, third sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

**Sec. 906 – Prima Facie Case.**

In the last sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

## **ARTICLE X – RULES OF ORDER**

### **Sec. 1001 – Rules of Order Governing All Meetings.**

*Under no. 4., in the first sentence, replace “he” with “the member” and in the last sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under no. 6., in the first sentence, replace “him” with “them”.*

*Under no. 7., in the second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under no. 11., in the second sentence, replace “He” with “The presiding officer”.*

*Under no. 12., in the first and second sentences, replace both “him” with “the presiding officer”.*

*Under no. 19., (b), replace the first two “he has” with “they have”. Replace “his” with “their” and the last “he” with “they”.*

*Under no. 23., in the second paragraph, replace “his” with “their” and “he does” with “they do”.*

## **ARTICLE XII – MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE**

### **Sec. 1201 – Formation.**

*Under (b) **Suspension and Discontinuance.**, (1), in the second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under (b)(3) **Disbanding of Pup Tent by a Post.**, in the third sentence, replace “his” with “their”. In the fourth sentence, replace “he” with “the Commander-in-Chief”.*

*Under (e) **Reports.**, no. (1), replace “his” with “their” and “him” with “the Commander-in-Chief”.*

*Under (e) no. (2), replace “his” with “their” and “him” with “the Commander”. (Approved)*

**M-2** (Proposed by Department of Kansas)

## **ARTICLE I – MEMBERS**

### **Sec. 101 – Eligibility.**

Amend Sec. 101 – Eligibility., Manual of Procedure, in the **ELIGIBILITY GUIDE**, by adding “US Navy Submarine Warfare Insignia (Dolphins)” as a campaign medal meeting the requirements of membership.  
(Rejected)

**B-2** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

## ARTICLE II – POSTS

### **Sec. 203 – Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.**

Amend Sec. 203 – Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees., National By-Laws, under **Quorum.**, by replacing the period at the end of the sentence with a comma and adding “physically present.” Also add the following after the paragraph titled **Quorum.**:

“**Electronic Attendance.** Provided that the Post has adopted additional rules pertaining to its conduct, members may be allowed to participate in meetings using technology that allows all participating members to see and hear each other simultaneously.” (Approved)

**B-3** (Proposed by Department of Connecticut)

## ARTICLE II - POSTS

### **Sec. 215 – Eligibility to Office.**

Amend Sec. 215 – Eligibility to Office., National By-Laws, by adding the following as a new paragraph after the second paragraph:

“Commencing with the elections of Post Commanders in 2015, Post Commanders shall serve no more than 3 consecutive terms as Post Commander, and cannot be considered again for the office of Post Commander in the same Post until 2 consecutive administrative years have passed.” (Rejected)

**B-4** (Proposed by Department of Mississippi)

## ARTICLE II - POSTS

### **Sec. 215 – Eligibility to Office.**

Amend Sec. 215 – Eligibility to Office., National By-Laws, by replacing the third paragraph with the following:

“Any officer or committee member whose annual dues anniversary date expires prior to the end of the term to which they have been elected or appointed shall remit payment for the ensuing year prior to installation to office.” (Rejected)

**B-5** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

## ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

### **Sec. 403 – Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.**

Amend Sec. 403 – Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Quorum; Authorized Attendees., National By-Laws, by replacing the sections titled

**Regular Meeting. and Quorum.** and add new section titled “**Electronic Attendance.**” with the following:

“**Regular Meeting.** Districts shall hold at least two (2) regular meetings each year for purposes of transacting business and conducting schools of instruction.

**Quorum.**

a. The minimum number of delegates required to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a District Convention shall not be less than one (1) delegate each from fifty (50) percent of Posts in the District.

b. The minimum number of delegates required to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a regular or special meeting shall not be less than one (1) delegate each from fifty (50) percent of Posts in the District, provided that when using electronic attendance, at least twenty five (25) percent are physically present.

**Electronic Attendance.** Provided that the District has adopted additional rules pertaining to its conduct, members may be allowed to participate in regular or special meetings using technology that allows all participating members to see and hear each other simultaneously.”  
(Approved)

**M-3** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS**

**Sec. 403 – Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees.**

Amend Sec. 403 – Regular, Special and Committee Meetings; Convention; Quorum; Authorized Attendees., Manual of Procedure, under **Regular Meeting.**, by replacing “promoting” with “conducting”.  
(Approved)

**B-6** (Proposed by Department of Mississippi)

**ARTICLE IV - DISTRICTS**

**Sec. 415 – Eligibility to Office.**

Amend Sec. 415 – Eligibility to Office., National By-Laws, by replacing the third paragraph with the following:

“Any officer or committee member whose annual dues anniversary date expires prior to the end of the term to which they have been elected or appointed shall remit payment for the ensuing year prior to installation to office.” (Rejected)

**M-4** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

#### ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

##### **Sec. 418 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.**

Amend Sec. 418 – Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under **(a) Officers. (1) Commander.** k., in the second sentence, by adding “within thirty (30 days)” after “forward a copy”.  
(Approved)

**B-7** (Proposed by Department of Mississippi)

#### ARTICLE V - DEPARTMENTS

##### **Sec. 515 – Eligibility to Office.**

Amend Sec. 515 – Eligibility to Office., National By-Laws, by replacing the third paragraph with the following:

“Any officer or committee member whose annual dues anniversary date expires prior to the end of the term to which they have been elected or appointed shall remit payment for the ensuing year prior to installation to office.” (Rejected)

**M-5** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

#### ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

##### **Sec. 516 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.**

Amend Sec. 516 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees., Manual of Procedure, in the first paragraph, at the end of the last sentence, by replacing “with the approval of a majority of the Department Council of Administration” with “as prescribed in Section 520.” (Approved)

**B-8** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

#### ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

##### **Sec. 520 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.**

Amend Sec. 520 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committees., National-By-Laws, by adding “**and Salaried Officers.**” at the end of the title. Under **Removal.**, replace the first paragraph with the following and remove the second paragraph:

“The Department Commander or Department Council of Administration may remove an elected officer, elected committee member or appointed salaried officer as prescribed in Section 520 of the Manual of Procedure.” (Approved)

**M-6** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

## ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

### Sec. 520 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committee Members.

Amend Sec. 520 – Vacancies and Removal of Elective Officers or Committees., Manual of Procedure, by adding “**and Salaried Officers.**” at the end of the title. Under **Removal.**, replace the first sentence with the following:

“The Department Commander or Department Council of Administration may, upon motion duly passed at any meeting, propose the removal of an elected officer, elected committee member or appointed salaried officer at the next stated meeting called for such purpose.” (Approved)

B-9 (Proposed by Department of Mississippi)

## ARTICLE VI - NATIONAL

### Sec. 615 – Eligibility to Office.

Amend Sec. 615 – Eligibility to Office., National By-Laws, by adding the following as a second paragraph:

“Any officer or National committee member whose annual dues anniversary date expires prior to the end of the term to which they have been elected or appointed shall remit payment for the ensuing year prior to installation to office.” (Rejected)

B-10 (Proposed by Department of California)

## ARTICLE VI - NATIONAL

### Sec. 622 – National Council of Administration-Composition, Powers and Duties.

Amend Sec. 622 – National Council of Administration-Composition, Powers and Duties., National By-Laws, by adding the following at the end of the section under **(b) Powers and Duties:**

“(14) In the event a Department’s duly elected National Representative is unable to attend a National Council of Administration meeting, whether regular or special, the Department Commander attend as a representative, representing his Department.” (Rejected)

M-7 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

## ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

### Sec. 709 – Control of Units.

Amend Sec. 709 – Control of Units., Manual of Procedure, in the first paragraph, second sentence by removing “Ladies”. (Approved)

**M-8** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS**

**Sec. 711 – Buddy Poppy.**

Amend Sec. 711 – Buddy Poppy., Manual of Procedure, in the second paragraph, first sentence, by removing “Ladies”. (Approved)

**B-11** (Proposed by Department of Maryland)

**ARTICLE IX - DISCIPLINE**

**Sec. 903 – Procedure for Disciplinary Actions.**

Amend Sec. 903 – Procedure for Disciplinary Actions., National By-Laws, by adding the following as a new paragraph after the second paragraph:

“The Commander-in-Chief shall have the authority to revoke the membership of a member who has been convicted of, or who entered a guilty or no contest plea to a felony, without the necessity of following the procedures listed in the remainder of this Section.”  
(Rejected)

**B-12** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**ARTICLE XI – LADIES AUXILIARY**

**Sec. 1101 – Organization and Disbandment of Auxiliaries.**

Amend ARTICLE XI – LADIES AUXILIARY, Sec. 1101 – Organization and Disbandment of Auxiliaries., National By-Laws, by replacing the title of the Article and the entire section with the following:

**ARTICLE XI - AUXILIARY**

**Sec. 1101-Organization, Disbandment, and Transition of Auxiliaries.**

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary is an incorporated national association of eligible members chartered by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Such association shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the Commander-in-Chief and the National Council of Administration.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary shall be governed by such By-Laws, Rules and Regulations and Ritual as may be adopted by it and by the lawful orders issued by the National Officers of the Auxiliary, provided such By-Laws, Rules and Regulations, Ritual and orders do not conflict with the Congressional Charter, By-Laws, Manual of Procedure or Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States or the lawful orders or directives of the National



Convention, the Commander-in-Chief or the National Council of Administration of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary may issue charters to Department, District, County Council, and Post Auxiliaries, provided that the establishment of such Auxiliary shall have been approved by the respective Department, District, County Council or Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and subject to its control. Formation, control and disbandment of auxiliaries as well as suspension or cancellation of charters shall be in the manner prescribed in the Manual of Procedure.

Auxiliary units approved and chartered prior to the adoption of these provisions shall be entitled to retain such unit's seal, uniforms, emblems, badges, and insignia so long as such seal, uniforms, emblems, badges, and insignia are serviceable and available, for a period of up to five-years following the adoption of this provision. Auxiliary officers shall make such reports as may be required in the Manual of Procedure." (Approved)

**M-9** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

#### **ARTICLE XI – LADIES AUXILIARY**

##### **Sec. 1101 – Organization and Disbandment of Auxiliaries.**

Amend ARTICLE XI – LADIES AUXILIARY, Sec. 1101 – Organization and Disbandment of Auxiliaries., Manual of Procedure, by replacing the title of the article and the entire section with the following:

#### **ARTICLE XI - AUXILIARY**

##### **Sec. 1101—Organization, Disbandment, and Transition of Auxiliaries.**

- (a) Formation.** Auxiliaries shall be hereafter formed and approved in accordance with the following provisions. Auxiliaries approved and chartered prior to the adoption of these provisions need not be reapproved.
- (1) By Departments.** No auxiliary to a Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be formed unless approved by two-thirds vote of the delegates assembled at an annual Department Convention. Each Department of the Auxiliary shall be identical in geographical limits with the respective Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and shall be known and identified by the same name as the Department whose name it bears.
- (2) By Districts.** No auxiliary to a District of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be formed unless approved at a regular or special meeting by two-thirds vote of the delegates assembled in such District. Notice of the proposed formation of an auxiliary to

the District shall be given all Posts in the District in writing at least twenty (20) days prior to any meeting during which a vote to determine the formation of an auxiliary to the District will be made. Each District of the Auxiliary shall be identical in geographical limits with the respective District of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and shall be known and identified by the same number as the District whose number it bears.

**(3) By County Councils.** No auxiliary to a County Council of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be formed unless approved at a regular or special meeting by two-thirds vote of the delegates assembled in such County Council. Notice of the proposed formation of an auxiliary to the County Council shall be given all Posts of the County Council in writing at least twenty (20) days prior to any meeting during which a vote to determine the formation of an auxiliary to the County Council will be made. Each County Council of the Auxiliary shall be identical in geographical limits with the respective County Council of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and shall be known and identified by the same name as the County Council whose name it bears.

**(4) By Posts.** No auxiliary to a Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be formed unless approved by a two-thirds vote of the Post membership present at a regular or special meeting, due notice of the proposed formation of an auxiliary having been given the entire membership in writing at least twenty (20) days prior to a regular meeting, or special meeting called for the aforementioned purpose. Each Auxiliary shall be assigned the name and number of the Post with which it is affiliated.

**(b) Governance.**

**(1) Department Auxiliaries.** Department Auxiliaries shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the Convention and Council of Administration of the respective Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Department Auxiliaries shall be governed by the By-Laws, Ritual, and Rules and Regulations of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary and the Department Auxiliary and lawful orders issued by their respective officers, provided they do not conflict with the Congressional Charter, By-Laws or Manual of Procedure of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and By-Laws of the Department whose name it bears or lawful orders issued by the Commander-in-Chief, the National Council of Administration or the Department Council of Administration.

**(2) District, County Council and Post Auxiliaries.** The Auxiliary to a District, County Council or Post shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the respective District, County Council or Posts of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States whose name or number it bears.

Such auxiliary shall be governed by the By-Laws, Ritual and Rules and Regulations of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary and the Department Auxiliary and lawful orders issued by their respective officers provided they do not conflict with the Congressional Charter, By-Laws or Manual of Procedure of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Department By-Laws or the By-Laws of the District, County Council or Post whose name and number it bears, or lawful orders issued by the Commander-in-Chief, the National Council of Administration, or the Department Council of Administration.

**(c) Suspension and Discontinuance.**

**(1) National.** The Commander-in-Chief may suspend the Charter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary if its conduct, or that of its officers or Council of Administration, is determined to be detrimental to the interests of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

The Charter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary may not be suspended by the Commander-in-Chief for a period longer than thirty (30) days without the consent of the National Council of Administration of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Such consent shall be given only if a majority of the members of the Council determines that it is in the best interest of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to suspend the Charter for a longer period of time.

While the Charter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary is suspended, its officers shall have no authority and shall not issue any orders other than those necessary to keep a National Headquarters office in operation.

**(2) Departments.** The Commander-in-Chief may direct the suspension of the charter of any Department Auxiliary upon the recommendation of the National President of the Auxiliary or the Commander of such Department when it is shown to the satisfaction of the Commander-in-Chief that the conduct of such Department Auxiliary, or its officers or Council of Administration, is detrimental to the interests of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. A Department Auxiliary charter may not be suspended by the Commander-in-Chief for a period longer than thirty (30) days without the consent of the National Council of Administration of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Such consent shall be given only if a majority of the members of the Council determines it is in the best interest of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to suspend the charter for a longer period of time.

**(3) Districts, County Councils and Posts.** The Commander-in-Chief may direct the suspension of the charter of any District, County Council or Post auxiliary for a definite or indefinite period of time and may order the National President to order the cancellation of the charter

of any District, County Council or Post auxiliary if the conduct of such auxiliary or its officers is determined to be detrimental to the best interest of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

**(d) Cancellation.**

**(1) By Departments.** A Department may, by a vote of eighty percent of the delegates assembled at an annual Department Convention, following written notice mailed to each Post in the Department at least twenty (20) days before such Convention, vote to request cancellation of the charter of its Auxiliary. The notice must state the contemplated action and the reason therefor. If the Department votes to request cancellation of the charter of its Auxiliary, the Department Commander shall certify that action in writing and forward such certification to the Commander-in-Chief. If determined it is in the best interest of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to do so, the Commander-in-Chief shall direct the National President to cancel the charter of the Department Auxiliary.

**(2) By Districts or County Councils.** A District or County Council may, by a vote of eighty percent of the delegates assembled at a regular or special meeting following written notice to each Post in the District or County Council at least twenty (20) days before such meeting, vote to request cancellation of the charter of its Auxiliary. The notice must state the contemplated action and the reason therefor. If the District or County Council votes to request cancellation of the charter of its Auxiliary, it shall certify the action in writing and forward same to the Department Commander who shall forward it to the Commander-in-Chief with a recommendation. After review and if the Commander-in-Chief determines it to be in the best interest of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to do so, the Commander-in-Chief shall direct the National President to cancel the charter of the District or County Council Auxiliary.

**(3) By Posts.** A Post may, by vote of eighty percent of its members present at a meeting following written notice mailed to each member of the Post in good standing at least twenty (20) days before said meeting, vote to request cancellation of the charter of its Auxiliary. The notice must state the contemplated action and the reason therefor. If the Post votes to request cancellation of the charter of its Auxiliary, it shall certify the action in writing and forward same to the Department Commander who shall forward it to the Commander-in-Chief with a recommendation. After review and if the Commander-in-Chief determines it to be in the best interest of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to do so, the Commander-in-Chief shall direct the National President to cancel the charter of the Post Auxiliary.

**(e) Disposition of Property.**

**(1) National.** In the event of the surrender, cancellation or forfeiture of the Charter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary, its records, monies and all other property shall immediately become the property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

**(2) Department, District, County Council and Post Auxiliaries.** In the event of the surrender, cancellation or forfeiture of the charter of the Auxiliary to a Post, County Council, District or Department, all monies, official records and all other property shall immediately be surrendered to such officer or officers as may be provided by the By-Laws and Rules and Regulations of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary for disposition in accordance with those By-Laws and Rules and Regulations. Notice of such contemplated action shall be given to the Post, County Council, District and Department Commander thirty (30) days prior to the surrender or cancellation of an Auxiliary charter.

**(f) Reports.**

**(1) National.** The National President of the Auxiliary shall, within thirty (30) days after induction into office, submit an itemized report of the financial and membership status of the Auxiliary to the Commander-in-Chief for information and for submission to the National Council of Administration.

The National Treasurer of the Auxiliary shall prepare a quarterly report for the National President and the National Council of Administration of the Auxiliary, and submit copies thereof to the Department Presidents of the Auxiliary and to the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The National Treasurer of the Auxiliary also shall prepare for the National President, before each National Convention, a list showing the Auxiliaries in good standing and the number of delegates to which each is entitled.

No less than ten (10) days prior to the meeting of the National Council of Administration of the Auxiliary at which the annual budget is adopted, the National Treasurer shall submit a proposed budget to the National President, and each member of the National Council of Administration of the Auxiliary. Immediately following the adoption of the annual budget by the National Council of Administration of the Auxiliary, the National Treasurer shall submit a copy of the approved budget to the Commander-in-Chief.

**(2) Department.** The Department President of the respective Department Auxiliary shall, within thirty (30) days after induction into office, submit to the Department Commander an itemized report of the financial and membership status of the Department Auxiliary for information and for submission by the Department Commander to the Department Council of Administration.

**(3) Districts, County Councils, Posts.** The President of the Auxiliary to a District, County Council or Post shall, within thirty (30) days after induction into office, submit to the Commander of the respective District, County Council or Post an itemized report of the financial and membership status of the auxiliary. Such reports will be acknowledged by each respective Commander during the next regular meeting and may be read to the members assembled.

**(g) Liaison.** There is established a committee composed of the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief and the Adjutant General who shall meet with a corresponding committee composed of the Senior Vice President, Junior Vice President and the National Secretary of the Auxiliary. This combined committee shall meet each year, at the call of the Commander-in-Chief, to consider all matters affecting the welfare of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary. The purpose of the committee shall be to coordinate the activities of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the activities of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary, and to insure full compliance with the Congressional Charter, By-Laws and Manual of Procedure of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and the mandates of the National Convention and National Council of Administration of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.” (Approved)

**B-13** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

#### **ARTICLE XI – LADIES AUXILIARY**

##### **Sec. 1102 – Eligibility.**

Amend Sec. 1102 – Eligibility., National By-Laws, by replacing the entire section with the following:

“Membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary shall be limited to spouses, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, children, and grandchildren of a person who was or is eligible for membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Persons eligible for membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall not be eligible for membership in the Auxiliary; however, members in good standing of the Auxiliary and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States prior to August 20, 2015 may retain membership in both.” (Approved)

**B-14** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

#### **ARTICLE XI – LADIES AUXILIARY**

##### **Sec. 1103 – Ritual, By-Laws and Regulations.**

Amend Sec. 1103 – Ritual, By-Laws and Regulations., National By-Laws, in the first sentence, by removing “Ladies Auxiliary to the” and adding “Auxiliary” after “Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States”. (Approved)

**B-15** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**ARTICLE XI – LADIES AUXILIARY**

**Sec. 1104 – Incorporation.**

Amend Sec. 1104 – Incorporation., National By-Laws, under (a) in the first sentence, by removing “Ladies Auxiliary to the” and “Ladies”. Add “Auxiliary” after “Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States”.

Under (b) in the first sentence, remove “Ladies Auxiliary to the” and add “Auxiliary” after the first “Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States”. (Approved)

**M-10** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**ARTICLE XI – LADIES AUXILIARY**

**Sec. 1104 – Incorporation.**

Amend Sec. 1104 – Incorporation., Manual of Procedure, by replacing the entire section with the following:

**“National.** The Articles of Incorporation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary, should it incorporate, and any amendments thereto, must include the following provisions:

- (1) The active and voting membership of this corporation shall, at all times, consist of and be confined to the active membership in good standing of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary.
- (2) This incorporated organization shall be and remain under the jurisdiction of the National Convention, Commander-in-Chief and National Council of Administration of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and subject to its Charter, By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.
- (3) In the event of a dissolution of this corporation, or the simultaneous dissolution of this corporation and the forfeiture of the Charter issued to it by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, title to all of the assets shall pass to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to be disposed of according to its By-Laws. At no time shall the assets of the corporation be distributed among the individual members thereof.

- (4) The Articles shall, in addition, contain a provision specifically excluding from the powers of the corporation the power to own or hold real property.

**Department, Districts, County Councils, Posts.** The Articles of Incorporation of any Department, District, County Council or Post Auxiliary, should it incorporate, and any amendments thereto, must include the following provisions:

- (1) The active and voting membership of this corporation shall, at all times, consist of and be confined to the active membership in good standing of the (Department of \_\_\_\_\_, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary) or (Post \_\_\_\_\_, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary).
- (2) This incorporated organization shall be and at all times remain under the jurisdiction of the National Convention, National President and National Council of Administration of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary, the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the (Department of \_\_\_\_\_, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States) or (Post No. \_\_\_\_\_, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States) and subject to the By-Laws and Rules and Regulations of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary and the Charter, By-Laws and Manual of Procedure of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.
- (3) In the event of a dissolution of this corporation, all the assets shall be the property of (Department of \_\_\_\_\_) or (the Post \_\_\_\_\_) Auxiliary, and in the event of any dissolution of their corporation and the forfeiture of the charter issued by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary entitled to all assets of this corporation shall pass through the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary or the Department to be disposed of in accordance with the By-Laws, rules and regulations of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary, and at no time shall the assets of the corporation be distributed among the individual members thereof.
- (4) The Articles shall, in addition, contain a provision specifically excluding from the powers of the corporation the power to own or hold real property.” (Approved)

**B-16** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group.  
Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)



## ARTICLE XII – MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE

### **Sec. 1201 – Formation.**

Amend Sec. 1201 – Formation., National By-Laws, under (d), in the first sentence, by removing “for adult females” and “Ladies Auxiliary to the” and adding “Auxiliary” after “Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States”. (Approved)

*R-1 (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)*

*Amend the Sections below in the Ritual, by removing or replacing “he, him, his or himself” and the word(s) after (if appropriate) with the following, in the order they appear in each Section.*

### **FOREWARD (Page 1)**

*In the third and fourth paragraph, replace “his” with “their”.*

### **BALLOTING FOR CANDIDATES (Pages 9 - 14)**

*Under the third **Commander:**, inside the parentheses, replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under **Senior Vice Commander:**, inside the second set of parentheses, second sentence, replace “he” with “the applicant”.*

*Under the last **Commander:**, in the second sentence, remove “himself” and the parentheses around “themselves”.*

### **OPENING POST CEREMONIES (Pages 14 – 18)**

*Under **Officer of Day:**, inside the parentheses, third sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under the fifth **Commander:**, inside the parentheses, first sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under the subtitle **PRAYER, Chaplain:**, inside the last set of parentheses, replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under the third **Commander:**, in the first paragraph, third sentence, replace “he” with “the Commander”. In the second paragraph, second sentence, replace “He” with “The Officer of the Day”.*

*Under the last **Commander:**, in the first set of parentheses, replace “his” with “their”.*

### **INITIATION CEREMONY (Brief Form) (Pages 21 - 28)**

Under **Adjutant**;, inside the parentheses, replace “he” with “the Adjutant”. Under the third **Commander**;, inside the parentheses, second sentence, replace “he” with “the Quartermaster”.

Under the subtitle **PRAYER, Junior Vice Commander**;, in the first paragraph, third sentence, replace “he is” with “they are”. Inside the last set of parentheses, third sentence, replace “he” with “the Officer of Day”.

#### **CEREMONIAL INITIATION (Pages 28 - 42)**

Under the subtitle **PREPARATION OF ROOM**, in the fourth paragraph, third sentence, replace “himself” with “themselves”. In the fifth paragraph, replace every “his” with “their”.

Under the subtitle, **CEREMONIAL, Chaplain**;, inside the last set of parentheses, replace “his” with “their”.

Under the subtitle, **PRAYER, second Commander**;, in the last set of parentheses, replace “his” with “their”.

Under the third **Commander**;, inside the parentheses, second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

Under the fourth **Commander**;, inside the last set of parentheses, third sentence, replace every “his” with “their”.

Under the second **Junior Vice Commander**;, second paragraph, replace “he” with “they”.

#### **PRESENTATION OF INSIGNE (Pages 42 - 46)**

Under the first **Commander**;, in the fourth paragraph, second sentence, replace “he” with “they”.

Under the second **Commander**;, in the first paragraph, replace “he” with “they” and every “his” with “their”. In the second paragraph, replace “his” with “their” and “he” with “they”.

Under the third **Commander**;, inside the first set of parentheses, second sentence, replace “his” with “their” and “him” with “the Commander”.

#### **INSTALLATION OF POST OFFICERS (Pages 53 - 57)**

Under the third **Installing Officer**;, replace “his” with “their”.

Under the sixth **Installing Officer**:, in the second paragraph, replace “himself” with “themselves” and remove “him”. In the third paragraph, third sentence, replace “him” with “the retiring Commander” and “he” with “the Commander”. In the fourth sentence, replace “He” with “The retiring Commander”.

Under **Retiring Commander or Aide**:, inside first parentheses, replace “he” with “the retiring Commander”.

#### **DEDICATING POST COLORS (Pages 57 - 60)**

Under the first **Dedicating Officer**:, in the first paragraph, replace “he/she represents” with “they represent.”

Under the second **Dedicating Officer**:, in the second paragraph, second sentence, replace “his/her” with “their”. In the third sentence, replace “He/She holds” with “They hold”.

Under the third **Dedicating Officer**:, in the second paragraph, replace every “his/her” with “their”.

Under the fourth **Dedicating Officer**:, inside the parentheses, first sentence, replace “He/She reads” with “They Read” and in the second sentence, replace “he/she” with “they”.

Under the fifth **Commander**:, in the second paragraph, first sentence, replace “he/she faces” with “they face”. In the third paragraph, first sentence, replace “his/her” with “their”.

#### **INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS (National or Department) (Pages 60 - 67)**

Under the fifth **Commander**:, replace “He” with “The Adjutant”.

Under the fourth **Installing Officer**:, replace “his” with “their”.

Under the fifth **Installing Officer**:, replace “his” with “their”.

Under the subtitle **PRAYER**, third **Installing Officer**:, in the second sentence, replace every “his” with “their”.

Under the subtitle **COMMANDER’S OBLIGATION**, in the first **Installing Officer**:, third sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

#### **MEMORIAL SERVICE (Pages 68 - 73)**

Inside the parentheses, last sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

*Under the first **National Chaplain**; in the second paragraph, second sentence, replace every “his” with “their”. In the fourth sentence, replace “he” with “the Commander”.*

*Under the subtitle **PRAYER**, under the last **National Chaplain**; after the song “America”, inside the parentheses, first sentence, replace “he or she” with “they”.*

### **MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE (Pages 73 - 78)**

*After the **HEADQUARTERS GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC Washington, D.C., May 5, 1868, GENERAL ORDER NO. 11** in the first paragraph, replace every “his” with “their” throughout the paragraph.*

*Under the second **Commander**; inside the last set of parentheses, remove “he”.*

*Under the fourth **Commander**; inside the last set of parentheses, replace the period at the end of the first sentence with a comma and replace “He holds” at beginning of the second sentence with “holding”.*

*Under the fifth **Commander**; inside the parentheses, replace the period at the end of the first sentence with a comma and replace “He holds” at the beginning of the second sentence with “holding”.*

*Under the sixth **Commander**; inside the parentheses, replace the period at the end of the first sentence with a comma and replace “He holds” at the beginning of the second sentence with “holding”.*

*Under the eighth **Commander**; inside the parentheses, second sentence, remove “himself to” and “he”.*

*Under the ninth **Commander**; inside the parentheses, remove “he”.*

*Under the tenth **Commander**; inside the parentheses, second sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

### **DEDICATING A MEMORIAL (Pages 78 - 82)**

*In the second paragraph, first sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under the third **Commander**; second paragraph, inside parentheses, first sentence, replace “his” with “their” and replace the period at the end of the sentence with a comma and replace “He” at the beginning of the second sentence with “and”.*

Under **Chaplain:**, inside the second parentheses, first sentence, remove “his”.

### **FUNERAL CEREMONIES (Pages 83 - 107)**

In the second paragraph, first sentence, remove “his”. In the fourth sentence, replace “he is” with “they are”.

Under **Chaplain.**, replace every “He” with “The Chaplain” (using capitalization where appropriate) throughout this section with the exception of the removal of “he” in the second paragraph, second sentence, at the end of the fourth sentence and in the third paragraph after the second semicolon. In the second paragraph, second sentence, capitalize the “t” in “then”, in the fourth sentence, replace “desires” with “desired”. Also, replace every “his” with “their” throughout this section with the exception of the removal of “his” in the second paragraph, fourth sentence.

Under **Escort and Firing Party.**, replace every “his” with “their” throughout this section. In the eleventh paragraph, second sentence replace “He raises the rifle” with “Each member of the firing party raises their rifle”. Also in the eleventh paragraph, third sentence, remove “He” and capitalize the “t” in “then”.

Under the subtitle **CHAPEL SERVICE**, first **Commander:**, replace every “his” with “their” throughout this section. In the first paragraph, third sentence, replace “As a brave man he” with “Bravely they”. In the second paragraph, replace “him” with “them” and “he has” with “they have”.

Under the first **Chaplain:**, first paragraph, third sentence, replace “him” with “them”. In the fourth sentence, replace “his” with “their”.

Under **Junior Vice-Commander:**, in the first sentence inside the parentheses, replace “his” with “their”. In the second sentence, replace “He” with “They”. In the third sentence, remove “he”. Inside the last parentheses, replace “his” with “their”.

Under **Senior Vice-Commander:**, inside the first parentheses, replace “he” with “and”. Inside the last parentheses, replace “his” with “their”.

Under **Officer of the Day:**, inside the first parentheses, second sentence, replace “he” with “and”. Replace every “his” with “their” throughout this section.

*Under the third **Commander**:, inside the first parentheses, replace “he” with “and”. Replace every “his” with “their” throughout this section.*

*Under the second **Chaplain**:, replace “his/her” with “their” throughout this section.*

*Under the subtitle **VFW BURIAL RITUAL, Commander**:, in the second paragraph, second sentence, replace “As a brave man he” with “Bravely they” and replace every “his” with “their” throughout this section. In the third paragraph, replace “he has” with “they have”.*

*Under the subtitle **PRAYER, Chaplain**:, inside the last parentheses, replace “he” with “they”. In the paragraphs following the last parentheses, replace every “his” with “their” in paragraphs one and four. In paragraph three, replace “his” with “HIS”. In paragraph one, replace “he” with “they”.*

*Under **Commander**:, replace every “his” and “his/her” with “their” throughout this section.*

*Under the subtitle **SPECIAL NOTICE**, replace every “his” with “their” and “he” with “they” throughout this section.*

*Under the subtitle **CEREMONY FOR DRAPING CHARTER, Chaplain**:, replace “his/her” with “their”, “he/she” with “they” and “him/her” with “them” throughout this section.*

#### **HONORING VISITING OFFICERS (Pages 109 - 110)**

*In the first paragraph, second sentence, replace “he” with “they” and “him” with “them”. In the third sentence, replace “he is” with “they are”. In the fourth sentence, replace “he remains” with “they remain”.*

*In the sixth and seventh **Commander**:, replace every “his” with “their”.*

#### **TRIBUTE TO COMRADES – P.O.W. OR M.I.A. (Pages 110 - 113)**

*Under third **O.D.**:, inside the last parentheses, first sentence, replace “his” with “their”.*

*Under **Commander**:, inside the parentheses, second sentence, replace “he” with “they”. (Approved)*

#### **R-2 (Pages 3 - 4) (Proposed by Department of Kansas)**

##### **RITUAL**

##### **COMMEMORATIVE TRIBUTES – THE DATES**

*Amend Chapter Title – Commemorative Tributes – The Dates, Ritual, by adding “(traditional)” after “May 30- Memorial Day.” and below*

that date, add “Last Monday in May – Memorial Day (celebrated)”.  
(Rejected)

**R-3 (Pages 4 - 9)** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**RITUAL**

**SPECIAL PRAYERS – PRAYER AT A FUNERAL WITHOUT FORMAL RITUAL AND PRAYER FOR DECEASED COMRADES AND/OR SISTERS**

Amend Chapter Title Special Prayers – Prayer at a Funeral Without Formal Ritual, Ritual in the second sentence, by replacing “(Sister)” with (Auxiliary Member).

Amend Chapter Title Special Prayers – Prayer For Deceased Comrades and/or Sisters, Ritual, by replacing “SISTERS” with “MEMBERS OF THE AUXILIARY” in the title. (Approved)

**R-4 (Pages 18 - 19)** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**RITUAL**

**ORDER OF BUSINESS (Post)**

Amend Chapter Title Order of Business (Post), Ritual, under no. 2, by replacing “widows” with “surviving spouses”. (Approved)

**R-5 (Pages 23, 35 and 47)** (Proposed by Department of Virginia)

**RITUAL**

**INITIATION CEREMONY (Brief Form)**

**CEREMONIAL INITIATION**

**INSTITUTING NEW POST**

**(MEMBER’S OBLIGATION)**

Amend Chapter Titles – Initiation Ceremony (Brief Form), Ceremonial Initiation and Instituting New Post, Ritual, by replacing the MEMBER’S OBLIGATION located in these Chapter Titles with the following:

“In the presence of Almighty God and the members of this order- I (state your name) do of my own free will and accord, solemnly promise and declare that I will always bear true compliance, allegiance, and loyalty to the Constitution of the United States, and the Congressional Charter, By-Laws and Rituals of this order.

That I will, if in my power, always protect this organization and its members from all wrongdoing, and only propose for membership persons who are eligible and worthy.

Should my affiliation with the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States cease in any way, I will consider this pledge as binding outside

of the order as though I had remained a member, and protect its works from unauthorized persons.

All this I promise and pledge upon the honor of a true comrade and citizen of our great republic.” (Rejected)

**R-6 (Pages 28 - 42)** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**RITUAL**

**CEREMONIAL INITIATION**

Amend Chapter Title Ceremonial Initiation, Ritual, under subtitle **CEREMONIAL**, third **Senior Vice Commander**:, in the third paragraph by adding “charitable” after “historical”. In the sixth paragraph, replace “widows” with “surviving spouses”. (Approved)

**R-7** (Proposed by Department of Virginia)

**RITUAL**

**INSTALLATION OF DISTRICT OFFICERS**

Add Chapter Title “**INSTALLATION OF DISTRICT OFFICERS**” with the following:

“(Installation comes under the head of new business. The Commander should call the installing officer to the chair and remain standing while being questioned).

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Commander, the term for which you and your subordinate officers were elected will terminate upon the date of installation of your Department Commander. I have been selected by the Commander-elect, in accordance with the National By-Laws, to install your newly elected officers. Have the officers for the ensuing year been duly elected?

**Commander:** They have.

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Adjutant, do you have on file proof of eligibility for all officers to be installed during this installation?

**Adjutant:** I have.

**Installing Officer:** I would remind any officer not having proof of eligibility on file and not being installed at this time that the By-Laws prescribe you must, within sixty (60) days of election or appointment, submit to the Adjutant for their file a copy of your proof of eligibility.

**Installing Officer:** Have you the charter in your possession?



**Commander:** I have.

**Installing Officer:** You will now surrender the gavel to me. (Commander relinquishes the gavel to the installing officer.)

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Commander, your duties as presiding officer of this District will terminate following the Department Convention. It is proper to remind you that, when you assume the chair of past commander, it will be your duty to assist your successor with all the counsel and experience you have gained during your term of office. I now invite you to assist me in the installation ceremonies by presenting at the altar the officers-elect.

(If the Commander is to succeed themselves the installing officer will appoint a past officer as aide-de-camp to assist them.)

(Officers to be installed are placed in a semi-circle behind the altar, facing the commander's station. Retiring commander, if not re-elected, or the aide-de-camp takes position before the altar, facing the semi-circle. Officers-elect will salute the retiring commander (or aide-de-camp) and be acknowledged with the same in return. The retiring commander (or aide-de-camp) will then about-face and salute the installing officer who will return the salute. The retiring commander or aide-de-camp reports):

**Retiring Commander or Aide:** Comrade, the officers-elect are in proper position to receive the obligation.

(Salutes are exchanged and the retiring commander or aide-de-camp takes station to the left and slightly to the rear of the installing officer.)

(Installing officer raps twice, advances to the altar.)

**Installing Officer:** Officers-elect of District \_\_\_\_\_ of the Department of \_\_\_\_\_ Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I will now administer to you the officers' obligation.

You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left and repeat after me:

### OFFICERS' OBLIGATION

I do hereby solemnly promise---that I will faithfully discharge to the best of my ability---the duties of the office to which I have been elected or appointed---according to the By-Laws and Ritual---of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States---together with the By-Laws of this district. I solemnly promise---that at the close of the term to which I have been elected or appointed---or sooner if so ordered by proper authority---I will surrender immediately---to

only the duly authorized of persons---all records, money or other properties of this organization---in my possession or under my control. All this I freely promise---upon my honor as a true comrade---and a citizen of our great republic. So help me God.

**Installing Officer:** As you were! Parade rest.

## PRAYER

**Retiring or Acting Chaplain:** Almighty God, our Guide and Divine Protector, give Thy blessing upon these, our Comrades, who now become fellow officers. We beseech Thee, O Lord, who art ever present amongst us, grant wisdom unto them, so that in their deliberations they continue to favor Thee, our glorious Country and to better our organization. May Thy strength sustain them. May Thy power preserve them. May Thy hand protect them in the faithful and fruitful performance of their duties. Amen.

**Installing Officer:** As you were! Comrade Retiring Commander (or aide-de-camp) you will now conduct the officers to their stations. (Officers remain standing, one rap of the gavel. Outgoing officers salute incoming officers and surrender stations.)

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Retiring Commander, you may assume your station. (Left of Commander.) Officers, you now occupy the positions of honor to which your comrades have elected you; the duties of which you will assume. Learn well the responsibilities entrusted to you so that you may intelligently discharge the duties you are to undertake. The By-Laws and Ritual of our organization prescribe in detail the duties of your offices. By virtue of the confidence placed in you, through your election, we assume that you will acquaint yourselves thoroughly with your duties. (Or installing officers may elaborate by calling each newly installed officer individually and instructing them briefly, as follows):

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Senior-Vice Commander, it will be your duty to assist the Commander in preserving order, to preside in the absence of the Commander and to perform such other duties as may be required by our laws and Ritual.

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Junior-Vice Commander, it will be your duty to assist the Commander and Senior-Vice Commander in preserving order, to preside in their absence, and perform such other duties as may be required of you by our By-Laws and Ritual.

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Quartermaster, it will be your duty to take charge of and accurately account for the funds of this District. The duties of your officer are prescribed in detail in the By-Laws.

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Adjutant, it shall be your duty to serve as the official corresponding officer of the District. The duties of your officer are prescribed in detail in the By-Laws.

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Judge Advocate, you are the legal assistant and adviser to the Commander and District in all legal matters pertaining to this organization and to assist post Judge Advocates. You shall perform such other duties incident to your office as the By-Laws may require.

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Chaplain, the members of this District look to you for spiritual and inspirational guidance. It will be your duty to visit and comfort the sick and disabled members of the District and to perform such other duties as may be required of you by the By-Laws and Ritual of this organization.

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Surgeon, it will be your duty to promote and direct health programs for the benefit of the District and to assist Post Surgeons. You shall perform such other duties in the District as are incident to our office.

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Inspector, it will be your responsibility to ensure that each post in the District is inspected in accordance with the Department By-Laws or as directed. You shall perform such other duties as may be incident to the office or as required by the By-Laws of this organization.

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Chief of Staff, it shall be your duty to assist the District Commander in the performance of their duties as to perform such actions as may be incident to the office or as required by the By-Laws of this organization.

**Installing Officer:** Comrade District Trustees, it will be your duty to make correct audits and reports of the District records as prescribed by the VFW By-Laws.

**Installing Officer:** Comrade Commander, this District will be placed in your charge upon the date of installation of your Department Commander, immediately following the Department Convention.

It will be your responsibility to see that the Trustees, in accordance with the National By-Laws, audit the books of the Adjutant and Quartermaster.

Comrade Commander, it will further be your obligation to see that the Quartermaster is bonded in accordance with the National By-Laws.

Much of the success of this District will depend on you. Guard well its interests, so that you may fill your high office acceptably.

It will be necessary that you study carefully the principles of this organization, since it will be your duty to enforce its By-Laws and Ritual.

I present you with this gavel, the emblem of authority. Upon assuming office you will use it firmly, but with discretion (presents gavel).

Comrade Commander, Commander-elect, officers and members of District \_ , Department of \_\_\_\_\_, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I proclaim the officers duly installed for the ensuing year.  
(Business resumed.)” (Approved)

**R-8 (Page 68)** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**RITUAL**

**HONORING GOLD STAR PARENTS**

Amend Chapter Title Honoring Gold Star Parents, Ritual, in the last paragraph, by removing “Ladies”. (Approved)

**R-9 (Pages 68 - 73)** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**RITUAL**

**MEMORIAL SERVICE**

Amend Chapter Title Memorial Service, Ritual, under the first **Commander-in-Chief;**, by replacing “Ladies” with “Members”.

Under the second **National Chaplain;**, in the first and second paragraph, remove “Ladies”.

Under subtitle **PRAYER**, sixth **National Chaplain;**, remove “Ladies”.

Under **Chaplain of Ladies Auxiliary;**, remove “Ladies” in the title.

Under the eleventh **National Chaplain;**, replace “Ladies” with “Members”. (Approved)

**R-10 (Pages 73 - 78)** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**RITUAL**

**MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE**

Amend Chapter Title Memorial Day Service, Ritual, under General Order No. 11, first paragraph, fifth sentence, remove “Ladies”.

Under **Chaplain:**, second paragraph, third sentence, replace “widows” with “surviving spouses”.

Under **Officer of the Day:**, last sentence in parentheses, replace “Ladies” with “the”.

Under the seventh **Commander:**, in the first sentence, remove “Madam” and “Ladies”. In the last sentences in parentheses, replace the period after the first sentence with a comma and replace “She holds” with “holding”. (Approved)

**R-11 (Pages 110 - 113)** (Recommended by National By-Laws Study Group. Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief)

**RITUAL**

**TRIBUTE TO COMRADES – P.O.W. OR M.I.A.**

Amend Chapter Title Tribute to Comrades – P.O.W. or M.I.A., Ritual, in the third paragraph, second sentence, by removing “Ladies”.

Under the first **O.D.:**, first sentence, replace “sisters” with “members of the auxiliary”.

Under the third **O.D.:**, in the last paragraph, first sentence, replace “ladies are” with “auxiliary is”. In the second sentence, replace “lady” with “auxiliary member”.

Under **Commander:**, inside the parentheses, first sentence, replace “ladies are” with “auxiliary is” and “ladies” with “auxiliary”. (Approved)

**RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL  
ORGANIZATION AT THE 116TH NATIONAL CONVENTION,  
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA**

Resolution No. 201 (Submitted by Department of Kentucky)

**LIFE MEMBERSHIP CREDIT FOR VFW**

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has benefited greatly for more than 100 years due to the involvement of its Ladies Auxiliary; and

WHEREAS, there are currently many women who are not only qualified to be members of both of these organizations, but in fact are members of both organizations; and

WHEREAS, current life members of the Ladies Auxiliary may in the future become eligible to be members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars; and

WHEREAS, these Ladies Auxiliary members may lose a significant portion of their life member fee as a result of having to become members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Department of Kentucky, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States at its annual Convention on June 12, 2015 that should the changes to the National By-Laws occur at the 116th National Convention that requires those Ladies Auxiliary members who become eligible to be members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars after August 20, 2015 that they be given life membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 202 (Submitted by Department of California)

**PURGE DELINQUENT MEMBERS FROM ROLLS**

WHEREAS, Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts rely on VFW National Headquarters Membership Department to provide valid membership rosters of those comrades in good standing; and

WHEREAS, VFW Posts rely on VFW National Headquarters Membership Department to remove members not in good standing from Post membership rosters; and

WHEREAS, VFW Posts monitor delinquent members that are kept on membership rolls for an arbitrary and unreasonably long period of time, to wit, three years after expiration of most recently paid dues; and

WHEREAS, Post members not in good standing that remain on the rolls unnecessarily burden Posts with “ghost” members that count against total membership while aggravating attempts to achieve 100 percent membership goals; and

WHEREAS, VFW National Headquarters Membership Department mails renewal notices to members with expiring membership; and

WHEREAS, Posts aggressively pursue membership renewals via mail, email, phone calls, and personal visits; and

WHEREAS, Post members not in good standing for one year from expiration of the most recently paid dues have clearly taken the position that they intend not to renew their membership; and

WHEREAS, the Manual of Procedure, Article 1, Section 106—Former Members., states: “The annual dues for a former member must be accepted without reapplication to membership if tendered to his Post within one year of the date on which he became unpaid. A member whose dues remain unpaid for a period of more than one year may be required to reapply for membership in their former Post as prescribed in Section 102 of the National By-Laws.”; and

WHEREAS, the National By-Laws, Article 1, Section 105—Members in Good Standing., states: “A member whose dues are unpaid after their anniversary date ceases to be a member in good standing and loses all rights to membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.”; and

WHEREAS, a member not in good standing, having lost all rights to membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars, should be removed from Post rolls; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, National Headquarters Membership Department shall purge delinquent members from Post rolls whose dues remain unpaid one year after their most recent dues expiration. (Rejected)

**RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON  
GENERAL RESOLUTIONS AT THE 116TH NATIONAL CONVENTION,  
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA**

Resolution No. 301 (Submitted by Department of North Dakota)

CORRECT AN INJUSTICE

WHEREAS, eleven enlisted soldiers were convicted of various charges relating to the incidents, with all the convictions including the dereliction of duty. Most soldiers only received minor sentences. Three other soldiers were either cleared of charges or were not charged. No one was convicted to the murders of the detainees; and

WHEREAS, Colonel Thomas Pappas was relieved of his command on 13 May, 2005, after receiving a non-judicial punishment on two instances of dereliction of duty, including that of allowing dogs to be present during interrogations. He was fined \$8,000 under the provisions of Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (Non-judicial punishment). He also received a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand which effectively ended his military career; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Colonel Steven L. Jordan became the highest-ranking officer to have charges brought against him in connection with the Abu Ghraib abuse on 29 April 2006. Prior to his trial, eight of the twelve against him were dismissed, including two of the most serious, after Major General George Fay admitted that he did not read Jordan his rights before interviewing him. On 28 August 2007, Jordan was acquitted of all charges related prisoner mistreatment, and received a reprimand for disobeying an order not to discuss a 2004 investigation into the allegations; and

WHEREAS, Specialist Charles Graner was found guilty on 14 January 2005 of conspiracy to maltreat detainees, failing to protect detainees from abuse, cruelty, and maltreatment, as well as charges of assault, indecency, adultery, and obstruction of justice. On 15 January 2005, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison, dishonorable discharge, and reduction in rank to private. Garner was paroled from the U.S. Military's Fort Leavenworth prison on 6 August 2011 after serving six-and-a-half years; and

WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Ivan Frederick pleaded guilty on 20 October 2004 to conspiracy, dereliction of duty, maltreatment of detainees, assault and committing an indecent act, in exchange for other charges being dropped. His



abuses included forcing three prisoners to masturbate. He also punched one prisoner so hard in the chest that he needed resuscitation. He was sentenced to eight years in prison, forfeiture of pay, a dishonorable discharge and a reduction in rank to private, and a bad conduct discharge; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Javal Davis pleaded guilty on 4 February 2005 to dereliction of duty, making false official statements, and battery. He was sentenced to six months in prison, and a reduction in rank to private, and a bad conduct discharge; and

WHEREAS, Specialist Jeremy Sivits was sentenced on 19 May 2004 by a special court-martial to the maximum one-year sentence, in addition to a bad conduct discharge and a reduction in rank to private, upon his guilty plea; and

WHEREAS, Specialist Armin Cruz was sentenced on 11 September 2004, to eight months in confinement, reduction in rank to private and a bad conduct discharge in exchange for his testimony against other soldiers; and

WHEREAS, Specialist Sabrina Harman was sentenced on 17 May 2005, to six months in prison and a bad conduct discharge after being convicted on six of the seven counts. She had faced a maximum sentence of five years. Harman served her sentence at Naval Consolidated Brig, Miramar; and

WHEREAS, Specialist Megan Ambuhl was convicted on 30 October 2004, for dereliction of duty, and sentenced to reduction in rank to Private, and loss of half-month's pay; and

WHEREAS, Private First Class Lynndie England was convicted on 26 September 2005, on one count of conspiracy, four counts of maltreating detainees and one count of committing an indecent act. She was acquitted on a second conspiracy count. England had faced a maximum of ten years. She was sentenced on 27 September 2005, to three years confinement, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, reduction to Private (E-1) and received a dishonorable discharge. England had served her sentence at Naval Consolidated Brig, Miramar; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Santos Cardona was convicted of dereliction of duty and aggravated assault, the equivalent of a felony in the U.S. civilian justice system. He served 90 days of hard labor at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Cardona was unable to re-enlist due to his conviction, and left the army in 2007. In 2009, he was killed in action while working as a government contractor in Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, Specialist Roman Krol pled guilty on 1 February 2005 to conspiracy and maltreatment of detainees at Abu Ghraib. He was sentenced to ten months confinement, reduction in rank to private, and a bad conduct discharge; and

WHEREAS, Specialist Israel Rivera, who was present during abuse on 25 October, was under investigation but was never charged and testified against other soldiers; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Michael Smith was found guilty on 21 March 2006 of two counts of prisoner maltreatment, one count of simple assault, one count of conspiracy to maltreat, one count of dereliction of duty and a final charge of an indecent act, and sentenced to 179 days in prison, a fine of \$ 2,250, a demotion to private, and a bad conduct discharge; and

WHEREAS, in response to the recent Senate CIA report, new information in regards to the Enhanced Interrogation report, stating that the US military conducted state sponsored enhanced interrogation techniques to all military prison camps in Iraq. These individuals were part of the state sponsored enhanced interrogation program. Recent the Commander in Chief has indicated he will not prosecute the individuals within the Senate CIA Report; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we request the Commander-in-Chief, President Barack Obama, to grant full pardon to the enlisted soldiers listed above, to restore previous rank and to restore Veterans Administration full benefits and entitlements, to purge all past connected actions from military files. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 302 (Submitted by the Department of Kentucky)

#### SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT

WHEREAS, in 1991 Congress passed a Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) which eliminated all Federal Retirees, Police Department, Fire Department and Federal, State employees from obtaining Social Security. If they retired from any other federal employment except for military retirement benefits; and

WHEREAS, this provision effectively eliminated the Social Security of one in five of the 2.1 million federal employees that are Veterans; and

WHEREAS, an additional 6.2 million state employees, fire department and police department were included in this provision. The percentage of the groups that are veterans affected is unknown at this time; and

WHEREAS, on February 13, 2015 Representative Rodney Davis, Illinois in the 114th Congress introduced HR 973 Social Security Fairness Act 2015, which would repeal the windfall elimination requirement with respect to computation of individuals primary insurance amount under which retirement or disability benefits are reduced if the individual receives a federal, state, or local government pension, did not pay Social Security taxes during the years of government service and so did not earn entitlement Social Security benefits for those years. Currently has 105 Cosponsored Representatives that are supporting HR 973; and

WHEREAS, GPO/WEP failed to meet the original intent to provide equitable pension allocations achieve substantial savings for the Social Security System. The GPO/WEP reduced or eliminated so security only for some, while others are allowed to receive the second pension with no reduction or elimination of benefits. In addition, often those in public sectors with the second pension have higher incomes than those penalized by the GPO/WEP, thus significantly lowering the retirement incomes for over 2 million retired public service workers from state, federal and local government; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Department of Kentucky, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States at its annual Convention on June 12, 2015 that all Post, District, State and National Offices of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States contact and ask for their respective Members of Congress to co-sponsor and support HR 973 and expedite the progress on this legislation. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 303 (Submitted by Department of Montana)

AMENDMENT TO THE UNITED STATES CODE SECTION 36, SUBTITLE 1, PART A,  
CHAPTER 3, SUBSECTION 301

WHEREAS, a national anthem (also national hymn, national song, etc.) is a generally patriotic musical composition that evokes and eulogizes the history, traditions and struggles of its people, recognized either by a nation's government, the official national song or by convention through use by the people; and

WHEREAS, President Woodrow Wilson tasked the U.S. Bureau of Education with providing that official version of a National Anthem; and

WHEREAS, the Bureau enlisted the help of five musicians to agree upon an arrangement. Those musicians were Walter Damrosch, Will Earhart, Arnold J. Gantvoort, Oscar Sonneck and John Phillip Sousa; and

WHEREAS, the standardized version that was voted upon by these five musicians, AND an official handwritten version of the final votes of these five men has been verified and shows all five men's votes tallied, measure by measure; and

WHEREAS, John Phillip Sousa published his opinion in favor, stating that "it is the spirit of the music that inspires" as much as it is Key's "soul-stirring" words; and

WHEREAS, by a law signed on March 3, 1931 by President Herbert Hoover, "The Star-Spangled Banner" was adopted as the national anthem of the United States of America. Title 36, Subtitle 1, Part A, Chapter 3, subsection 301, which states "The composition consisting of the words and music known as the Star-Spangled Banner is the national anthem"; and

WHEREAS, our National Anthem is also considered our National Hymn; and

WHEREAS, no other hymn or National Anthem are subjected to unauthorized variations additionally there is no caveat in the law that allows performers any form of "artistic license" to render this music in any form other than as written; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States urges the United States Congress to modify Section 36, Subtitle 1, Part A, Chapter 3, Subsection 301 of the U. S. Code, with the addition of this phrase: "Any public performance of the United States National Anthem must be performed exactly as the words and music are written without any variation for "artistic license" whatsoever. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 304 (Submitted by Department of Wisconsin)

#### ADDRESS THE FINANCIAL CONCERNS OF SERVICE MEMBERS AND VETERANS

WHEREAS, deployments, change of duty stations, and emergencies lead to unplanned and unique financial difficulties which can devastate a service member's career and even affect the mission readiness of a military unit; and

WHEREAS, P.L. 111-203, Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, which created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), established the Office of Service member Affairs to address specific consumer protection concerns for the nation's military community; and

WHEREAS, a priority of the CFPB is to monitor the consumer complaints the Bureau receives from active-duty service members, veterans, and their families – such as cleaning up their credit reports, stopping harassment from debt collectors, and correcting account information; and

WHEREAS, service members, veterans, and their families who complained to the CFPB have received more than \$1 million in relief; and

WHEREAS, service members continue to be victimized by unscrupulous financial institutions and are unable to enforce their rights under the Service members Civil Relief Act and other laws due to the expanding use of forced arbitration clauses buried in all types of contracts for financial products and services; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support CFPB to address the financial concerns of service members, veterans and their families by providing them with the information and tools to make smart financial decisions and to avoid unfair financial business practices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support policies to eliminate forced arbitration in financial disputes, and protect service members from predatory financial practices or high cost lending. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 305 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

AWARD CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO FILIPINO VETERANS OF  
WORLD WAR II

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has always supported properly recognizing the service and sacrifice of all veterans; and

WHEREAS, the men and women of the Philippines and United States performed an invaluable service in defense of the United States and Philippines from July 26, 1941, to December 31, 1946; and

WHEREAS, Filipino veterans of World War II were an integral part of the U.S. Armed Forces Far East, and they served and fought with great distinction to help defeat the Japanese and liberate the Philippines on October 20, 1944. They were assigned to the Philippine Scouts, Philippine Commonwealth Army, New Philippine Scouts, Recognized Guerillas, and later,

the 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment, 2nd Filipino Infantry Battalion (Separate), and 1st Reconnaissance Battalion; and

WHEREAS, of the estimated 300,000 loyal and courageous Filipino veterans of World War II who served and fought, more than 57,000 would be killed in action during the four-year battle to defend, then free, their homeland, which was then sovereign U.S. Territory; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Filipino Veterans of World War II in recognition of their loyal and selfless duty to the Philippines and to the United States of America. (Approved)

Resolution No. 306 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### SUPPORT THE NATIONAL EISENHOWER MEMORIAL

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

WHEREAS, General Eisenhower was a lifetime member of VFW Post 3279 in Abilene, Kan., and he vigorously supported the troops and veterans. In honor of his lifetime of honorable and dedicated service to the nation, the VFW created in 1970 its highest national award, the Dwight D. Eisenhower Award, to recognize one individual annually who continues to champion the cause of American security, unity and world peace; and

WHEREAS, due to earlier concerns about the design and objections from the Eisenhower family, the House and Senate appropriation committees eliminated the proposed memorial's construction budget in 2012. The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission has since given final approval to a modified design, but without federal assistance, the \$142 million Eisenhower Memorial can now only be completed through a public-private collaboration; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to reinstate funding and build the National Eisenhower Memorial as a lasting tribute to the General, the President, and to those who served with him; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW also encourages its members, friends and family to contribute to the memorial on an individual basis. (Approved)

**RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL  
SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS AT THE 116TH NATIONAL CONVENTION,  
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA**

Resolution No. 401 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

END SEQUESTRATION

WHEREAS, the Budget Control Act of 2011 raised the federal debt ceiling on an agreement to offset the increase with a corresponding decrease in federal discretionary spending over a 10-year period. A bipartisan Congressional committee was created to identify which federal accounts to reduce, and as a penalty, an automatic 10 percent across-the-board sequester would kick in at the beginning of the 113th Congress should the committee fail to reach an agreement, which it did; and

WHEREAS, the Budget Control Act of 2011 also mandated a \$487 billion reduction in Pentagon spending over a 10-year period. The imposed sequester doubles that amount; and

WHEREAS, mandatory sequestration began in the second half of FY 2013. In order to meet the forced spending cuts without impacting combat operations in Afghanistan, the four military services had to slash flying, sailing and troop training, as well as began furloughing its civilian workforce. A Bipartisan Budget Agreement signed in December 2013 put a temporary hold on sequestration until FY 2016, which begins Oct. 1, 2015; and

WHEREAS, cutting almost \$1 trillion from the Pentagon's budget — no matter how dispersed — could eliminate quality of life programs for military personnel and their families, and have a tremendous impact on readiness and modernization programs, to the point of jeopardizing the military's ability to respond when and where needed; and

WHEREAS, mandatory sequestration also impacts other federal agencies, most notably the Department of Homeland Security and its many subsidiary units, to include the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the Transportation Security Agency. Plus, it is still unknown how a restarted sequester will impact future budgets requests for the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, sequestration cripples the government's ability to operate, to secure our country and protect our citizens, and it threatens to dismantle

every quality of life program the VFW has helped to create for veterans, service members and their families everywhere; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the United States Congress to end sequestration. (Approved)

Resolution No. 402 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### SUPPORT THE TROOPS AND THEIR WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States supports the Commander-in-Chief and our military and intelligence agencies in their mission to identify, target and destroy terrorists wherever they hide; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the Administration and Congress provide the military with the resources necessary to succeed in this global fight against a shadow threat, as well as to properly care for those American service members who return home wounded, ill or injured, and their families; and

WHEREAS, it is equally critical that U.S. intelligence agencies be properly resourced in order to identify threats to U.S. security and interests by organized extremist groups or lone individuals, both foreign and domestic; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that the Administration and Congress heed the expert counsel of field commanders regarding future troop buildups or reductions, and modernization initiatives. This includes working together in a bipartisan manner to end the draconian effects of sequestration; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the Commander-in-Chief and the brave men and women in uniform who prosecute the war on terrorism, and that we call upon Congress to end sequestration and provide our military and the nation's intelligence agencies the necessary resources to identify, target and destroy our enemies. (Approved)

Resolution No. 403 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### KEEP DEFENSE BUDGET RELEVANT

WHEREAS, America's Number #1 priority is to defend herself and her citizens, yet continued efforts to keep defense spending below 5 percent of Gross Domestic Product jeopardizes the Defense Department's ability to



properly train, equip and field a military that can defeat all enemies, as well as protect vital U.S. interests around the globe; and

WHEREAS, defense spending today is approximately 16 percent of the total federal budget—the lowest since before World War II—but defense also amounts to nearly half of all discretionary spending, which means DOD took 50 percent of the cuts under the Budget Control Agreement of 2011; and

WHEREAS, the Budget Control Agreement forces the Defense Department to reduce overall spending by at least \$487 billion over the next decade, an amount that is doubled by mandatory sequestration. DOD only has three principal accounts in which to rein in costs—Personnel, Operations and Maintenance, and Modernization—with Congress having approval authority for every request regarding troop strengths, weapons systems, stateside installations, and quality of life programs; and

WHEREAS, excluding Overseas Contingency funding, the FY 2015 defense budget of \$521 billion represents just 3 percent of the nation’s 2014 Gross Domestic Product, and the FY 2016 defense request of \$534 billion will only account for 2.9 percent of the nation’s estimated GDP; and

WHEREAS, the military shrinks in terms of installations, manpower and material at the end of every war, but bringing the troops home has yet to make the world any less dangerous, our enemies any more predictable, or reduce the world’s reliance on the United States to lead every contingency or humanitarian operation; and

WHEREAS, it is crucial that any proposed reduction not jeopardize America’s security or break faith with those who serve or have served her in uniform. A nation that cherishes its freedom and supports the troops can afford to do both; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge Congress to end sequestration and to provide the necessary funding equal to not less than 5 percent of GDP for the readiness, training, modernization, healthcare, and quality of life initiatives for the armed forces of today and tomorrow. (Approved)

Resolution No. 404 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### PRESERVE THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE

WHEREAS, America’s All-Volunteer Force successfully undertook a 13-year, two-front war, that nobody prior to 9/11 would have thought possible. It

did so despite multiple combat tours and significant military recruiting and retention challenges; and

WHEREAS, with the War in Afghanistan officially over, the challenge now for a military in transition is how to balance the needs of the troops and their families with the national security requirements of a nation that continues to confront new and old enemies abroad; and

WHEREAS, congressional budget decisions have forced the Department of Defense to reduce spending by \$487 billion over a 10-year period, an amount that is doubled by a looming sequester that is on temporary hold until Oct. 1, 2015; and

WHEREAS, of DOD's three principal funding accounts—Personnel, Operations and Maintenance, and Modernization—it is the Personnel account that continues to bear the brunt of planned or recommended reductions because Congress is hesitant to authorize a new Base Realignment and Closure Commission, and due to the inherent inflexibility of the military acquisition program process; and

WHEREAS, planned troop strength cuts, limited pay raises, reduced housing allowances, and increased active-duty family healthcare costs, combined with no end to real or perceived threats, is continuing to erode military morale. And recommendations made by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission, combined with the potential lure of a better civilian jobs market, could possibly give troops more incentives to separate than reenlist; and

WHEREAS, DOD's FY 2016 budget recommendation to further lower troop numbers and reduce benefits is the direct result of a military struggling to survive a budget crisis that will continue to grow the longer Congress is unable to end the sequester. The cumulative impact of DOD's action, in combination with a better civilian economy, could impact both recruiting and retention, and possibly threaten the continued existence and viability of the All-Volunteer Force; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we will redouble our efforts to work with Congress and the Administration to preserve the All-Volunteer Force, to end the sequester, and to help bring some financial stability to a military that will continue to operate in a very dangerous and unpredictable world. (Approved)

Resolution No. 405 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

## LINK MILITARY PAY INCREASES TO PRIVATE-SECTOR INCREASES

WHEREAS, military pay raises are linked by law to the increase in private-sector wages, as measured by the Employment Cost Index (ECI). The Administration's military pay raise request, however, can be more or less than the ECI, with Congress having the final approval; and

WHEREAS, Congress erased the double-digit pay gap of the 1990s by directing military pay raises from fiscal years 2000-2006 to be a half-percent above private-sector wage increases, and raises from FY 2007-forward to match the ECI, although more could be authorized; and

WHEREAS, the 1.7 percent military pay raise for FY 2013 matched the ECI, but the Department of Defense—in its continuing campaign to slow the growth of military compensation due to budget constraints and the sequester—recommended that future pay increases be limited, despite knowing it could lead to another pay gap similar to the past; and

WHEREAS, over the objections of the VFW but with the approval of Congress, the new “slow the growth” initiative began with the FY 2014 military pay increase of 1 percent, even though the ECI increase was 1.8 percent, and continued into FY 2015 with another 1 percent raise, though the ECI was 1.7 percent. DOD is now requesting a 1.3 percent increase for FY 2016, which again is expected to be less than ECI forecasts; and

WHEREAS, changes to military pay and benefits is the top concern of military service members and their families. Continued efforts to slow the growth of military compensation, combined with a better civilian jobs market, could directly impact recruiting and retention, which could jeopardize the continued existence and viability of the All-Volunteer Force; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to maintain military base pay comparability with private-sector wages by matching annual military pay raise percentages to annual ECI increases. (Approved)

Resolution No. 406 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

## MILITARY COMPENSATION & RETIREMENT MODERNIZATION COMMISSION REPORT

WHEREAS, the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) initiated an important conversation with Congress and the American people when it released its 15 recommendations to preserve the

long-term viability of the All-Volunteer Force, maintain the quality of life of troops and their families, and achieve fiscal sustainability for the military compensation and retirement systems; and

WHEREAS, as such, the VFW supports recommendations that bolster military financial literacy, improves services to military families, enforces electronic medical record collaboration between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, and creates a common DOD/VA formulary, among others; and

WHEREAS, the VFW also supports key elements of now four proposals to blend the best of civilian 401(k)-type plans into the current military retirement system. This includes an initial 1 percent government contribution to Thrift Savings Plans (TSP) upon enlistment, then up to a 5 percent government match beginning after the two-year mark through the end of a service member's career. This transition enhancement would tremendously benefit the great majority of service members (83 percent) who don't stay till retirement. All retirees and service members are grandfathered under the current system, and new enlistees would know what they are signing up for, should they stay the requisite 20 years. Current members would also have an opportunity to opt into the new system. The proposals do reduce retiree pay from 50 to 40 percent of base pay at the 20-year mark, but overall net worth would be higher due to a one-time continuation bonus and compound interest on increased TSP accounts, which can be rolled over into other investment plans and bequeathed entirely to heirs, whereas just a portion of retiree pay goes to surviving spouses. The success of any new retirement program, however, hinges on Congress eliminating the one-percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) penalty; and

WHEREAS, regarding the future of military healthcare, the Commission wants to move away from the government-managed TRICARE health program into a competitive market-based system that they claim will provide better service and more coverage selections, but at a higher out-of-pocket cost to military dependents and retirees. There is little interest in Congress or the Pentagon to replace the existing healthcare system this year, but the recommendation is worth further study should the proposal arise in the future; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support a number of Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission recommendations, and will work with Congress to eliminate the COLA penalty on future military retirees, as well as further define the benefits and potential pitfalls associated with the Commission's recommendations to change the current military healthcare program, among others. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 407 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

PRESERVE MILITARY TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the military's Tuition Assistance (TA) program is an invaluable in-service benefit for all service members of every rank, especially for noncommissioned officers who are highly encouraged to have an associates or bachelor's degree before being selected for promotion into the Top 3 ranks, and for company grade officers who are highly encouraged to have advanced degrees before being eligible for promotion to field grade; and

WHEREAS, in early 2013, the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps deemed TA to be a non-priority and suspended their programs in an effort to control personnel-related costs in a budget-constrained environment. The VFW intervened by working with Congress to fully reinstate TA on behalf of the estimated 300,000 service members who rely upon the benefit annually to advance their personal and professional development goals; and

WHEREAS, the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission recommended doing away with the military's Tuition Assistance program in favor of service members using their earned GI Bill veterans' benefits, which the VFW views as a post-military transition assistance program and not a military professional development supplement; and

WHEREAS, since the military highly encourages its members to have civilian degrees, Congress must not allow the services to eliminate TA or to require individual Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen or Marines to use their Department of Veterans Affairs-funded GI Bill programs while they are still on active-duty; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the military services to fully fund and maintain their Tuition Assistance programs, and for Congress to work with DOD to develop TA policies that will ensure the program remains a quality professional development and military retention tool. (Approved)

Resolution No. 408 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

ENSURE DOD COMPLIANCE WITH TAP MANDATE

WHEREAS, the goal of the military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is to ease the difficult transition from active duty into civilian life by

offering job-search assistance, advice on available educational and healthcare programs, and other earned benefits; and

WHEREAS, Congress mandated TAP pre-separation counseling for all service members, and for the military to develop additional tracked curricula focused on education, employment, vocational careers and entrepreneurship in collaboration with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Education and Labor, as well as with the Small Business Administration; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense has implemented a new TAP curriculum for separating service members, but does not require them to participate in classroom instruction for the individual tracks for Career Vocational Training, Accessing Higher Education, or Entrepreneurship; and

WHEREAS, former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel issued guidance to installation commanders to accommodate nationally-accredited Veterans' Service Organizations to provide pre-separation services to transitioning service members, but local transition program staff do not consistently afford VSOs with the opportunity to actively engage service members during scheduled TAP classes; and

WHEREAS, although DOD and the Department of Labor worked to make TAP resources available to veterans via a public-facing website, transitioning service members lose their access to TAP classroom instruction and supplemental TAP resources once they separate or retiree, which is when they may need those resources the most; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Department of Defense to include the additional curriculum tracks in its mandatory pre-separation classroom counseling, and to ensure nationally-accredited Veterans' Service Organizations are afforded consistent access to transitioning service members; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we request Congress to require DOD and its partner agencies to periodically update their TAP information and procedures to maintain program relevancy, and to expand access to TAP resources for veterans after separating from the military. (Approved)

Resolution No. 409 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

REVISE UNFAVORABLE DISCHARGE REVIEW PROCEDURES

WHEREAS, approximately 30,000 veterans have been administratively discharged from the military for adjustment or personality disorders since September 11, 2001, and according to the Army Human Resources Command, the number of misconduct discharges continues to increase; and

WHEREAS, discharges under other-than-honorable conditions often disqualifies veterans from Department of Veterans Affairs health, compensation and education benefits, and could render them undesirable to potential employers; and

WHEREAS, many veterans who received unfavorable discharges could have been suffering from the effects of undiagnosed and untreated Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injuries and Military Sexual Trauma as the result of their military service; and

WHEREAS, a 2014 Department of Defense decision opened an avenue for Vietnam veterans and those from other wars, conflicts and eras to request upgrades to their other-than-honorable military discharge due to an extenuating factor not known at the time of their separation: PTSD. The decision is not a blanket approval for every upgrade request, but it does help veterans who may have been diagnosed with PTSD years after separation to submit new evidence and hopefully correct a past injustice; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to establish a process by which Military Department Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records (BCM/NR) presume administrative irregularity and place the burden of proof on DOD to show that the discharge was just for those cases where the veteran claims service-related PTSD, TBI or MST as a mitigating factor in requesting an upgrade to his or her military discharge. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 410 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

PROVIDE DD-214s TO ALL RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS

WHEREAS, virtually all veterans are eligible for VA medical care, as well as compensation and pension, if a service-connected wound, illness or injury occurred while on active duty; and

WHEREAS, eligibility for other VA benefits is based on presenting proof of active military service in the form of a DD Form 214. According to Title 10, U.S. Code, a member of the Guard or Reserve can only receive a DD-214 if they serve 90 days of continuous active duty, although Service Secretaries have the authority to issue the forms for shorter time periods; and

WHEREAS, the Guard and Reserve contributed a quarter of all ground forces deployed into Iraq and Afghanistan over the past 13 years, and half of all Air Force airlift, yet similar to the active force, not every Reserve Component member had the opportunity to deploy much less be activated for 90 consecutive days; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to delete the 90-day activation requirement in Title 10, U.S. Code, and provide the DD Form 214 to all Reserve Component members who separate or retire under conditions other than dishonorable. (Approved)

Resolution No. 411 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### CORRECT RESERVE COMPONENT EARLY RETIREMENT PAY PROVISIONS

WHEREAS, America’s reliance on its Reserve Component (RC) has been unprecedented in our nation’s history. According to the Defense Department, more than 900,000 RC members have served on active duty since 9/11, with a third of them serving multiple tours; and

WHEREAS, RC retirees are normally eligible to receive military retirement pay at age 60, but in an effort to recognize their service, the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) allowed National Guard and Reserve members to lower their retirement pay eligibility age by three months for every 90 days served on active duty after Jan. 29, 2008; and

WHEREAS, the provision did not, however, extend early retirement credit to hundreds of thousands who were activated prior to the implementation date, nor did it include a carryover clause, which meant the credit was only awarded if the minimum 90-day activation period occurred within the same fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, the FY 2015 NDAA amends the earlier language by including a carryover clause for RC members activated after Sept. 30, 2014, but the new law did not extend the carryover provision back to Jan. 29, 2008, or grandfather any early retirement credits back to 9/11. This inequity discounts the dedication and sacrifice of our Reserve Component members serving at home and abroad; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to grandfather all early retirement credits to all Reserve



Component members who were activated in support of a contingency operation from 9/11 forward. (Approved)

Resolution No. 412 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### EXPAND OPERATION WARFIGHTER PLACEMENTS

WHEREAS, Operation Warfighter is a Department of Defense program that allows wounded, ill or injured service members to temporarily intern with other federal departments and agencies while they recuperate or are on medical hold pending discharge or retirement; and

WHEREAS, there is no cost to gaining agencies, as DOD pays each participant's full military pay and allowances while he or she gains valuable federal civilian work experience for the average 20 hours per week, three-month internship; and

WHEREAS, the program has placed more than 2,500 recuperating service members with 105 different federal departments and agencies. More important, a third were offered fulltime employment after their military discharge or retirement; however, current legislation to reduce the size of the federal workforce by 10 to 15 percent may present fewer federal employment opportunities in the future; and

WHEREAS, the program to temporarily place wounded, ill or injured service members with federal agencies should be expanded to include the private sector as well, where fulltime employment opportunities will always be greater than within the federal government; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Department of Defense to expand the Operation Warfighter internship program to include placing wounded, ill or injured service members with nonprofit organizations and civilian industry. (Approved)

Resolution No. 413 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### PROVIDE FULL CONCURRENT RECEIPT OF MILITARY RETIREMENT PAY AND VA DISABILITY COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, the fiscal year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act allowed for the gradual phase-in of full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation for service-connected wounds, illnesses or injuries; and

WHEREAS, the 10-year phase-in period ended in 2014, which means military retirees with 20 or more years of service and 50 percent or higher VA disability ratings no longer have their military retirement pay offset by the amount of their VA disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, the law did not provide the same equity to service-connected disabled military retirees with VA ratings of 40 percent or below, or Chapter 61 retirees who were medically retired with less than 20 years, regardless of VA disability rating; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation for the full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation without offset and regardless of rating percentage. (Approved)

Resolution No. 414 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### MST INCIDENT REPORTING AND TREATMENT

WHEREAS, the Defense Department's annual report on Sexual Assault in the Military Services indicated that 5,983 service members reported being sexual assaulted in fiscal year 2014. The Department of Veterans Affairs reported, as of October 2014, that 25 percent of female veterans and 1 percent of male veterans responded "yes," that they experienced a Military Sexual Trauma (MST), when screened by their VA provider; and

WHEREAS, it is widely held that a far greater number of MST victims do not come forward while on active duty due to embarrassment, lack of command action when they do file reports, or for fear of personal and/or professional reprisal, to include real or perceived "red flags" in their military personnel folders; and

WHEREAS, DOD's "Zero Tolerance" campaign has made great strides to encourage prevention efforts and tighten field reporting and managerial oversight, to include providing restricted and unrestricted options for reporting a sexual assault. DOD has begun keeping records that provide evidentiary support of the assault and its effect on service members, and has taken steps to improve the actions of first responders, as well as to provide confidential counseling and other specialized treatments. Yet many MST victims are not aware of such services, which could help alleviate mental health issues commonly associated with sexual assault; and

WHEREAS, although the VA does not require MST victims to have first reported an incident or to have a VA disability rating before receiving

treatment, more can still be done inside DOD with regards to prevention, treatment and reporting; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge DOD to continue strengthening its “Zero Tolerance” campaign by encouraging all MST victims to report their attacks, to provide victims with proper medical and mental health care, and to aggressively investigate every reported incident and punish attackers as appropriate. (Approved)

Resolution No. 415 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

#### REPEAL SBP/DIC OFFSET

WHEREAS, the surviving spouses of retired military members who die from service-connected wounds, illnesses or injuries are entitled to Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. However, if the military retiree was also enrolled in the Defense Department’s Survivor Benefits Plan (SBP), the surviving spouse’s SBP benefit would have a dollar-for-dollar offset by the amount of DIC benefits; and

WHEREAS, SBP and DIC payments are paid for two different reasons. Similar to life insurance, SBP is purchased by the retiree and is intended to provide 55 percent of his/her retirement pay to the surviving spouse. DIC is a modest indemnity compensation benefit of \$1,215 per month that is paid to surviving spouses whose loved ones died from a service-connected condition; and

WHEREAS, with few exceptions, the surviving spouses of other federal program retirees have no offset penalty, whereas more than 65,000 surviving military spouses are affected by this aptly termed “widow’s tax.” Congress recognized the offset as unfair and in the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act created a Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance to partially reduce some of the offset via a graduated monthly payment of up to \$310, but only through FY 2017; and

WHEREAS, military retiree SBP payments currently range between 2.5 and 6.5 percent of the selected base amount. A recommendation by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission would offer a new SBP program with substantially higher (a fluctuating 11.25 percent) monthly premiums in order to receive full DIC without offset. The VFW’s position is for the full repeal of the SBP-DIC offset, not to subsidize it out of the pockets of military retirees; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to repeal the Survivor's Benefit Plan and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset. (Approved)

Resolution No. 416 (Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief)

#### CREATE A JOINT MILITARY MEDICAL COMMAND

WHEREAS, Army, Navy and Air Force medical professionals provide the highest level of care to all eligible service members, dependents and retirees, yet a 2006 Defense Department proposal to create a Joint Military Medical Command continues to be ignored due to interservice rivalries and perceived mission and cultural differences between the services; and

WHEREAS, military medicine operates in a joint world, from contingency and humanitarian deployments to meeting the daily healthcare needs of more than 9 million multiservice beneficiaries with 59 inpatient hospitals and 364 clinics; and

WHEREAS, despite the unwillingness of the services to discuss a joint command, some universal medical processes and operations have already merged. Research is aligned under the Army Medical Research and Materiel Command at Fort Detrick, Md.; all enlisted medics and corpsmen are trained at Fort Sam Houston, Texas; information management and technology, facilities management, contracting and procurement, and logistical and financial support services are being consolidated; and 45 percent of total beneficiaries are now being served by the Defense Health Agency, which activated in 2013 to merge military medicine in six major markets—San Antonio, the National Capitol Region, Hawaii, Colorado Springs, and in Washington State's Pudget Sound and Virginia's Tidewater Region; and

WHEREAS, the military medical communities can no longer afford a parochial attitude, not with a downsized military, reduced defense budgets, threats of new base closure rounds, a continued high operations tempo, and the still unfulfilled requirement to create one interoperable electronic health record between DOD and the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission recommendation to elevate the status of a surgeon general inside a newly created Joint Readiness Command merely creates another level of bureaucracy and does not address the need for one joint medical command; and

WHEREAS, the Defense Health Agency has proven that the future of military medicine is in jointness. The services need to stop resisting and start discussing how to get there from here; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to use the Defense Health Agency as a springboard towards creating a Joint Military Medical Command. (Approved)

Resolution No. 417 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### PROTECT POW/MIA FULL ACCOUNTING MISSION FUNDING

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting of 83,000 missing Americans that include approximately 73,600 from World War II, 7,900 from the Korean War, 1,630 from the Vietnam War, 126 from the Cold War, and 6 post-Vietnam that include Operations Eldorado Canyon (1), Desert Storm (2) and Iraqi Freedom (3); and

WHEREAS, it is hoped that the merger of the former Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, and the Air Force Life Science Equipment Laboratory, into the new Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) will produce the unity of command necessary to achieve the fullest possible accounting of missing and unaccounted-for Americans; and

WHEREAS, DPAA has strong bipartisan support on Capitol Hill, which will be necessary should additional funding be required to support recovery operations in North Korea, which have been interrupted since 2005 due to U.S. safety and security concerns; and

WHEREAS, without additional funding to meet expanded requirements, DPAA could be forced to postpone or cancel difficult recovery sites in favor of potentially more productive locations, such as mass burials or multi-crewman aircraft crashes. Full funding enables DPAA to efficiently plan, resource and accomplish its worldwide mission to recover, identify and return to their families all missing American service members from all wars and conflicts; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to fully fund the requested amounts for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and all supporting organizations involved in the Full Accounting Mission. (Approved)

Resolution No. 418 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CALL FOR MORE UNILATERAL POW/MIA ACTIONS BY VIETNAM

WHEREAS, 2,583 Americans were listed as missing and unaccounted-for at the end of the Vietnam War. As of February 2015, the number of missing is slowly nearing 1,630 due to a combination of increased U.S. Government emphasis, better research and identification technology, stronger diplomatic ties with host governments, and access to aircraft crash and ground battlefield sites; and

WHEREAS, Vietnam had a comprehensive wartime and post-war process to collect and retain information and remains, and according to the National League of POW/MIA Families, this unilateral effort enabled the Vietnamese to locate and return remains to U.S. custody along with records that continue to offer significant potential; and

WHEREAS, onsite joint field operations are also achieving increased results. The process now includes both U.S.-led Joint Excavation Teams and Vietnamese-led Recovery Teams that are assisted by fewer Americans who are experts in their fields of forensic science, EOD and medical. This formula allows a greater number of teams to “increase the pace and scope of field operations,” as requested by Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, increased military-to-military relations is also benefiting the Full Accounting Mission. U.S. Navy assets are increasingly allowed to participate in underwater survey and recovery operations, which has long been advocated for by the VFW; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we encourage Vietnam to continue to expand the number and frequency of Vietnamese-led recovery operations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in this cooperative effort, that we urge Vietnam to continue to authorize its officials to locate and release immediately to the United States all records relating to Americans missing from the Vietnam War, and to urge the Vietnamese people to turn over the remains of Americans or information on American burial sites, as well as any reports of live American servicemen. (Approved)

Resolution No. 419 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SECURE AMERICA’S BORDERS

WHEREAS, America's security is threatened by foreign nationals who enter the United States illegally with the intent to do harm, by those who may enter legally but intentionally overstay their work, education or tourist visas, and potentially by U.S. born or naturalized citizens and legal immigrants who could return to the U.S. after receiving military-style training in tactics and weaponry by belligerent countries or nonaligned terrorist organizations; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has increased its workforce to 60,000 to operate 328 sea, land and air Ports of Entry, and to provide a physical monitoring and enforcement presence along America's southern border. Physical barriers are being erected along 700 miles of our 2,000-mile border with Mexico, but such barriers are virtually nonexistent along the 5,500-mile border we share with Canada, or along 12,000 miles of U.S. coastline; and

WHEREAS, increased surveillance, enforcement, intelligence collection assets and economic support to border states helped to reduce violent crime and led to the deportation of almost 316,000 in fiscal year 2014, two-thirds of whom were apprehended while trying to illegally cross into the United States. The other one-third—85 percent of whom had been previously convicted of a crime—were apprehended and deported from inside the country; and

WHEREAS, regarding trained insurgents, the House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman said in February that as many as 20,000 foreign fighters from more than 90 countries now make up the ranks of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, to include at least 3,400 from the West and more than 150 Americans. No one has an accurate estimate because of nonexistent travel restrictions into neighboring countries through which people can use as transit points, but clearly more must still be done to secure America's borders, to include eliminating sequestration and its impact on the budgets of those federal agencies tasked with securing America's homeland; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to end sequestration and to fast-track funding so that the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice can expedite all initiatives to secure America's borders from all threats, foreign and domestic; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we insist the U.S. Government continue to aggressively identify and deport illegal aliens who commit crimes.  
(Approved)

Resolution No. 420 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HALT ROGUE NATION WMD PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the greatest threat to America is weapons of mass destruction—and the technology by which to make and employ them—in the hands of North Korea and Iran, as well as nonaligned terrorist organizations; and

WHEREAS, the Administration and Congress must remain suspicious of the actions and motives of North Korea and Iran, who repeatedly reject diplomatic attempts to reduce tensions and normalize relations; and

WHEREAS, North Korea continually breaks earlier agreements by conducting underground nuclear detonations, test firing warhead-capable missiles, and by stating it no longer honors the 1953 armistice, which is a direct threat to South Korea. North Korea is also a known exporter of ballistic missiles and its technology to countries unfriendly to the United States, most notably Iran; and

WHEREAS, Iran's nuclear program is a major contention with the West and its neighboring countries. The tentative agreement reached July 13, 2015, focuses on limiting Iran's ability to produce and maintain fissile material (that which is capable of sustaining a nuclear fission chain reaction) for at least a decade. It reduces the number of Iranian centrifuges used to enrich uranium gas from 19,000 to 6,000, and reduces Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium from 10,000 kilograms to 300, though no enrichment facilities are to be dismantled. Congress now has 60 days in which to approve or reject the agreement; and

WHEREAS, nonaligned terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, continue to demonstrate with deadly consequences their ability to strike regionally and globally without remorse; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to do all within their power to halt the nuclear weapons development programs and transfer of nuclear weapons technology and material to rogue nations and nonaligned terrorist organizations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support and encourage the U.S. Government to penalize all American companies and corporations that conduct business with North Korea and Iran. (Approved as Amended)



Resolution No. 421 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

**BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE CRITICAL TO NATIONAL SECURITY**

WHEREAS, the U.S. State Department says the worldwide proliferation of ballistic missiles almost makes them common battlefield weapons, yet the United States has not fielded a Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) system that is fully capable of detecting, intercepting, and destroying one or more ballistic missiles aimed against our homeland; and

WHEREAS, even though the Cold War missile threat against the United States has subsided, there are an estimated 6,300 ballistic missiles of different ranges that are not controlled by the U.S., NATO, Russia or China; and

WHEREAS, BMD systems have a proven capability to be able to detect, intercept and destroy ballistic missiles in flight. Despite the growing threat of rogue nations, unstable third world countries and nonaligned terrorist organizations, the United States still has no ballistic missile defense system to protect our country and her citizens from attack; and

WHEREAS, along with satellite assets, the U.S. has operational surveillance radar units deployed in the Pacific and Middle East, is continuing shipborne Aegis BMD testing in the Pacific, and will have an operational Aegis Ashore site in Eastern Europe later this year; and

WHEREAS, U.S.-Israeli partnerships, with respect to the battlefield proven capabilities of the short-range Iron Dome weapons system, and the continued testing of the medium-range David's Sling and long-range Arrow-3, is confirming that a multi-layered defense against everything from short-range mortars, rockets and artillery shells to longer-range cruise missiles and intercontinental ballistic missiles is both technologically and operationally achievable today; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to fund a fully integrated ballistic missile defense system to protect our country, our deployed military forces, and our allies.  
(Approved)

Resolution No. 422 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

**SUPPORT THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN**

WHEREAS, the Republic of China on Taiwan is a historic democratic ally of the United States, a valuable trading partner, and key link in the Western Pacific defense chain; and

WHEREAS, the Taiwan Relations Act (PL 96-8) codifies the policy of the United States to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character to bolster peace and stability in the cross-strait environment; and

WHEREAS, on January 1, 1979, then-President Carter terminated diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Taiwan, and instead established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in an attempt to help maintain peace, security and stability in the Western Pacific. This loss of diplomatic status prevents the President of Taiwan from receiving the same respect and courtesies afforded other Heads of State who visit the U.S.; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Administration and Congress to strictly adhere to the concepts of the Taiwan Relations Act by approving the sale of state-of-the-art military equipment, weapons and technology to maintain an adequate defense capability; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to support the admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan into the United Nations, and to afford the President of Taiwan the same respect and privileges due other visiting Heads of State. (Approved)

Resolution No. 423 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### SUPPORT THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

WHEREAS, the Republic of Korea is a historic democratic ally of the United States, a valuable trading partner, and a key link in the Northeast Asia defense chain. Numerous treaties are in force with the Republic of Korea concerning economic and technical cooperation, education, maritime matters, trade and commerce, and the Mutual Defense Treaty, that was enacted on November 17, 1954; and

WHEREAS, South Korea's immediate neighbor, however, continues to maintain an extremely large and forward-deployed military force capable of launching no-notice offensive operations against South Korea; and

WHEREAS, North Korea’s new “supreme leader,” the European-educated Kim Jong-un, has expanded upon the same aggressive path established by his father and grandfather. He purged his inner counsel of three defense ministers and four army chiefs of staff—the most prominent of whom was his uncle—and replaced them with officers more loyal to him; and

WHEREAS, North Korea continues to escalate tensions in the region by test launching potentially nuclear-capable missiles and conducting underground nuclear explosions. It is a known exporter of ballistic missiles and its technology to countries unfriendly to the United States, most notably Iran, and it periodically deploys its armed forces along the demilitarized zone and the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom; and

WHEREAS, the continued unpredictability of North Korea makes the presence of U.S. ground and air forces inside South Korea even more critical as a deterrent to aggression; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the U.S. Government to maintain a substantial military presence in the Republic of Korea, and to increase military aid and assistance though modern weaponry and technology to help promote peace and stability in the region. (Approved)

Resolution No. 424 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### SUPPORT THE STATE OF ISRAEL

WHEREAS, the State of Israel is a historic, democratic ally of the United States of America, and a key link in the defense of democratic principles in the Middle East; and

WHEREAS, Israel is surrounded by active enemies, to include Hamas in the Gaza Strip, which has fired more than 15,000 short-range rockets into mostly civilian towns and villages over the past 10 years; Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, which continues to infiltrate Israel through underground tunnels; and Iranian influences on the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, which continues to escalate tensions through indiscriminate small arms and car bomb attacks. Yet to be determined is the impact of Syria’s internal civil war and/or the spillover of its fight with ISIS, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria; and

WHEREAS, Iran is one of America’s and Israel’s foremost enemies, and continues to be one of the most serious threats to regional stability due to its conventional military forces, ballistic missiles, nuclear research and proliferation, and as an exporter of terrorism; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the United States Government to continue to support the State of Israel through the sale of state-of-the-art military equipment and technology to help them maintain an adequate defense capability in order to survive as a nation. (Approved)

Resolution No. 425 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

REPEAL THE MILITARY RETIREE COLA PENALTY

WHEREAS, heavy pressure from the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and veterans' advocates everywhere forced Congress to eliminate legislation that penalized working age military retirees with a one-percent reduction to annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLA). In a compromise, Congress grandfathered all military retirees and those currently serving in uniform, but Congress still imposed the one-percent penalty on future retirees, with the caveat that full COLAs would be reinstated upon their reaching age 62; and

WHEREAS, the COLA penalty is bad for the future leadership of the All-Volunteer Force. It negates all the upfront service and sacrifice that's required before someone can earn the title of "military retiree," like first volunteering decades of one's youth to the nation. It discounts the dangerous deployments and hazardous duty assignments, and the dozen or more moves that consistently uproot children from schools and spouses from any semblance of a career. And the penalty ignores the potential age discrimination many military retirees encounter when entering the civilian workforce in their 40s and 50s; and

WHEREAS, military retirees are already financially singled out with a dollar-for-dollar offset if they have service-connected disabilities below 50 percent, whereas other federal retirees receive both payments regardless of disability ratings. That surviving military spouses are hit with a "widow's tax" that reduces Defense Department Survivor Benefits Program payments by the amount received from the Department of Veterans Affairs-administered Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Plan, whereas surviving spouses of other federal retirees have no such penalties. And that the COLA penalty, which only applies to military retirees, will have a negative effect on the new military retirement system proposals made by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission, both the U.S. House and Senate, and now by the Department of Defense; and

WHEREAS, the world will remain a very dangerous and unpredictable place even after America ends its current involvements, and future military retirees may be required to serve just as long and perhaps sacrifice even more than their predecessors. We cannot allow Congress to send mixed messages to the troops that on one hand says the nation loves you while you're in uniform, but once retired, you cost too much; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge our members and veterans' advocates everywhere to demand that their elected members to Congress repeal the COLA penalty. (Approved)

Resolution No. 426 (Submitted by Department of South Dakota)

**PROTECTION OF FAMILIES OF DEPLOYED PERSONNEL IN COMBAT AREAS**

Whereas, the threat to the families of deployed personnel in combat areas has become a reality, due to the recent activity of "Lone Wolf" Jihadists in Texas; and

Whereas, the Department of Defense (D.O.D.) has responded by advising military personnel to safe-guard their social networking site as the only answer to the threat; and

Whereas, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) has vowed to cover the backs of their brothers and sisters in harm's way; and

Whereas, the VFW intends to fulfill its responsibility to our deployed brothers and sisters; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars support any and all laws passed by Congress that aide in the protection, and well-being of the families of America's deployed military personnel in combat areas. (Rejected)

**RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE  
AT THE 116TH NATIONAL CONVENTION,  
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA**

Resolution No. 601 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

**ADEQUATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BUDGET**

WHEREAS, there are about 21.6 million living veterans; and

WHEREAS, more than 2 million men and women have served in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11/2001; and

WHEREAS, VA anticipates that enrollment in the Veterans Health Administration will grow to nearly 9.2 million veterans; and

WHEREAS, more than 6.6 million of those veterans will be seen by VA for health care services; and

WHEREAS, even though appropriations for VA continue to increase, they have not kept pace with demand and the rate of inflation; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress of the United States authorize appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs which fully fund and maintain the integrity and enhancement of veteran entitlement programs and health care system.  
(Approved)

Resolution No. 602 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### OPPOSE VA PHARMACEUTICAL CO-PAYMENT INCREASES

WHEREAS, veterans, other than those with a service-connected disability rating of 50 percent or greater, those who are receiving medications for their service-connected conditions or those whose incomes fall below the non service-connected pension threshold, must pay a co-payment for each 30-day supply of medications obtained through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, there have been repeated proposals to raise the pharmaceutical co-payment, placing an undue hardship on many veterans; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, using his statutory authority, raised the pharmaceutical co-payment from \$8 to \$9 for each 30 day supply for priority groups 7 and 8, and authority to raise it again in the future exists; and

WHEREAS, the increase in costs of the benefit would likely cause many veterans to turn away from the VA health care system and would serve to inequitably balance the federal budget through veterans programs; and

WHEREAS, pharmaceuticals are part of the VA's standard health benefits package and must be provided to all eligible veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose increases in the VA pharmaceutical co-payment. (Approved)

Resolution No. 603 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### MAKE CHAMPVA PAYMENTS FAIR TO PROVIDERS

WHEREAS, the fees paid under the CHAMPVA medical insurance to providers of medical services are less than the fees paid by private insurance; and

WHEREAS, these reimbursement rates are subject to a pending rate cut of 24 percent under the Balanced Budget Act of 1997; and

WHEREAS, many private medical providers will not accept CHAMPVA, and TRICARE because of the inequity of payment; and

WHEREAS, the government plans are the only insurance that many 100 percent disabled and retired military personnel have and the proposed reductions will prevent veterans and their dependents from adequate medical treatment and care; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation and regulations requiring that CHAMPVA, TRICARE and other plans providing medical care for retired and disabled veterans be kept competitive with private insurance providers. (Approved)

Resolution No. 604 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### VA MEDICARE and TRICARE REIMBURSEMENT

WHEREAS, the VFW views it as essential that the VA health care system provide qualifying veterans with timely and accessible care; and

WHEREAS, the VA collects third party payment for treatment, but current law prevents VA from collecting from the Medicare Trust Fund and TRICARE in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, a large number of VA's patients are Medicare eligible; and

WHEREAS, VA's ability to deliver health care efficiently, effectively and at lower cost than does the private health care industry ensures that Medicare and TRICARE will be billed at lower rates than private health care providers; and

WHEREAS, the diversion of Medicare and TRICARE eligible veterans from the private sector to VA will result in both lower costs to Medicare and TRICARE and greater reimbursements to VA; and

WHEREAS, it is now absolutely essential that VA be authorized to collect federal dollars to supplement its annual appropriations to ensure adequate funding for the Veterans Health Administration; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support enactment into law of legislation authorizing VA to collect and retain Medicare and TRICARE reimbursement dollars from care that is provided to non-service connected veterans who are Medicare eligible and who seek care through the Veterans Health Administration. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 605 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CONSIDER TREATMENT FOR A PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTED CONDITION  
AS A CLAIM FOR VA COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, many service members have suffered from diseases that are recognized to be presumptive; and

WHEREAS, veterans suffering from diseases which include many types of cancer, as well as diabetes and other chronic diseases may not be aware that they may be eligible for service connection, even if they are being treated in a VA facility; and

WHEREAS, many VA medical facilities are not currently staffed or equipped to provide appropriate counseling to veterans or their families on how to file a claim for service connected benefits; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation requiring that treatment by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for a condition or disease recognized as presumptively service connected will be considered to be an informal claim for service connection for compensation purposes. (Approved)

Resolution No. 606 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)



## EXTENDING GULF WAR PRESUMPTIONS AND HEALTH CARE TO AFGHANISTAN THEATER VETERANS

WHEREAS, many service members have served in Operation Enduring Freedom; and

WHEREAS, these veterans have served under circumstances similar to those serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and the first Persian Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, Afghanistan was not considered part of the Southwest Asia theater of operations during Operation Desert Storm and the VA did not include Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, veterans of Afghanistan are suffering from similar undiagnosed conditions as those who have served in Iraq; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress and the VA must support research to verify whether service members who served in Afghanistan are subjected to the same environmental hazards as those who served in Iraq, so that appropriate benefits, including eligibility for compensation based on undiagnosed illnesses, and medical care eligibility, will be provided, retroactive to the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that while research is ongoing, allow veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom access to the Gulf War Registry Health Exam. (Approved)

Resolution No. 607 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

### NURSING HOME ELIGIBILITY

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has called upon Congress to enact legislation to regulate and expand eligibility for VA health care and provide all veterans with mandated access to the full continuum of VA health care services which include nursing home care; and

WHEREAS, current VA regulations extend VA eligibility for nursing home care to those veterans who are service-connected at 70 percent or above or those seeking nursing home care for a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, the demand for VA nursing home care is increasing as the veteran population continues to age; and

WHEREAS, VA nursing home care units are VA hospital-based and provide an intensive and extensive level of nursing home care supported by the clinical specialties and other services within the host hospital; and

WHEREAS, VA nursing home care is considered the “safety net” for VA outpatient services such as residential care, respite care, hospital-based home care, adult day health care, homemaker/home health aid services and other extended care programs; and

WHEREAS, VA, through their own statements, recognizes the difference in eligibility for nursing home care and inpatient hospital care as inconsistent with the principles of sound medical practice, which support continuity of care for veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to establish a standard VA nursing home entitlement for all veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 608 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY HEALTH CARE

WHEREAS, since 2000, more than 313,816 service members have sustained Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) including those that served in Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and New Dawn; and

WHEREAS, veterans with blast injuries, blunt trauma, motor vehicle accidents, and falls are at risk for TBI which often goes unrecognized; and

WHEREAS, even mildly injured TBI patients may have long-term mental and physical health consequences; and

WHEREAS, there has been universal recognition that veterans with severe TBI will need a lifetime of intensive services to care for their injuries and many VA medical facilities are not currently staffed or equipped to provide the necessary and appropriate screening, or quality health care services to veterans suffering from TBI; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to provide sufficient funding to the Department of

Veterans Affairs to ensure that appropriate screening, diagnostic services, treatment and life-long case management services are available to every veteran suffering from TBI; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase research pertaining to, screening methods, diagnostic tools, and more effective treatments for traumatic brain injury patients to ensure that TBI veterans are receiving quality standardized treatment and rehabilitation care available. (Approved)

Resolution No. 609 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### PTSD AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has indicated that treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and providing Mental Health Care among returning war veterans is one of its highest priorities, and the VA operates a nationwide network of nearly 200 specialized PTSD outpatient treatment programs; and

WHEREAS, the early and accurate screening, diagnosis and treatment for PTSD, depression, substance use, and other mental health disorders, yields optimal patient outcomes, and statistics have shown that these conditions, left untreated or poorly treated, can lead to increases in suicide attempts or suicides among a host of other negative consequences; and

WHEREAS, a total number of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Operation New Dawn veterans diagnosed with PTSD as of September 2014 is 378,300; and

WHEREAS, available research has not sufficiently evaluated the clinical effectiveness of treatment programs for veterans diagnosed with and/or suffering from the effects of traumatic brain injuries, PTSD, and adequate research into the brain's response to internal and external influences that could result in mental illness has yet to be undertaken; and

WHEREAS, VA expects an increase in PTSD conditions as Veterans return from Iraq and Afghanistan after multiple tours of duty; and

WHEREAS, VA statistics show that approximately 22 Veterans commit suicide every day, exposing a national crisis; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to continue to adequately staff VA mental health treatment and research programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to dedicate adequate resources to address the alarming rate at which Veterans commit suicide. (Approved)

Resolution No. 610 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

### VA SERVICES FOR WOMEN VETERANS

WHEREAS, the number of women joining the armed forces of our country continues to increase every year; and

WHEREAS, the most recent figures indicate, 583,580 women veterans were enrolled within the VA health care population, and 57 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan female veterans have received VA care, and female veterans use more primary and mental health services than their male counterparts; and

WHEREAS, the number of enrolled women veterans is expected to double in the next two to four years making it essential that VA continue to staff and equip its facilities to meet their specific health care needs; and

WHEREAS, VA has made a push to increase the gender specific awareness and training for its medical staff and health care providers; and

WHEREAS, many VA facilities are providing gender-specific health care services to include counseling and care for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) whether due to combat, Military Sexual Trauma (MST), or another form of trauma; and

WHEREAS, VA has hired and trained full-time Women Veteran Program Managers who are charged with improving care and access for women veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we acknowledge that VA has improved its medical staff gender-specific training as well as the care and services provided to women veterans, but we urge VA to continue to monitor and enhance their health care services available to women veterans at all VA facilities by improving privacy and security within medical facilities and providing adequate mental health care services to include ongoing training of individuals specifically assigned to meet the needs of women to include care for MST and PTSD; and place the highest priority on women veterans programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veteran Affairs to improve outreach and expand programs for women veterans to close critical gaps, allow women to choose their VA healthcare provider and continue to offer a full-range of services designed to meet their current and future needs. (Approved)

Resolution No. 611 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

INCREASE ACCESS, CHOICE, AND VALUE OF HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS,  
SERVICE MEMBERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES

WHEREAS, P.L. 111-148, the “Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act,” extended the eligibility age for dependent children being carried on their parents’ health insurance policies to 26 years old; and

WHEREAS, the extension was subsequently provided to dependent children of military personnel (those on TRICARE) by P.L. 111-383, the “National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2011”; and

WHEREAS, the only qualified dependents that are not covered under a parent’s health insurance policy are those of 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans covered under The Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA); and

WHEREAS, the government plans are the only insurance that many 100 percent disabled and retired military personnel have and the proposed reductions will prevent their dependents from adequate medical treatment and care; and

WHEREAS, CHAMPVA, TRICARE, and other health care plans that are provided to veterans, service members and their families have deteriorated relative to the access, choice, and value civilians receive in the private sector; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support policies requiring that CHAMPVA, TRICARE and any other plans providing medical care to veterans, service members, and their families be kept competitive with private insurance providers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support policies requiring that the dependent children of 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans are afforded the same health care access as the dependents of non-veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 612 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### EXPAND VA CAREGIVER BENEFITS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program provides a monthly stipend, respite care, mental and medical health care, and necessary training and certifications for caregivers of veterans who were severely injured on or after September 11, 2001; and

WHEREAS, no such comprehensive program exists for the caregivers of veterans of other eras; and

WHEREAS, the VFW believes that severely disabled veterans of all conflicts have made incredible sacrifices, and all family members who care for them are equally deserving of our recognition and support; and

WHEREAS, it is arbitrary and unjust that veterans who were severely disabled prior to September 11, 2001 are ineligible for the Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense provides support to family caregivers of members of the armed forces who are catastrophically disabled through its Special Compensation for Assistance with Activities of Daily Living (SCAADL) program, which includes disability caused by illnesses in its eligibility criteria; and

WHEREAS, the VA Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program excludes veterans who require home caregiver services as a result of serious illnesses; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to expand eligibility for the VA Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program to include veterans of all eras; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to fully align the VA Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program with the DOD SCAADL program by including in its eligibility criteria veterans who require caregiver services as a result of serious illnesses incurred in the line of duty.  
(Approved)

Resolution No. 613 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### EXTEND SERVICE CONNECTION PRESUMPTION

## TO BLAST SURVIVORS

WHEREAS, the Global War on Terrorism has placed tens of thousands of service members in harm's way; and

WHEREAS, the nature of the conflict these men and women face is frequently guerrilla-style combat where the enemy is widely known to use improvised explosive devices (IEDs); and

WHEREAS, much of the attention has been focused on the apparent physical wounds, there are many unseen effects of blast trauma, which could include brain injuries, long-term hearing and balance issues, chronic pain, air embolisms, and injuries mistaken for personality disorders; and

WHEREAS, some effects associated with blast injuries may not become manifest immediately allowing the service member to return to the field, only to have their ability to fulfill their duty dramatically affected by the long-term effects of the blast; and

WHEREAS many injuries are difficult to diagnose and our men and women in uniform can suffer from these disabilities for many years after the blast; and

WHEREAS, a large number of veterans have been identified as having been evaluated or treated for a condition possibly related to a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) at a VA medical center from the start of OIF/OEF/OND; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to approve a presumption of service connection for the conditions associated with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). (Approved)

Resolution No. 614 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

## TINNITUS AND HEARING LOSS PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTION

WHEREAS, veterans of the armed services who served in combat or in a position (e.g. member of a gun crew on board Navy ships) or certain occupational specialties have a high incidence rate of hearing loss or tinnitus as a direct result of acoustic trauma; and

WHEREAS, many pre-service and discharge examinations, particularly for World War II and Korean Conflict veterans, were usually accomplished with the highly inaccurate whispered-voice test; and

WHEREAS, veterans, in those cases, were not afforded a comprehensive audio logical examination upon entrance and discharge from the military services; and

WHEREAS, in recent years the second leading disability granted service connection by VA was for hearing loss or tinnitus; and

WHEREAS, in 2005 the Institutes of Medicine (IOM) released a study that showed that nearly all service members are exposed to acoustic trauma at some point during their military service and that many experience hearing loss and/or tinnitus as a result, often years after service. However, “after the fact, hearing loss or tinnitus incurred as a result of military service cannot be distinguished with certainty from subsequent noise-induced hearing loss...” Given these findings, reasonable doubt must be resolved in favor of veterans who suffered acoustic trauma in service; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we urge Congress and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to grant service connection on a presumptive basis for any veteran diagnosed after discharge with hearing loss or tinnitus when the evidence shows that the veteran participated in combat or worked in a position or occupational specialty likely to cause acoustic trauma. (Approved)

Resolution No. 615 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### HEARING LOSS COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, veterans of the armed services who served in combat have a high incident rate of hearing loss usually associated with acoustical trauma; and

WHEREAS, in the practice of granting disability compensation there is a long-standing precedent that ratings not be offset by the function artificially restored by prosthesis; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs has the authority to grant service connection for disabilities associated with combat-related diseases or injuries even if medically undocumented at the time of service; and

WHEREAS, many veterans have incurred extreme hardships through undocumented acoustic trauma related to combat service or occupational duty; and



WHEREAS, hearing aids are considered a prosthetic device necessary for good quality of life; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to amend the Schedule for Rating Disabilities to provide a minimum compensable evaluation for any service connected hearing loss for which a hearing aid is medically indicated. (Approved)

Resolution No. 616 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### VA CLAIMS WORKLOAD

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a workload of 1.75 million claims for compensation, pension, education benefits and appeals; and

WHEREAS, due to the increasing complexity of claims, the need for compliance to Court of Veterans Appeals decisions claims, and the continued increase in the number of claims received each year the workload has remained unacceptably high; and

WHEREAS, because of substantial number of claims and appeals cases, 47.1 percent of rating cases have been pending for more than 125 days and take, on average, 186 days to complete. Appeals have increased to over 292,000 and pend, on average, over 1,000 days at a regional office before being shipped to the Board of Veterans Appeals; and

WHEREAS, VA continues to order unnecessary examinations even when claimants submit adequate medical records and doctors opinions; and

WHEREAS, decades of staffing shortages and neglect within VA contributed to current backlogs and decreased timeliness; and

WHEREAS, Congress in recent years has provided increased funding for staffing at VA and improved oversight. Yet, the attrition of new hires and retirement of journeymen claims processors continues to challenge VA's ability to train and maintain a technically proficient workforce; and

WHEREAS, after decades of study, Congressional hearings, changes of VA leadership, altered workflow, amended work processes, sporadic IT development as well as countless pilot programs and experimental initiatives, it is clear that there are no easy, simple or quick solutions that lead to the rapid reduction of the backlog; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress require VA to accept private medical evidence and opinions in lieu of VA examinations whenever it is sufficient for rating purposes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to continue to exercise its oversight capacity and provide the resources necessary to hire, train and sustain a workforce sufficient to overcome the workload and provide quality and timely service to those claiming benefits or appealing decisions from VA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress continues its oversight of VA IT initiatives to ensure that they are constructive, relevant and effective in streamlining claims processing and improving quality of entitlement decisions. (Approved)

Resolution No. 617 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### IMPROVE EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR SURVIVORS

WHEREAS, the Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance Program (DEA) provides educational support to eligible dependents (spouse or children) of a service member who died on active duty or a veteran who died or is permanently and totally disabled due to a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, while DEA benefits increase annually, they fail to increase at the same rate as tuition; and

WHEREAS, according to the College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, the average cost of attendance, including tuition, fees, and room and board, at a four-year public university is estimated at \$18,391 for the 2013-2014 academic year, while the DEA benefit for the same period is \$9,027; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. worked with Congress to successfully expand the Gunnery Sgt. John David Fry Scholarship to offer Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to eligible surviving children, and spouses; and

WHEREAS, while nothing can repay the enormity of the loss and sacrifice of military survivors, providing a quality educational benefit will provide them the opportunity to build a meaningful and productive future for themselves and their children; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to increase DEA benefits to reflect the rising cost of education, with future increases indexed to reflect the average cost of attendance as reported by the Department of Education. (Approved)

Resolution No. 618 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### BURIAL PLOT ALLOWANCE

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pays certain burial benefits at the death of a veteran who dies from a service connected disability. VA pays a different burial benefit and plot allowance on behalf of a wartime veteran who dies from a non-service connected condition; and

WHEREAS, the cost of funeral expenses in the private sector have increased nearly seven times over since 2001 and the current VA benefit is \$2,000 for a service connected death, and \$700 burial and \$700 plot allowance for a qualifying non-service connected death; well below the cost in the private sector; and

WHEREAS, Congress should provide the resources to meet the changing needs of burial benefits and bring burial allowances and plot allowances to the same proportionate level they were when the benefits were joined in 1973; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress increase all burial benefits to what the Independent Budget recommends: the service connected burial benefit, non-service connected burial benefit and the plot allowance for those veterans who do not have access to a state or national veterans cemetery should be increased to \$6,160, \$1,918, and \$1,150 respectively; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the service connected burial benefit, non-service connected burial benefit and the plot allowance for those veterans who have access to a state or national veterans cemetery but chose burial in a private cemetery should be increased to \$2,793, \$854, and \$1,150 respectively; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress should provide the resources required to meet burial needs of all veterans who have served their country so honorably and faithfully. (Approved)

TOXIC EXPOSURES

WHEREAS, veterans who served on the ground and inland waterways during the Vietnam War are granted presumptive service connection for conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure, yet Blue Water Navy veterans are still arbitrarily and unjustly denied such presumption; and WHEREAS, veterans who served along the Korean demilitarized zone before and after the April 1968 to August 1971 dates of presumptive exposure to Agent Orange suffer from conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure and are often denied service connection by the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, many Air Force Reserve veterans who operated repurposed C-123 aircraft that had been used to spray Agent Orange during the Vietnam War now suffer from conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure; and

WHEREAS, more than 200,000 veterans of the Persian Gulf War suffer from an array of conditions and diseases, collectively known as Gulf War illness, while the causes remain unexplained and effective treatments undetermined; and

WHEREAS, veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were exposed to numerous environmental hazards, including open air burn pits and the anti-malaria drug mefloquine, the full effects of which are still unknown; and

WHEREAS, for decades, veterans and dependents stationed at Fort McClellan, Alabama were exposed to soil, air and drinking water contaminated by Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB), and now suffer from conditions associated with PCB exposure; and

WHEREAS, the effects of toxic exposures on the descendants of veterans remains largely unknown; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to invest adequate resources to study, diagnose, and treat conditions and illnesses associated with toxic exposures; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress ensures that the Department of Veterans Affairs extends presumptive service connection to veterans suffering from any conditions or illnesses found to be associated with exposure to toxic substances in the line of duty. (Approved)

Resolution No. 620 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

### HOMELESS VETERANS PRIORITIES

WHEREAS, homelessness among veterans has significantly decreased due to coordinated efforts across multiple agencies of government and the ambitious goal of the Department of Veterans Affairs to eliminate homelessness among veterans by 2015; and

WHEREAS, a growing number of female veterans experiencing homelessness, many of whom have dependents in their care; and

WHEREAS, local and state homeless veteran agencies and programs, are federally funded by the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Grant and Per Diem program and the Department of Labor (DOL) Homeless Veterans Reintegration program; and

WHEREAS, programs such as VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and the joint Housing and Urban Development and VA's Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program are showing signs of success in reducing homelessness; and

WHEREAS, the VA acknowledges its obligation to maintain comprehensive assistance to veterans who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness to the best of its capabilities; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the President and Congress to continue to address veterans' homelessness by increasing the availability of affordable housing, expanding educational and employment opportunities and training and providing gender-specific services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA should periodically adjust Grant and Per Diem program rates for inflation to ensure sufficient operation of homeless veteran assistance programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA compensation and non-service connected pension should not be considered countable income by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in determining program eligibility. (Approved)

Resolution No. 621 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

### ENSURE VETERAN SUCCESS IN EDUCATION

WHEREAS, our nation has consistently supported the future success of our warfighters through robust veterans' education benefits, historically molding generations of proven leaders; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States helped secure robust education benefits for today's veterans through the passage of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, offering a free in-state public education to veterans who qualify; and

WHEREAS, VA enrolled nearly one million veterans across all G.I. Bill programs in the past academic year; and

WHEREAS, the VFW successfully worked with Congress to offer reasonable in-state tuition protections for recently transitioned service members and dependents; and

WHEREAS, despite significant improvements to consumer resources for student veterans, inconsistent access to quality consumer information and financial hardships continue to drive perceptions in Washington that student-veterans are not succeeding in higher education; and

WHEREAS, the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission made several recommendations to streamline veterans' education programs; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, urge Congress to ensure proper oversight of VA's educational benefit programs by developing quality metrics with which to demonstrate student veteran success in higher education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress ensure veterans receive equitable access to benefits like in-state tuition and quality pre-enrollment educational information to ensure veterans are academically and financially prepared to succeed in higher education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States work to preserve quality GI Bill benefits for all current conflict veterans and future conflict veterans to ensure they continue to have access to quality education assistance programs. (Approved)

Resolution No. 622 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

WHEREAS, the period of eligibility for VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) benefits is 12 years from the date of separation from the military or the date the veteran was first notified by VA of a service-connected disability rating; and

WHEREAS, many veterans do not understand their eligibility to VR&E services and the benefits of the program until later in life when they become so disabled that their disabilities create an employment barrier; and

WHEREAS, VR&E lacks quality performance measures that measure rehabilitation based on the long-term effects of disability and the likelihood that a disability may require further rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, VR&E can take more than 90 days from enrollment to the start of services; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to change the eligibility delimiting date for VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program by eliminating the 12-year-delimiting date for eligibility to Chapter 31 benefits and allow all veterans with employment impediments or problems with independent living to qualify for VR&E services for life; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VA must restructure performance measures to emphasize long-term rehabilitation versus the current short-term indicators of success. Furthermore, VR&E should continually follow up with veterans considered to be rehabilitated to ensure that the rehabilitation and employment placement plans have been successful; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA streamlines eligibility and entitlement to VR&E programs to provide more timely intervention and assistance to all disabled veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 623 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### SUPPORT VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars recognizes that it is in the best interest of our nation to have a strong and viable veterans employment and training system; and

WHEREAS, Congress has recognized that veterans of all eras, especially recently separated service members find it difficult to obtain meaningful employment and careers; and

WHEREAS, while there are certain employment and educational programs in place for veterans such programs must have a proactive, long-term career focus; and

WHEREAS, programs designed to encourage federal employment of veterans, assist veterans in finding employment in their communities, and encourage federal contractors to hire veterans demand reasonable funding and responsible oversight to ensure success; and

WHEREAS, state agencies who receive federal funding are not held to the same veteran hiring standards as the federal government; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support viable and effective veterans employment and training systems, such as the Joint Veterans Service Grant (JVSG) program and other Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to improve and enforce federal veteran-hiring mandates for contractors who do business with the federal government as outlined in Title 38 USC 4212; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that federal veteran hiring initiatives and programs must be held accountable for the effectiveness of the services provided and funding should be adjusted to reflect abilities in creating long-term meaningful careers for veterans, and state agencies that receive federal funding must be held to the same standards and report to Congress on the success of veteran hiring initiatives; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if Department of Labor cannot ensure consistent, quality delivery of veterans' employment programs, that such programs be moved under the purview of the Department of Veterans Affairs. (Approved)

Resolution No. 624 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### VETERAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WHEREAS, government reports consistently indicate that many federal agencies fail to reach their three-percent contracting goal for disabled veterans; and



WHEREAS, many veterans and disabled veterans lack access to the necessary capital to invest in small business opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has failed to deliver adequate tools to veterans, offering the opportunity to fulfill the three-percent federal contracting mandate; and

WHEREAS, the Small Business Administration remains underfunded and understaffed to fulfill its mission of establishing and maintaining robust veterans' programs; and

WHEREAS, the verification process through which the Department of Veterans Affairs verifies veteran-owned businesses to do business with VA and other federal agencies has failed to adequately verify veteran business owners; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress expand entrepreneurial education and networking programs for veterans via veterans small business centers and other entrepreneurship programs funded through the Small Business Administration in order to help achieve the federal government's three-percent veterans contracting goal; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress expand veteran's and disabled veteran's access to capital by expanding direct loan programs through the Small Business Administration in order to help achieve the federal government's three-percent veterans contracting goal; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress hold VA accountable for its duty to properly verify veteran entrepreneurs to help achieve the federal government's three-percent veterans contracting goal. (Approved)

Resolution No. 625 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

#### SUSTAINABLE NON-VA HEALTH CARE OPTIONS FOR VETERANS

WHEREAS, in Spring 2014, whistleblowers exposed rampant wrongdoing at medical facilities across the VA health care system, through which veterans were alleged to have died on secret waiting lists while waiting for VA care and resulted in the resignation of a VA secretary and his top deputies; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States worked with Congress to pass the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, establishing the Veterans Choice Program, which offers veterans the

opportunity to obtain health care through non-VA providers if VA care is not accessible; and

WHEREAS, the VFW has consistently worked with Congress and VA to improve the health care VA provides our nation's veterans through innovative programs like the Patient-Centered Community Care Program to ensure non-VA health care providers receive appropriate and prompt payment for services furnished under VA's purchased care model and ensure veterans are not adversely affected by VA's inability to make such payments; and

WHEREAS, VFW members are generally satisfied with the care they receive from VA and believe the VA health care system must be preserved, but have consistently demanded timely access to high-quality health care, whether it be at VA or through non-VA health care providers; and

WHEREAS, the veterans population is a shifting demographic with evolving health care needs, which necessitates that VA identify new and innovative ways to deliver high-quality health care to the veterans it serves when it is unable to provide such care at VA medical facilities; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the VFW, that Congress must establish standardized, sustainable and veteran-centric non-VA health care options for veterans, leveraging VA's full range of non-VA care authorities and programs to ensure veterans receive the timely, high-quality and geographically accessible health care they have earned and deserve; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA comply with federal prompt payment requirements and incentivize non-VA health care providers to participate in its non-VA care programs, while ensuring veterans are not held financially liable for services furnished through such programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA must remain the guarantor and coordinator of care for enrolled veterans and provide them a full continuum of care; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress and VA must furnish and conduct proper outreach to ensure veterans are fully aware of their health care options. (Approved)

Resolution No. 626 (Submitted by Department of Michigan)

MARKER MEDALLION

WHEREAS, Public Law 110-157, signed into law on December 26, 2007 gives the VA authority to “furnish, upon request”, a medallion or other device of a design determined by the Secretary, to signify the deceased’s status as a veteran, to be attached to a headstone or marker that was furnished at private expense; and

WHEREAS, veterans who died prior to November 1, 1990 are not eligible to have this medallion or other device provided; and

WHEREAS, family headstones or monuments often do not necessarily commemorate the veteran’s military service; and

WHEREAS, many of our honored deceased veterans now lie in their final resting place without lasting testimony by our government of their service to our country; and

WHEREAS, we believe this injustice to our Nation’s veterans must be corrected; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support amending Public Law 110-157 to require the Department of Veterans Affairs to furnish a medallion or other device notwithstanding the fact that they died prior to November 1, 1990. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 627 (Submitted by Department of Hawaii)

#### IMPROVE VA & DOD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR HEPATITIS B

WHEREAS, most individuals with chronic Hepatitis B enjoy good health, are symptom free and may not know they have the silent disease; and

WHEREAS, in developed countries like the U.S. chronic Hepatitis B is a preventable, highly-treatable long-term illness where since 2002, Hepatitis B vaccinations have been required for all incoming U.S. military personnel; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Health & Human Services, in 2011, released our nation’s first-ever comprehensive Action Plan for the Prevention, Care and Treatment of Hepatitis B; and

WHEREAS, a 2014 study by the American Association for the Study of Liver Disease concluded that Hepatitis B infection was twice as common in the veteran population as in the general population, and that VA screening for the infection was “suboptimal”; and

WHEREAS, legislation has been consistently introduced in Congress to improve VA Hepatitis B testing and treatment for veterans considered to be at-risk; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense has unjustly discharged or denied the reenlistment requests of military service members with Hepatitis B who are on stable treatment plans, do not exhibit symptoms and fit for duty; and

WHEREAS, transparency and accessible documentation are among the best means to educate and prevent stigma and discrimination; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. urges the Department of Veterans Affairs to take steps to improve Hepatitis B screening, follow-up testing and treatment among veterans born between 1945 and 1980; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. urges the Department of Defense to codify policies for retention and discharge of military personnel with chronic Hepatitis B infection in order to educate and ensure Hepatitis B policies are documented, transparent, equitable, and updated as medical capabilities, technologies, evidence-based practices, and DOD policy considerations evolve. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 628 (Submitted by Department of Florida)

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continues to struggle to meet the growing healthcare needs of veterans of all generations; and

WHEREAS, the VA has an identifiable shortage of professional and administrative staff; and

WHEREAS, it is part of the explicit mission of the VA to support the federal government, including the Department of Defense (DOD) in times of national emergency; and

WHEREAS, DOD continues to have a backlog of service members awaiting a medical board and Benefits Delivery at Discharge exams, and there remains a need to reduce wait times in VA clinics and hospitals; and

WHEREAS, DOD has the capability and resources, within its rank and file, to effect both missions with the proper usage of Reserve Component medical units that have trained but have not deployed; and

WHEREAS, use of these resources will take advantage of the monies utilized to prepare these units for deployment and will result in leveraging existing manpower and already allocated training dollars to assist transitioning service members and veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we advocate and urge mutual cooperation and support through the use of DOD Reserve Component medical units that were non-deployed or are in their reset year to be assigned to major VA locations to assist in the reduction appointments for veterans; and also to Active Duty locations to staff the transitioning offices to ensure that service members may discharge with complete medical exams. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 629 (Submitted by Department of Virginia)

#### PRESERVE GI BILL EQUITY

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars' backed-GI Bill of Rights ("GI Bill") established, in 1944 a unique education benefit to returning war veterans; and

WHEREAS, iterations of the GI Bill have evolved to its current state of serving the education needs of the post-9/11 generation of veterans, service personnel, and their families; and

WHEREAS, the earned education entitlement of the GI Bill is a prime motivator in building and sustaining the United States' All-Volunteer Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, an eligible veteran's GI Bill entitlements are reduced for any type of post-high school education – be it Vocational School, Community College, or Four-Year University; and

WHEREAS, President Obama's Fiscal Year 2016 budget proposes two years of free Community College tuition to any high school graduate, regardless of military, community, or volunteer service ; and

WHEREAS, such a gratuitous social benefit would reduce the uniqueness and equity of GI Bill entitlements earned through the sacrifices and deprivations of service to one's Country in time of war, effectively discounting such service; and

WHEREAS, such a program would jeopardize the ability of the United States to sustain an All-Volunteer Force; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we enjoin Congress to protect the equities of the GI Bill against any such infringements through any necessary means, including, but not limited to: should the Obama measure be passed, prohibiting claims against the GI Bill entitlements for any education available at taxpayer expense to non-veterans, thereby preserving GI Bill equity for completing one's degree; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States enjoins all State, Federal District, or U. S. Territorial legislatures contemplating enacting, or having already enacted such a program as "Tennessee Promise," to prohibit institutions from charging the student's GI Bill entitlements for any education otherwise available at taxpayer expense to non-veterans. (Withdrawn by Department of Virginia)

Resolution No. 630 (Submitted by Department of Pacific Areas)

INCLUSION OF VETERANS TRAVELING AND RESIDING ABROAD ALL-INCLUSIVE MEDICAL SERVICE UNDER THE FOREIGN MEDICAL PROGRAM (FMP)

WHEREAS, services under the Foreign Medical Program (FMP) are strictly limited to the treatment of service-connected disabilities, regardless of a veteran's VA rating adjudication; and

WHEREAS, at this time current law prevents the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from establishing a VA Fee-Basis Program outside the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Fee Basis Program is solely for veterans receiving non-VA hospital care and medical services in the United States and is not applicable to veterans residing or traveling abroad; and

WHEREAS, reimbursement for a veteran traveling under the FMP is limited to Compensation and Pension (C&P) examinations and transportation for a veteran to the nearest medical facility when life-threatening emergencies occur; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the Foreign Medical Program be expanded to provide all-inclusive medical services to 100 percent disabled veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 631 (Submitted by Department of Pacific Areas)

EXTEND THE PRESUMPTION OF EXPOSURE TO HERBICIDES TO VETERANS  
STATIONED AT ROYAL THAI MILITARY BASES DURING THE VIETNAM WAR

WHEREAS, it is well-documented that herbicides were used for vegetation control and to clear base perimeters at Royal Thai installations between 28 February 1961 and 7 May 1975; and

WHEREAS, it is also documented that tactical herbicides obtained from Vietnam, as well as commercial grade herbicides, were used in Thailand; and

WHEREAS, many U.S. military service members stationed at Royal Thai Military installations throughout Thailand are suffering from diseases which include many types of cancer, as well as diabetes and other chronic diseases; and

WHEREAS, these diseases are recognized to be presumptive to herbicide exposure; and

WHEREAS, base personnel received military training such as small arms qualification training near the base perimeter; and

WHEREAS, current policy by VA restricting the presumption of exposure to herbicides to only those personnel who were military police and those with specific duties on the perimeter of installations does not recognize that many personnel working at these bases were given adjunct assignments (guard duty) on the perimeter which was poorly documented; and

WHEREAS, military service members with boots on the ground, at any time and point in Vietnam are automatically considered to have been exposed to herbicides; and

WHEREAS, the restrictive policies of VA unfairly exclude personnel who were assigned adjunct duties on the perimeter but cannot provide it; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation granting the presumption of exposure to any veteran who was assigned to a Royal Thai military installation from 28 February 1961 through 7 May 1975. (Approved)

Resolution No. 632 (Submitted by Department of Ohio)

## SUPPORT FOR VIET NAM BLUE WATER EQUITY ACT

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was recently admonished in the decision of Gray V. McDonald concerning the definition of an inland waterway/harbor which had previously denied service connection for the disabilities recognized as presumptive of exposure to Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Appellate Court has ordered VA to remand the previous decision to the VA in order to issue definitions to meet the requirements of international laws and definitions of inland waterways/harbors to ensure that the personnel serving on ships who were within the harbors/ports in Viet Nam are covered by the presumption of exposure to Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, the Congress and Senate of the United States have consistently introduced legislation call the Viet Nam Blue Water Equity Acts in Congress after Congress that urged Congress to pass the legislation based upon studies conducted by Australia; New Zealand and other nations which prove that ships serving within the territorial water boundaries of Viet Nam used waters that were contaminated by Agent Orange and that the desalination process actually increased the potency of Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, the Institutes of Medicine (IOM) does not recognize the studies or conclusions and the IOM is the decisive agency for recommendation of service connection; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition the Secretary of Veterans Affairs change the definition of Viet Nam veterans to include those who served within the territorial limits in the waters surrounding Viet Nam. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 633 Submitted by Department of Colorado)

### AUTHORIZATION AND APPROPRIATION LEGISLATION TO COMPLETE THE REPLACEMENT VA REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER IN AURORA, COLORADO

WHEREAS, the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care Center is of an age that it no longer is able to properly care for our veterans; and

WHEREAS, the replacement VA Regional Medical Center currently under construction in the Denver suburb of Aurora will be an excellent replacement for the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care Center to properly care for our veterans; and



WHEREAS, the replacement VA Regional Medical Center will be a Regional Center serving over 1 million veterans in the states of New Mexico, Kansas, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and Montana; and

WHEREAS, a bill must be passed in the U.S. Congress to authorize of an additional \$800 million to complete the construction project; and

WHEREAS, if the needed authorization is not passed, the replacement VA Regional Medical Center construction project will be shut down, depriving veterans of the health care they have earned through their service to their country; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives to pass legislation as required to complete the construction of the replacement VA Regional Medical Center in Aurora, Colorado, to properly serve the veterans who have sacrificed so much for the freedoms of the United States of America.  
(Approved as Amended)

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

Chairman: Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Past Commander-in-Chief, Arizona

Vice Chairman: Larry W. Rivers, Past Commander-in-Chief, Louisiana

(Room 319-20-21, David L. Lawrence Convention Center)

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Post No.</b>
Alabama	Charles Stephens	3128
Arizona	Timothy Borland	9972
Arizona	Tammie Smith	1433
Arkansas	Derek Patsey	1991
California	Deborah Johnson	1468
California	James Kokas	9223
Colorado	Barbara Green	4051
Colorado	Ronald Lattin	5061
Colorado	Kirk Rosa	12009
Connecticut	Ronald Rusakiewicz	9460
Delaware	Paul Phillips, Jr.	2863
Europe	Peter Mascetti	27
Europe	Gladwin Spohr	10692
Florida	W. Benny Bachand	4287
Florida	Wayne Carrigan	5625
Florida	John Hamilton	7909
Georgia	Gina Rhoden	7402
Illinois	Bradley Gould	630
Indiana	Leslie Ackermann	2689
Indiana	David Capshaw	1152
Iowa	Carol Whitmore	9127
Kansas	Johnathan Duncan	852
Kansas	Terry Fletcher	3115
Kansas	Robert Greene, Jr.	7397
Kansas	John Muckelbauer	3712
Kansas	Christopher Stergos	7397
Kentucky	Michael Busby	2728
Maine	John Bouchard	9609
Massachusetts	Christine Bassett	3236
Massachusetts	Theodore Eaton	2104
Michigan	Jerry Newberry	2492
Michigan	David Prohaska	4434
Michigan	Robert Weiss	2406
Minnesota	Tate Doom	295
Mississippi	Thomas Rollins, Jr.	6809
Missouri	Lawrence Maher	7356

<b>Missouri</b>	Zach Schwenk	5606
<b>Montana</b>	Thomas Pouliot	1116
<b>Nebraska</b>	Roger Broeker	1504
<b>Nevada</b>	Robert Barquist	7385
<b>New Hampshire</b>	Rose Connor-Allard	8214
<b>New Jersey</b>	George Spink	7125
<b>New Mexico</b>	Warren Booker	7686
<b>New York</b>	Harold Burke, Jr.	1895
<b>New York</b>	Brenda Serena	3180
<b>North Carolina</b>	Lewis Hunt	9488
<b>Ohio</b>	Andrew Caprella	9648
<b>Ohio</b>	Gerald Ward	5713
<b>Oregon</b>	Judith Burger	4108
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	Sandra Showalter	43
<b>Rhode Island</b>	Denise Calise	2396
<b>South Carolina</b>	Rodney Burne	3447
<b>South Dakota</b>	Willie Page	1640
<b>Tennessee</b>	Chester Crone	4862
<b>Texas</b>	Glen Gardner, Jr.	3359
<b>Texas</b>	Larry Sanders	12041
<b>Utah</b>	Brent Neilsen	10900
<b>Vermont</b>	Ann Marie McCallum	790
<b>Virginia</b>	Mark Winn	392
<b>Washington</b>	George Berthiaume	91
<b>West Virginia</b>	James Talerico	573
<b>Wisconsin</b>	Aimee Carrington	10911

### **COMMITTEE ON FINANCE & INTERNAL ORGANIZATION**

Chairman: James R. Mueller, Past Commander-in-Chief, Missouri

Vice Chairman: Edward S. Banas, Past Commander-in-Chief, Connecticut

(Room 301-02-03-04, David L. Lawrence Convention Center)

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Post No.</b>
<b>Alaska</b>	John Minnick	9365
<b>Arizona</b>	Terry Hill	9907
<b>California</b>	Everett Martin	1732
<b>California</b>	Daniel Schmaltz	4048
<b>Colorado</b>	Robert Kidd	3917
<b>Connecticut</b>	John Larensen	5095
<b>Europe</b>	Richard Kennedy	27
<b>Florida</b>	Patrick Love	8203
<b>Florida</b>	Robert Shepherd	4864

<b>Georgia</b>	Desso Faulkner	5978
<b>Hawaii</b>	Dick Skarnes	12122
<b>Idaho</b>	John Crotinger	3520
<b>Illinois</b>	Robert Migalich	4763
<b>Illinois</b>	Gary Stork	2698
<b>Indiana</b>	Herbert Mullen	286
<b>Iowa</b>	Jerry Black	839
<b>Kansas</b>	Patrick Briggs	3111
<b>Kansas</b>	Robert Greene, Jr.	7397
<b>Kansas</b>	John Muckelbauer	3712
<b>Louisiana</b>	Ralph Simmons	3267
<b>Louisiana</b>	Fred Wesley	12065
<b>Maine</b>	Raymond Lupo	4633
<b>Maine</b>	Christopher Robison	4527
<b>Massachusetts</b>	William Madera	1702
<b>Massachusetts</b>	Paul Spera	144
<b>Michigan</b>	Donald Nettler	1407
<b>Michigan</b>	Jerry Newberry	2492
<b>Mississippi</b>	Johnie Richard	2539
<b>Mississippi</b>	Danny Williams	3685
<b>Missouri</b>	Phillip Pippins	2593
<b>Missouri</b>	Kim Wischmeyer	280
<b>Montana</b>	Edward Viig	7311
<b>Nevada</b>	Merlin Hollinger	8336
<b>Nevada</b>	Anthony Yarbrough	8084
<b>New Jersey</b>	Patrick Botbyl	1593
<b>New Jersey</b>	Richard Smith	4463
<b>New York</b>	Art Scheuneman	547
<b>Ohio</b>	Chuck Keller	3761
<b>Ohio</b>	Kari Pfeifer	2920
<b>Oklahoma</b>	Timothy Turman	3085
<b>Oregon</b>	Cheryl Campos	10626
<b>Oregon</b>	Donald Reed	12140
<b>Pacific Areas</b>	Peter Callaghan	3457
<b>Pacific Areas</b>	Gerald Kraus	1509
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	Dominic De Franco	764
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	John Getz, Jr.	3376
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	Lloyd Greenwood	8951
<b>Rhode Island</b>	Guyde Lombardi	2812
<b>South Dakota</b>	Darold Couch	3442
<b>Tennessee</b>	Joe Myers	11333
<b>Texas</b>	Richard Shawver	3893
<b>Utah</b>	Darryl Root	6395
<b>Virginia</b>	Tommy Hines	9954
<b>Washington</b>	Dean Miller	239

<b>Washington</b>	Charles Noble	10711
<b>Washington</b>	Keith Wooldridge	7392
<b>West Virginia</b>	Robert Caruthers	9926
<b>Wisconsin</b>	Walter Hogan	6498

### **COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS**

Chairman: William A. Thien, Past Commander-in-Chief, Indiana  
 Vice Chairman: Richard L. DeNoyer, Past Commander-in-Chief, Massachusetts  
 Vice Chairman: George J. Lisicki, Past Commander-in-Chief, New Jersey  
 Vice Chairman: John E. Moon, Past Commander-in-Chief, Ohio

(Ballroom C, David L. Lawrence Convention Center)

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Post No.</b>
<b>Alabama</b>	Jerry Anger	4850
<b>Alabama</b>	Janice Harris	1349
<b>Alaska</b>	Alvin Moye	10252
<b>Alaska</b>	Melvin Sheppard	3836
<b>Arizona</b>	Daniel Rowland, II	10188
<b>Arizona</b>	Raymond Thomas	3632
<b>Arkansas</b>	Gary Wellesley	3031
<b>Arkansas</b>	William Wells	4764
<b>California</b>	Douglas Carrington	2275
<b>California</b>	Robert Crider	9223
<b>California</b>	Edward Ford	7635
<b>California</b>	Stephen Milano, Jr.	4647
<b>Colorado</b>	Gregory Wawrytko	101
<b>Connecticut</b>	Robert Crandall	189
<b>Connecticut</b>	Richard Kennedy	9460
<b>Delaware</b>	John Morrow	475
<b>Delaware</b>	Mark Newman	3238
<b>Delaware</b>	William Rickards	6984
<b>Dist of Col.</b>	Robert Lane, Jr.	341
<b>Dist of Col.</b>	Arne Shaw	341
<b>Dist of Col.</b>	Clinton Townsend	9755
<b>Europe</b>	George Gilgore	10614
<b>Europe</b>	James Vergott	27
<b>Florida</b>	Danette Hernandez	7909
<b>Florida</b>	William Shaw	7122
<b>Georgia</b>	Richard Attaway	4629
<b>Georgia</b>	R. D. Smith, Jr.	4346
<b>Hawaii</b>	Stanley Fernandez	10276
<b>Idaho</b>	Robert Jones	3012
<b>Idaho</b>	Richard Pingry, Sr.	3012

<b>Illinois</b>	Michael De Ross	8821
<b>Illinois</b>	Matthew Mihelcic	2698
<b>Indiana</b>	Eric Campbell	1925
<b>Indiana</b>	Roger Chandler	6582
<b>Iowa</b>	Dennis Abel	1797
<b>Iowa</b>	Bradley Whitmore	9127
<b>Kansas</b>	David Cuba	6654
<b>Kansas</b>	Robert Greene, Jr.	7397
<b>Kansas</b>	John Muckelbauer	3712
<b>Kansas</b>	Lee Reynolds, Jr.	7397
<b>Kentucky</b>	Richard Quire	4075
<b>Maine</b>	Darald Mitchell	9779
<b>Maine</b>	Kevin Woodward	11553
<b>Maryland</b>	Michael Johnson	5118
<b>Maryland</b>	Douglas MacArthur	5337
<b>Massachusetts</b>	Keith Jackson	6538
<b>Massachusetts</b>	David Josselyn	2498
<b>Massachusetts</b>	George Murray	1018
<b>Massachusetts</b>	Ronald Smith	8892
<b>Michigan</b>	Harry Croyle	6756
<b>Michigan</b>	John Gubin	9021
<b>Michigan</b>	James Hubbard	334
<b>Michigan</b>	Jerry Newberry	2492
<b>Minnesota</b>	Gary Anderson	6587
<b>Minnesota</b>	Scott Bill	3915
<b>Minnesota</b>	Donald Nix	5518
<b>Minnesota</b>	Stephen O'Connor	4114
<b>Mississippi</b>	Douglas Lee	4272
<b>Mississippi</b>	Jeffory Mc Kenzie	9832
<b>Missouri</b>	Debra Anderson	7356
<b>Missouri</b>	Jeffrey Colyer	3838
<b>Missouri</b>	Jimmy Cook	30
<b>Missouri</b>	Troy Williams	2442
<b>Montana</b>	David Johnson	10010
<b>Montana</b>	Gerard Weitz	6774
<b>Nebraska</b>	John Iossi	3704
<b>Nevada</b>	Vita Lopez	12101
<b>Nevada</b>	Joe Rigsby	2350
<b>Nevada</b>	Robert Snider	3396
<b>New Hampshire</b>	Travis Bill	9552
<b>New Hampshire</b>	Jorg Dreusicke	10722
<b>New Jersey</b>	Frederick Gould	1593
<b>New Jersey</b>	Andrew Henkel, Jr.	2290
<b>New Mexico</b>	Karla Eaton	9515
<b>New Mexico</b>	Michael Hendrickson	401

<b>New York</b>	Melvin Garrett	6396
<b>New York</b>	Philip Ippolito	2940
<b>New York</b>	Walter Zincio	9593
<b>North Carolina</b>	Kenneth Sellers	1920
<b>North Dakota</b>	James Hapala	7564
<b>North Dakota</b>	Devlon Olson	7564
<b>North Dakota</b>	Shaun Shenk	1874
<b>Ohio</b>	Merton Compton	7424
<b>Ohio</b>	Michael Rebeta	7609
<b>Oklahoma</b>	Larry Jordan	4465
<b>Oklahoma</b>	Gordon Wheeler	9969
<b>Oregon</b>	Thomas Laing	9448
<b>Oregon</b>	James McDonald	1324
<b>Pacific Areas</b>	Clifton Wilsey	2485
<b>Pacific Areas</b>	Robert Zaher	2485
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	John Brenner	2493
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	Lynn Keener	6319
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	Wayne Perry	7505
<b>Rhode Island</b>	Jeanne Glendinning	2396
<b>South Carolina</b>	Janet Chisolm-Richard	3433
<b>South Carolina</b>	M. H. Gunter, Jr.	8738
<b>South Dakota</b>	Linda Fox	791
<b>South Dakota</b>	Kenneth Payne	6554
<b>Tennessee</b>	Michael Gratton	4840
<b>Texas</b>	Henry Lester	9313
<b>Texas</b>	John Lozanski	5076
<b>Texas</b>	Lavern Terbl	7873
<b>Utah</b>	Elmer Inman	6395
<b>Utah</b>	Mark Luddington	10900
<b>Vermont</b>	John Boardman	6689
<b>Vermont</b>	Timothy Hodet	758
<b>Virginia</b>	Joe Martin	1827
<b>Virginia</b>	Donald Westerlund	9954
<b>Washington</b>	Jack Chandler, Sr.	11401
<b>Washington</b>	Theodore Streeete	2669
<b>Washington</b>	Teddy Wright	51
<b>West Virginia</b>	Melvin Goodard	4484
<b>West Virginia</b>	Charles Haney	7048
<b>Wisconsin</b>	John Kleinmaus	1393
<b>Wyoming</b>	Charles Sutter	4797

## **COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Chairman: John F. Gwizdak, Past Commander-in-Chief, Georgia

Vice Chairman: John Furgess, Past Commander-in-Chief, Tennessee

(Room 408, 409, David L. Lawrence Convention Center)

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Post No.</b>
<b>Alaska</b>	Robert Myles	1685
<b>Arizona</b>	Derek Tramondo	7968
<b>Arkansas</b>	Timothy Dover	4548
<b>California</b>	Charles Anfuso	2111
<b>California</b>	Alexander Brown	1512
<b>California</b>	David Norris	1051
<b>Dist. of Col.</b>	Herman Salley	2979
<b>Florida</b>	Karen Nigara	1689
<b>Hawaii</b>	George Barlett	10154
<b>Hawaii</b>	Joseph Davis	3391
<b>Illinois</b>	John Davin	5917
<b>Illinois</b>	Russell Rieke	5694
<b>Illinois</b>	Jules Spindler	4549
<b>Indiana</b>	Gregory Baker	6978
<b>Indiana</b>	Robert Muhlhauser	5864
<b>Kansas</b>	Douglas Simms	10552
<b>Kentucky</b>	Robert Daugherty	1298
<b>Kentucky</b>	Carl Kaelin	1170
<b>Louisiana</b>	John Fauver	3784
<b>Maine</b>	Andre Dumas	9389
<b>Massachusetts</b>	Jeffrey Najarian	1788
<b>Michigan</b>	Barbara Locke	1329
<b>Michigan</b>	Jack Pray	3243
<b>Minnesota</b>	John Staum	9625
<b>Minnesota</b>	Steven Van Bergen	1296
<b>Missouri</b>	Paul Frampton	11290
<b>Nevada</b>	Caleb Harris	3819
<b>Nevada</b>	Gilbert Hernandez	2350
<b>New Hampshire</b>	Paul Chevalier	168
<b>New Jersey</b>	William Thomson	6192
<b>New Mexico</b>	Vincent Lawrence	7686
<b>New York</b>	James Longendyke	1386
<b>New York</b>	James Mc Nally	53
<b>North Carolina</b>	William Hertline, Jr.	7288
<b>North Carolina</b>	Jason Schoolcraft	8073
<b>North Dakota</b>	Loren Headrick	753
<b>Ohio</b>	David Root	1079
<b>Oregon</b>	John Stanks	3965
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	Russell Canevari	5544
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	Allen Jones	21



<b>Pennsylvania</b>	John Moyer	7155
<b>Rhode Island</b>	Roger Lavoie	5392
<b>South Carolina</b>	Richard Bell	4262
<b>South Dakota</b>	Russel Dramstad	1776
<b>South Dakota</b>	Verne Hansen	2118
<b>South Dakota</b>	Todd Struwe	2118
<b>Tennessee</b>	Darryl Mc Pheron	9754
<b>Texas</b>	Gary Bridges	4709
<b>Texas</b>	James Chamlee	6873
<b>Virginia</b>	John Smart	1503
<b>Washington</b>	Thomas Darling	1585
<b>West Virginia</b>	Randall Bare	3488
<b>Wisconsin</b>	Charlene Cobb	10173
<b>Wyoming</b>	James Pedersen	2673
<b>Wyoming</b>	Renford Smith, Jr.	3628

### **NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS**

Chairman: Gary L. Kurpius, Past Commander-in-Chief, Alaska  
 Vice Chairman: James E. Nier, Past Commander-in-Chief, Texas

(Room 326, David L. Lawrence Convention Center)

#### **SUBCOMMITTEE I - HEALTH**

Chairman: Denise Estes, Nevada  
 Vice Chairman: Wayne Hutchison, Ohio  
 Staff Advisors: James Moss, Assistant Director, Veterans Health Policy, National Veterans Service  
 Carlos Fuentes, Senior Legislative Associate, National Legislative Service

(Room 327, David L. Lawrence Convention Center)

#### **SUBCOMMITTEE II – BENEFITS**

Chairman: Paul Pirlot, Michigan  
 Vice Chairman: Mark Barrett, California  
 Staff Advisors: Jerry Manar, Deputy Director, National Veterans Service  
 Aleks Morosky, Deputy Director, National Legislative Service

(Room 326, David L. Lawrence Convention Center)

#### **SUBCOMMITTEE III – ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY/OTHER**

Chairman: Jason K. Smith, Florida

Vice Chairman: Jon Gohn, Minnesota

Staff Advisors: Ryan Gallucci, Deputy Director, National Veterans Service

Brendon Gehrke, Senior Legislative Associate National Legislative Service

(Room 328, David L. Lawrence Convention Center)

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Post No.</b>
Alabama	Laylon Gardner	4572
Alabama	Cassandra Simons	1349
Alaska	Gerry Glover	9785
Alaska	William Yudiskas	9785
Arizona	Bradley Hazell	1677
Arizona	Frank Petty	2555
Arizona	Phil Yin	7507
Arkansas	Paul Bunn	10007
Arkansas	Terry Callahan	2256
California	Mark Barrett	5477
California	Herbert Hillaker	3919
California	Douglas Scholl	3783
Colorado	Anthony Archer	101
Colorado	Bruce Dolan	7945
Connecticut	Edmund Burke	10004
Connecticut	Aleksandr Morosky	7788
Connecticut	Charles Pickett	12150
Delaware	David Hilliard	475
Delaware	John Mitchell	7234
Deaware	Lawrence Waters	475
Dist of Col.	William Bradshaw	284
Dist of Col.	Oran Danzy	341
Europe	Billy Barber	10436
Europe	Dale Nagan	10708
Florida	Kevin Kellett	8205
Florida	Jason Smith	10140
Georgia	Joel Willis	5290
Hawaii	Maria Va`a-Igafa	3391
Idaho	William Heyob	63
Idaho	Dale Rutter	142
Illinois	George Foy, Jr.	5917
Indiana	Lawrence Northcutt	7119
Indiana	Christopher Stein	6904
Iowa	Darrell Blasberg	2208
Iowa	Richard Davis	788
Iowa	Stuart Juarez	738
Kansas	Michael Petersen	7397
Kentucky	Gerald Kayrouz	1170

<b>Kentucky</b>	Bruce Unland	5480
<b>Kentucky</b>	Claud Wyatt	5704
<b>Louisiana</b>	Alfred Leger	6720
<b>Maine</b>	Louis Peterson	6859
<b>Maine</b>	David Williams	1641
<b>Maryland</b>	Raymond Kelley	160
<b>Maryland</b>	Anthony Navickas	521
<b>Maryland</b>	Kenneth Smith	304
<b>Maryland</b>	Larry Tribbitt	652
<b>Massachusetts</b>	Mark Allen	1822
<b>Massachusetts</b>	Donald Lafond	7239
<b>Michigan</b>	Timothy Litz	1146
<b>Michigan</b>	Paul Pirlot	4230
<b>Michigan</b>	Barry Walter	4005
<b>Minnesota</b>	Jon Gohn	5
<b>Minnesota</b>	Barry Henriksen	1782
<b>Mississippi</b>	Tara Rivers	9832
<b>Missouri</b>	Melvin Brinkley	2426
<b>Montana</b>	Robert Schwegel	6786
<b>Nebraska</b>	James Pierce	5547
<b>Nebraska</b>	Eric Williams	7102
<b>Nevada</b>	Denise Estes	10053
<b>Nevada</b>	Herman Hagen, Jr.	10468
<b>Nevada</b>	Philip Jacka, Jr.	9165
<b>New Hampshire</b>	Dana Hussey	1772
<b>New Hampshire</b>	Lawrence Shamer, Jr.	10722
<b>New Jersey</b>	Mauel Almeida	2226
<b>New Jersey</b>	Bernard McElwee	10184
<b>New Jersey</b>	Gary Stoop	5479
<b>New Mexico</b>	Cynthia Archuleta	5890
<b>New Mexico</b>	Allan Kuchinsky	7686
<b>New Mexico</b>	Richard Nutt	7686
<b>New York</b>	Donald Mackey	1895
<b>New York</b>	Bruce Terwilliger	686
<b>New York</b>	Thomas Todaro, Jr.	53
<b>North Carolina</b>	Christopher Sikes	2573
<b>North Carolina</b>	David Watts	7383
<b>North Dakota</b>	Russel Foster	7564
<b>Ohio</b>	Karl Hagaman, Jr.	5713
<b>Ohio</b>	Wayne Hutchison	7670
<b>Oklahoma</b>	Michael Devenitch	8706
<b>Oklahoma</b>	David Webb	3916
<b>Oregon</b>	George Carroll	3973
<b>Oregon</b>	Jason Carroll	3973
<b>Oregon</b>	Bert Key	4273

<b>Pacific Areas</b>	Michael Castro	1054
<b>Pacific Areas</b>	Barry Moshinsky	10217
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	John Foster	2
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	Thomas Hanzas	7599
<b>Rhode Island</b>	Allen Wagonblott, Jr.	5392
<b>South Carolina</b>	Thomas Roundtree, Jr.	4262
<b>South Carolina</b>	Johnny Wilson	4262
<b>South Dakota</b>	Willaim Huffmon	1273
<b>South Dakota</b>	Dick Pickering	4726
<b>Tennessee</b>	David Jungquist	9851
<b>Tennessee</b>	Donald Smith, Jr.	2120
<b>Texas</b>	Ingleborg Conley	12075
<b>Texas</b>	Norman Macey	4816
<b>Utah</b>	Brent Lyon	12087
<b>Virginia</b>	Steven Botello	7589
<b>Virginia</b>	Ryan Gallucci	3150
<b>Virginia</b>	Gerald Manar	609
<b>Washington</b>	Celeste Ashworth	11401
<b>Washington</b>	Robert Dunn	91
<b>Washington</b>	Jerry Herker	3386
<b>West Virginia</b>	Thomas Lyons	9796
<b>Wisconsin</b>	John Giese	6375
<b>Wyoming</b>	Kenneth Persson	954

### **COMMITTEE ON CREDENTIALS**

Chairman: Bertha M. Gripp, Post 10188, Arizona

### **COMMITTEE ON CONVENTION RULES**

Chairman: John M. Carney, Past Commander-in-Chief, Florida

Vice Chairman: George R. Cramer, Past Commander-in-Chief, Illinois

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Post No.</b>
<b>Kansas</b>	Johnathan Duncan	852
<b>Michigan</b>	David Prohaska	7674
<b>Missouri</b>	Zach Schwenk	5606