

PROCEEDINGS OF
100th NATIONAL
CONVENTION *of the*
AMERICAN
LEGION



Minneapolis, Minnesota

August 24-30, 2018

2018 : 100th NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION : 2018

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 100TH NATIONAL
CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE
DIVISION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

TRANSMITTING

A FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF THE
AMERICAN LEGION, AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE 100TH ANNUAL
NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, HELD IN
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA FROM AUGUST 24-30, 2018, AND A
REPORT ON THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR
PRECEDING THE CONVENTION



JULY 26, 2019.—Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and
ordered to be printed

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, February 14, 2019.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER PELOSI: In compliance with current public law, we herewith transmit for printing as a House document, a financial statement and independent audit of The American Legion, and proceedings of our 100th annual National Convention held in Minneapolis, Minnesota from August 24–30, 2018, and a report on our organization's activities for the year preceding the convention.

For God and Country,

MATTHEW J. SHUMAN,
Director, National Legislative Division.

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FOREWORD

This booklet has been prepared for the information of members of The American Legion. It has come to be known as the Summary of Proceedings of the National Convention for the current year. It is a comprehensive résumé of what took place at the One Hundredth Annual National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018.

The final report of the national organization for the period ending December 31, 2017, and balance sheet as of December 31, 2017, and surplus analysis, January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2017, are included in the Summary.

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

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

Daniel S. Wheeler
National Adjutant

Note: At various times, the national vice commanders, as follows, presided over the Convention sessions, when called upon by the presiding officer, in accordance with the Uniform Code of Procedure as shown in the verbatim proceedings: Larry J. Marcouillier, Delaware; William J. Flanagan, Illinois; Bobby D. Bryant, Oklahoma; Byron I. Callies, South Dakota; Paula R. Stephenson, Utah.

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

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

**indicates deceased*

HONORARY COMMANDERS

**General of the Armies of the United States John J. Pershing*
Marshall of France Ferdinand Foch***

PARIS CAUCUS

Paris, France, March 15 - 17, 1919

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

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

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

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

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

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

ST. LOUIS CAUCUS

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

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

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

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

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

Chaplain: Thomas H. Wiles*, Colorado

1st NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

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

Vice Chairman: Bennett C. Clark*, Missouri

Secretary: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania

Treasurer: Gasper G. Bacon*, Massachusetts

Chaplain: Thomas H. Wiles*, Colorado

2nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Cleveland, Ohio, Sept. 27 - 29, 1920

Commander: Franklin D'Olier*, Pennsylvania

Vice Commanders: James O'Brien*, California; Allan A. Tukey*,

Nebraska; Joyce S. Lewis*, Minnesota;

Alden B. Chambers*, Massachusetts;

William Follett*, Oregon

Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington

Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana

Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts

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

Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

3rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

Commander: Frederic W. Galbraith, Jr. *,

(died June 9); Succeeded by John G.

Emery*, Michigan

Milton Foreman*, Illinois, Past National Commander

Vice Commanders: John G. Emery*,

Michigan; Thomas Goldingay*, New Jersey;

Claudius G. Pendill*, Wisconsin; James G.

Scrugham*, Nevada; E. Jackson Winslett*,

Alabama

Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington

Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana

Chaplain: Rev. John W. Inzer*, Tennessee

Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts

Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

4th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

Commander: Hanford MacNider*, Iowa

Vice Commanders: H. Nelson Jackson*,

Vermont; George L. Berry*, Tennessee;

Raymond O. Brackett*, Massachusetts;

Charles H. Kendrick*, California; John A.

McCormack*, Colorado

Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Earl A. Blackman*, Kansas
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

5th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

6th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

7th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

8th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Philadelphia, Pa., Oct. 11 - 15, 1926
Commander: John R. McQuigg*, Ohio
Bennett C. Clark*, Missouri, Past National Commander

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

9th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

10th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

11th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

12th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Boston, Mass., Oct. 6 - 9, 1930
Commander: O.L. Bodenhamer*, Arkansas

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

13th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

14th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

15th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Chicago, Ill., Oct. 2 - 5, 1933
Commander: Louis A. Johnson*, West Virginia
Vice Commanders: Russell Meadows*, Arizona; Robert D. Flory*, Nebraska; William E. Easterwood, Jr. *, Texas; John J. Maloney*, Maine; Chas. A. Mills*, Florida
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Irwin Q. Wood*, Idaho
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts (died January 22, 1933); Succeeded by Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama

Judge Advocate: Remster A. Bingham*, Indiana

16th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

17th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

18th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

19th NATIONAL CONVENTION

New York, N.Y., Sept. 20 - 23, 1937
Commander: Harry W. Colmery*, Kansas
Vice Commanders: Salvatore A. Capodice*, California; Leo A. Temmey*, South Dakota; Leonard Sisk*, Tennessee; J. Fred Johnson, Jr. *, Alabama; Jack Crowley*, Vermont
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Bryan H. Keathley, D.D. *, Texas

Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

20th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Los Angeles, Calif., Sept. 19 - 22, 1938

Commander: Daniel J. Doherty*,
Massachusetts

Vice Commanders: Drury M. Phillips*,
Texas; Phil M. Conley*, West Virginia;

Harry M. Johnson*, Montana; James F.
Daniel, Jr. *, South Carolina; James R.
Mahaffy*, Hawaii

Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas

Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Frank J. Lawler*, Illinois

Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana

Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

21st NATIONAL CONVENTION

Chicago, Ill., Sept. 25 - 28, 1939

Commander: Stephen F. Chadwick*,
Washington

Vice Commanders: Edward J. Quinn*,
Maine; Charles W. Crush*, Virginia; Earl T.
Ross*, Nevada; James T. Crawley*,

Mississippi; Henry C. Oakey*, Wisconsin

Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas

Chaplain: Rev. Jerome L. Fritsche*,
Nebraska

Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama

Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana

Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

22nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Boston, Mass., Sept. 23 - 26, 1940

Commander: Raymond J. Kelly*, Michigan

Vice Commanders: Leo E. Ray*, New
Hampshire; Charles Q. Kelly*, Arkansas;

Matthew J. Murphy*, Illinois; James B.
Fitzgerald*, Maryland;

H. Elwyn Davis*, Colorado

Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas

Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Patrick N.

McDermott*, Iowa

Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama

Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana

Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

23rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Milwaukee, Wis., Sept. 15 to 18, 1941

Commander: Milo J. Warner*, Ohio

Vice Commanders: Erwin A. Froyd*,

Wyoming; James L. McCrory*, Nebraska;

Harold P. Redden*, Massachusetts; Edward

R. Stirling*, Pennsylvania;

Alcee S. Legendre*, Louisiana

Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas

Chaplain: Rev. Brigadier William G. Gilks*,
Texas

Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama

Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana

Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

24th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Kansas City, Mo., Sept. 19-21, 1942

Commander: Lynn U. Stambaugh*, North
Dakota

Vice Commanders: W. C. Sawyer*, Arizona;

William DeLacy Allen*, Georgia; Charles E.

Booth*, West Virginia; V. M. Armstrong*,

Indiana; John F. Sullivan*, Vermont

Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas

Chaplain: Rev. Frederick J. Halloran*, New
Jersey

Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama

Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana

Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

25th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Omaha, Neb., Sept. 21 - 23, 1943

Commander: Roane Waring*, Tennessee

Vice Commanders: John T. Batten*,

Alabama; Arthur J. Connell*, Connecticut;

Fred G. Fraser*, District of Columbia;

Herman H. Lark*, Missouri;

Jefferson Davis Atwood*, New Mexico

Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas, (died

July 25); Succeeded by Donald G.

Glascoff*, Michigan, Acting Adjutant

Chaplain: Dr. Paul De Forrest Mortimore*,
Idaho

Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama

Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana

Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

26th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Chicago, Ill., Sept. 18 - 20, 1944

Commander: Warren H. Atherton*,
California

Vice Commanders: Martin V. Coffey*,

Ohio; E.A. Littlefield*, Utah; Robert 'Roy'

McMillan*, North Carolina; Edward Al

Mulrooney*, Delaware;

Hector G. Staples*, Maine

Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan

Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. John F.

McManus*, Kansas

Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama

Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana

Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

27th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

Commander: Edward N. Scheiberling*, New
York

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

28th NATIONAL CONVENTION

San Francisco, Calif., Sept. 30 – Oct. 4, 1946

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

29th NATIONAL CONVENTION

New York, N.Y., Aug. 28 – 31, 1947

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

30th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Miami, Fla., Oct. 18 - 20, 1948

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

31st NATIONAL CONVENTION

Philadelphia, Pa., Aug. 29 – Sept. 1, 1949

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

32nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Los Angeles, Calif., Oct. 9 – 12, 1950

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

33rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Miami, Fla., Oct. 15 – 18, 1951

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

34th NATIONAL CONVENTION

New York, N.Y., Aug. 25 – 28, 1952

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

35th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

36th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

37th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

38th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

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

39th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

40th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

41st NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

42nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

7-25-60); Succeeded by Irven Frank Gianotti*, Minnesota (appointed 9-14-60); Willard W. Brandt*, North Dakota; Charles McGonegal*, California; (died 1-27-60); Succeeded by Corydon T. Hill*, California (appointed 5-4-60)
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rabbi Robert I. Kahn* D.H.L., Texas
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

43rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

44th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

45th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

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

46th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

47th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Portland, Ore., Aug. 20 – 26, 1965
Commander: Donald E. Johnson*, Iowa
Vice Commanders: David Aronberg*, Kentucky; Herbert D. Black*, South Carolina; Ward W. Husted*, Wyoming; Edward H. Lynch, Jr. *, Connecticut; Joseph Paul*, Michigan
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Morris N. Dummet*, Louisiana

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

48th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

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

49th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Boston, Mass., Aug. 25 – 31, 1967
Commander: John E. Davis*, North Dakota
Vice Commanders: Robert M. Fritz*, Indiana; Lewis W. Emerich*, Texas;

Harry V. Klein*, Pennsylvania; Frank L. Orfanello*, Massachusetts;
James A. Tadlock*, New Mexico
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Anthony J. O'Driscoll*, New York
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

50th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

51st NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

52nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

53rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

54th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

55th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

56th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

Chaplain: Rev. Jerome D. Fortenberry*,
Missouri
Historian: R. Robert Filter*, Wisconsin
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New
York

57th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

58th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

59th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

60th NATIONAL CONVENTION

New Orleans, La., Aug. 18 – 24, 1978

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

61st NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

62nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

63rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

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

64th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

65th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

66th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

67th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

D. Birk*, Kansas; Stewart Kunde*,
Minnesota; Stephen J. Mikosky*,
Pennsylvania
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Charles G. Rice, Jr.*, New
York
Historian: Roy B. Mahoney, Florida
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

68th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

69th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

70th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

71st NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

72nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

73rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

74th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

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

75th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

76th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

77th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

78th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

79th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

80th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

81st NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

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

82nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

83rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

84th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

85th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

Historian: Donald F. Simons, Texas
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

86th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

87th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

88th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

89th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Reno, Nev., Aug. 28 – 30, 2007
Commander: Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts
Vice Commanders: Bryon W. White*, Alabama; Elgin Wahlborg, Kansas; Lloyd H. Woods, Maine; Robert C. Lahiere, Tennessee; Allan C. Setterberg, Utah
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan

Chaplain: Stanley Gruneich, South Dakota
Historian: Michael J. Miskell, Pennsylvania
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

90th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

91st NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

92nd NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

93rd NATIONAL CONVENTION

Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 30 – Sept. 1, 2011
Commander: Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska

Vice Commanders: Russell J. Henry, Louisiana; John M. Mella, Michigan; Carlos Orria-Medina, Puerto Rico; Eugene R. Pytko, Rhode Island; William F. Schrier, Washington
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Rev. Daniel J. Seehafer, Wisconsin
Historian: James Fratolillo, Massachusetts
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

94th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

95th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

96th NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

97th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Baltimore, Md. Sept. 1 - 3, 2015
Commander: Michael D. Helm, Nebraska
Vice Commanders: Paul O. Sanford, Kansas; Douglas C. Haggan, France; Richard W. Neville, North Carolina; William R. Bryant, Virginia; Gerald L. Jacobs, Wyoming
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Tierian "Randy" Cash, North Carolina
Historian: Susan B. Mason, Florida
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

98th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Cincinnati, Ohio, Aug. 30, 31, Sept. 1, 2016
Commander: Harold D. Barnett, Georgia
Vice Commanders: George E. Cushing, Arizona; Jimmy F. Lane, Arkansas; John W. Hargreaves, Maine; Alan A. Davis, Sr., Minnesota; David L. Gough, Wisconsin
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: H. C. Ted Kelley*, Pennsylvania
Historian: James E. Copher, Minnesota
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

99th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Reno, Nev., Aug. 22 - 24, 2017
Commander: Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon
Vice Commanders: Paul Martel, Florida; Fae Casper, Georgia; Douglas L. Boldt, Nebraska; Paul L. Espinoza, New Mexico; Vincent James Troiola, New York
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Harvey H. Klee, Texas
Historian: Paul D. Bennett, Missouri
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

100th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Minneapolis, MN, Aug 28 - 30, 2018
Commander: Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin
Vice Commanders: Larry J. Marcouillier, Denver; William J. Flanagan, Illinois; Bobby D. Bryant, Oklahoma; Byron I. Callies, South Dakota; Paula R. Stephenson, Utah
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Robert A. Vick, Florida
Historian: Richard T. Dubay, Michigan
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Kevin J. Bartlett, Michigan

PROCEEDINGS
of the
100th Annual Convention
of
The American Legion
Tuesday, August 28, 2018

...At 8:30 a.m., the delegates assembled for the 100th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Good morning. Before we begin, ladies and gentlemen, join me in a round of applause for our keyboard performer, Rick Pedro. Thank you, Rick. *(Applause)*

Call to Order
Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The 100th National Convention will come to order. *(Cheers and applause)* I now call on the National Champion Color Guard from Newport Harbor Post 291, Newport Beach, California, to present the colors and then please remain standing while rendering a hand salute for the National Anthem by the Indiana Army National Guard's 38th Sustainment Brigade Quartet, who will be performing our National Anthem from Kuwait. Color guard, advance the colors.

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Color Guard, you may retire, and thank you. For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Robert A. Vick, of Florida. Ladies and gentlemen, please uncover.

Invocation
Robert A. Vick, Florida, National Chaplain

Bow with me please. Our God and our Father, as we complete our hundredth year, we realize that You have had Your hand on this organization for our entire 100 years. There's nothing happens in this world that You don't know about. And either through Your directive will or Your permissive will, it occurs. Father, I pray for the next 100 years, that leadership like we have today can be duplicated and they can look at the past and see the mistakes we've made and correct them and be an even greater organization. Father, 100 years in the scheme of eternity is but a blink of an eye. It will pass so quickly. We pray Your blessings on this meeting, this week. We acknowledge your sovereignty. We worship You, and we thank You for what You have done for us.

I pray now for our veterans. I pray for their families, especially those who have physical and emotional needs as a result of sacrificing their very lives and bodies for our country. God bless America. And thank You for loving us when we're not lovable. Father, help us all to be very careful to give You all the praise and all the adoration that You deserve. And I pray this prayer in the name of that one before whom every knee will ultimately bow and every tongue will confess that You are Lord and God to the glory of the Father. Amen and amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Thank you, Chaplain Vick.

Pledge of Allegiance
Roy A. Helms, Wisconsin, National Sergeant-at-Arms

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Please remain uncovered as National Sergeant-at-Arms Roy A. Helms of Wisconsin leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

...The convention recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

POW/MIA Empty Chair Ceremony
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman, National Security Commission
E. C. Toppin, North Carolina, Vice Chairman, National Security Commission

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

Preamble to Constitution
Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin, National Commander

Legionnaires, re-cover and please join me as we reaffirm our commitment to the principles and ideals on which our American Legion was founded by reciting the Preamble to the Constitution. *...The convention recited the Preamble to the American Legion Constitution.*

Comrades, please remain standing so we can recognize some very special veterans sitting up front. They are our World War II veterans. Their generation saved the world and let's give them a hand to show them how much they mean to us. *(Applause)*

Please be seated. *...A 100th anniversary musical celebration was conducted.*

Our Master of Ceremonies for this morning is truly an inspirational hero. As a U.S. Army lieutenant, she was seriously wounded by a roadside bomb while riding in a convoy through Baghdad in 2004. The blast resulted in an amputation above her left knee, and she holds the distinction of being the first U.S. female to lose a limb in active combat. Medically retired with a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star, she went on to swim in the 2009 Beijing Paralympics. She is also a three-time Para-Triathlon World Champion and a bronze medalist from the 2016 Rio Paralympics. A mother of two, she is married to her husband, Brian, and hopes to compete again at the Tokyo Paralympic games in 2020. Please give a warm welcome to Melissa Stockwell. *(Applause)*

Opening Ceremony
Melissa Stockwell

Thank you. Thank you so much. What a warm welcome, and what an honor to be here. 100 years. I am honored and grateful to be among such distinguished guests and other veterans. So thank you for having me.

When I woke up in the Baghdad emergency room on April 13 of 2004, I knew that my life was drastically changed. I was still in my Army DCUs, but the lingering smell of smoke, a lingering ringing in my ears, and the most noticeable difference in that I no longer had my left leg. My left leg was gone, taken from me by a roadside bomb, and subsequently becoming the first female to lose a limb in active combat in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Obviously, a title that nobody ever expects or wants, nor were the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star that came along with it, but a title that I have taken in stride and used to motivate myself and hopefully others in not wanting to let losing a leg stop me from doing anything that I wanted to do with my life.

I like to say that I was born a patriot, as I'm sure many of you were. I grew up always wanting

to serve, wanting to wear the uniform with that flag patch on my shoulder and give back to a country that had given us so much. I don't come from a military family, so when anybody asks why I wanted to join the Army, and my answer was short and sweet. Because I love our country. And as my parents' youngest daughter, they were once skeptical of me joining the military, but they soon learned to love it, as I did, always strong and steadfast by my side.

I was a proud Army cadet at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Then when I was commissioned as a second lieutenant, I was a proud officer as I went to my first duty assignment at Ft. Hood, Texas, as part of the 1st Calvary Division. Proud to wear a uniform, the same uniform as my male counterparts, proving firsthand it didn't matter what gender you were. We were all part of the same team, all together for the greater good.

I was at Ft. Hood for five months when orders came down that the 1st Calvary Division was deployed to Iraq. So in March of 2004, I boarded a plane with the destination of Kuwait and the start of what was going to be a yearlong tour. I had two jobs over in Iraq, and my favorite one was as a platoon leader because I got to lead soldiers, both younger and older than I was, and in my mind, they were 20 of the greatest soldiers that I have ever been in contact with. My time in Iraq was cut quite short when three weeks into my tour, the fateful day of April 13, 2004, happened. Like many things in life, the day didn't really go as planned, and instead of ending on my cot in the town of Taji, just north of Baghdad, I ended in the Baghdad emergency room, coming out of a life-saving surgery, as the surgeon next to me told me that I no longer had my left leg. Twenty-four years of my life with both of my legs, and suddenly I was missing one.

But looking back so many years, I realize that that is the day that my real life's journey began. From there, I was sent to Walter Reed, where I did my recovery, and then I was medically retired from the Army. While my service was short, it was very eventful. But that service is what led me here. From the streets of Baghdad to the halls of Walter Reed, overcoming the loss of a leg, becoming a proud athlete and living a life of sport, proving that losing a leg doesn't have to stop you from doing anything that you want to do. Proudly representing our country in two Paralympic Games, most recently in 2016 in the Rio Paralympic Games, where I got to race on September 11th of 2016, representing a country that I defended over in Iraq and coming across the finish line in third place and being able to stand on that podium, receiving my medal, and show the world how much ability was in a disability and truly one of the greatest moments of my entire life. Then now a proud wife and extremely proud mother of two young children, a forever proud American and a proud above-the-knee amputee, and of course, a proud veteran. (*Applause*)

It's been a journey. The last 14 years have been a journey, quite the journey, but I wouldn't have it any other way. It's been a journey that has taught me that regardless of obstacles that come our way in life, we all have the ability to overcome those obstacles, and a lot of times we end up even better on the other side. It's a journey that taught me about teamwork, the power of surrounding ourselves with people, a country that care about us and that want us to get better and to improve. It's a journey that taught me that there is a way to make any difficulties that come our way desirable.

It truly is an honor to be here today, and as we all continue our life's journey, let's work together. Let's be true to ourselves. Let's believe in who we are, and let's never stop believing in the greater good of America by standing tall, standing proud, flying our flags as high as we can. Together we will continue to be the greatest country in the world. I know there are a lot of veterans out there. I think probably all of you are. So from one veteran to another, thank you. To The American Legion, thank you for standing up for veterans like all of us and helping us be the best that we can be. It truly is an honor. Thank you for having me. (*Applause*)

The American Legion Youth Champions

2017 American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team Captain Trace Henry, Tupelo, Mississippi

ANNOUNCER: The 2017 American Legion Baseball All-Academic team captain is Trace

Henry from Tupelo, Mississippi. A 2017 graduate of Mooreville High School in Mooreville, Mississippi, he graduated fourth in his class and maintained a place on the Superintendent's Honor Roll throughout his high school career. He plans to attend Jones County Junior College and eventually transfer to obtain a degree in civil engineering. Sponsored by Lee County Post 49 in Tupelo, Mississippi. Due to prior obligations, Trace is unable to attend today. Please give him a warm round of applause. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: Our next Youth Champion was elected as president of Boys Nation last month. He hails from Newport Coast, California, and exhibits an incredible passion for politics, debate, and business. In his downtime, he enjoys spending time with friends, reading, watching Formula 1, and cheering on his New Orleans Saints and Los Angeles Lakers. He plans to pursue a career in business, finance, or politics. Sponsored by Newport Harbor Post 291, please welcome your 2018 Boys Nation President, Joshua Cheadle. (Applause)

**2018 Boys Nation President
Joshua Cheadle, Newport Coast, California**

Good morning. I sit in my dorm room, surrounded by some of my closest new friends, as we get caught up in passionate policy discussions, and I realize the power of Boys Nation. Sitting there, I was surrounded by some of the kindest, brightest high school seniors from Alaska to Arkansas, Delaware to California, and Alabama to Arizona, from all over this great nation. The Boys Nation program gave me perspective, an understanding of our sacred political process, and an even greater appreciation for learning from and engaging with others.

Because of this week that has shaped and will continue to shape my lifetime, I'd like to thank Sandy Schneeberger and to everyone who has supported me at Post 291 in Newport Beach; my teachers at Sage Hill School, like Mr. Jordan, Dr. Farish, and Mr. Anderson, who always encouraged me; my loving and supportive parents and brothers; counselors like Ryan Silver and Tim Aboudara, Jr. and Sr., who, like many of you guys, have dedicated decades of their lives to the selfless service of others in The American Legion.

The American Legion has created countless invaluable programs to teach about the power of democracy and to spread patriotism into the minds and hearts of young people across this great nation. Lastly, I want to thank all of the veterans who have put their lives on the line and stood to fight when the fate of our country hung in the balance. For it is because of their sacrifices that I have the absolute privilege of standing before you here today and proudly calling myself an American. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The 2018 Eagle Scout of the Year is from Denver, Colorado. For his Eagle Scout project, he partnered with more than 35 businesses and his troop to redevelop the grounds at the Denver Indian Center. He raised more than \$20,000 for the project and provided 356 volunteer hours. A senior at Denver East High School, he aspires to attend a university with a program in military history, international relations, or foreign service. Please give a warm round of applause for the 2018 Eagle Scout of the year, Michael John Ankner. (Applause)

**2018 Eagle Scout of the Year
Michael Ankner, Denver, Colorado**

Hello. Gadugi, a defining value of the Cherokee people, means coming together for the betterment of the entire community. This value has great power. By working together, we improve our society, making it better for everyone in ways that we could not alone. Scouting has instilled the power of coming together, of Gadugi, in me. I've witnessed the impacts of Scouting's vast network of volunteers and supporters, of its merit badges, incurring civil responsibility, and of its

Eagle Scout service projects that bring communities together to achieve what could not be done alone.

The American people also value Gadugi. Coming together has been central to the heritage of the American nation since its earliest days. Thirteen states united to fight for their independence, and adopted as their motto, E pluribus Unum, out of many one. The nation they brought forth is vast, with diverse beliefs and backgrounds, and is dedicated to the noble cause of liberty and democracy. And that noble cause continues to bring us together to this day.

I am deeply honored to have been selected as the American Legion 2018 Eagle Scout of the Year. The American Legion itself is a living embodiment of citizens coming together for the common good. Thank you for your service to protect our country, your support of Scouting education, and the example you set.

I'd also like to thank all of those who helped me along my path to Eagle, including Troop 199 and St. John's Lutheran Church of Denver, the Denver Area Council, The American Legion Department of Colorado, and Denver Post 1. Thank you to all the donors and volunteers that supported my Eagle project, and to all my teachers, coaches, friends, and, of course, my family, who has taught and supported me along the way.

The joy and honor of serving our community has changed my life. As a senior in high school, I will lead a Colorado statewide student voter registration drive. I hope to continue to live up to this honor and to serve our nation in its noble cause in the spirit of Gadugi and E pluribus Unum as I enter college and throughout my adult life. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: In competition in Colorado Springs a few weeks ago, two youth champions took top prize in the 28th Junior Air Rifle Championships. Jared Eddy from Midland, Georgia, claimed the Precision Champion title with an overall score of 2475 out of a possible 2509. He shoots for Ole Mill Rangers and is heading to West Virginia University. Please welcome our 2018 Precision Champion, Jared Eddy. (Applause)

**2018 Junior Shooting Sports Precision Champion
Jared Eddy, Columbia, Georgia**

Good morning. First, thank you for having me here this morning. It truly is an honor to speak before you. I would like to begin with a huge thank you to my family. I can't stress it enough. Thank you for supporting me, pushing me past my limits, loving me unconditionally, funding my expensive sport, and having the patience to watch me grow. Because where would any of us be today without family? Whether that be blood related, a close bond amongst a group of people, a community, or all of the above.

Thank you to the coaches that aided me along my way, including Lisa Kelly, Sergeant Major Frank Tuggle, Sergeant First Class George Norton, and John Hammond. It truly has been an amazing journey so far, and I cannot wait to see what the future holds.

Thank you to the Americanism Commission for all of its volunteers and staff that work to make this experience possible for young men like me. Thank you to the Barnett Harris Post 15 back home in Georgia. Thank you to all the officials here and around the country that give the youth of America a chance as golden as this one. Thank you for making this convention and all the youth groups and championships happen. I will proudly use the scholarship given to me to further my education as I study biomedical engineering at West Virginia University these next four years. After college I plan to go on to med school and become an orthopedic surgeon.

Thank you to The American Legion for all the opportunities you have given me. God bless America. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: In the Sporter category, the championship was captured by a young shooter representing Zion-Benton High School NJROTC in Zion, Illinois. She won the title with a final score of 93.7, with a final aggregate score of 2,314 out of a possible 2400. Please welcome our 2018 Sporter Shooting Champion, Bailey Hoenig. (Applause)

**2018 Junior Shooting Sports Sporter Champion
Bailey Hoenig, Winthrop Harbor, Illinois**

Good morning. For me, becoming an American Legion National Champion was more than just a personal goal or outstanding achievement. On July 21, three days before my journey to Colorado Springs, one of my closest friends, Dwayne, was involved in a motorcycle accident that left him in a coma. His family and I were all overcome with grief. So I told myself I had to win to in Colorado Springs to give myself and his family a glimpse of hope for the future. And so I won.

I would like to thank the entire American Legion family, especially the Americanism Commission and all of its volunteers, for not only all of your hours of hard work and undying support, but also for giving my mother and Dwayne's family something to smile about. You have turned our tears of pain into those of joy, and that for me means more than just a medal. Dwayne has since been opening his eyes and squeezing our hands, and I cannot wait to tell him this story.

So once again, thank you from the bottom of my heart. This experience will be in mine and my family's memories forever. May the Lord bless Dwayne, and may the Lord bless all of you. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our last Youth Champion hails from Paducah, Kentucky. She displayed her passion and desire to learn about the U.S. Constitution with her prepared oration entitled "Limited Government: Our Right and Responsibility." She's an avid runner, a dark chocolate connoisseur, and has a deep love for this country. She is currently a freshman at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, and plans to major in genetics, genomics, and biotechnology, specializing in emergency medicine. Sponsored by Post 73 in Murray, Kentucky, please welcome your 2018 National Oratorical Contest winner, Carlissa Frederich. (Applause)

**2018 National Oratorical Contest First Place Winner
Carlissa Frederich, Paducah, Kentucky**

Good morning. I am honored to be with you today. The American Legion theme this previous year, "Family First," has been a prevalent motto in my life. First, I think of my family who have been my greatest cheerleaders. However, as I reflected on my experience in the oratorical competition, I found new meaning in this familiar phrase.

I had incredible support from Mark and Jackie Kennedy, Post 73, the Department of Kentucky, and The American Legion as a whole. Allow me to share an experience from the national level of the oratorical competition, which exemplifies the caliber of this great organization.

The final performance required delivery of my speeches in a spacious room without sound amplification. Due to recent illness, I began to doubt the reliability of my voice. A need was conveyed for throat lozenges, and I soon had donations from multiple Legionnaires representing different posts and branches of service. This experience culminated with a Legionnaire who ran to the hotel store and purchased a package of cough drops. He conveyed the selfless nature of The American Legion when my mother tried to repay him and he shook his head and simply stated, "We are a family here."

Ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to be part of this family. I am honored the members of this family loved this country enough to sacrifice much that I may succeed. Your sacrifice is much deeper than a monetary contribution of a scholarship, though that sacrifice is greatly appreciated.

Greater than that were the years of your life, leaving the comforts of your home and your sense of security, that I may have the freedoms I know today. Both of my grandfathers, both of my parents, each of you, and countless others who have loved and served this great nation are the reason I am here. I thank each of you.

The purpose of the oratorical competition have certainly been realized with me. It has been life changing. While I initially entered for a merit scholarship, I left with much more: substantially increased knowledge of and love for our Constitution; deeper desire to preserve our founding

principles and be an active, informed member of my nation; greater respect for those who protect me and this country; and increased love for all whom I call family. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Presentation of Spirit of Service Awards
Michael P. Barrett, Sergeant Major of The Marine Corps, Retired
Walter Joseph Marm, Jr., Medal of Honor Recipient

ANNOUNCER: Our next awards exemplify the volunteer spirit that helps nonprofit and charitable organizations succeed. The Spirit of Service Award winners are selected by their military branches and given to current servicemembers for their contributions to their communities and fellow citizens above and beyond the call. Assisting National Commander Rohan in presenting the awards is retired Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Michael P. Barrett and Medal of Honor Recipient and Vietnam veteran Walter Joseph Marm, Jr. Please rise as the commander leads us in rendering appropriate honors to Mr. Marm.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Hand Salute. Two.

ANNOUNCER: Our first Spirit of Service Award recipient demonstrated selfless care and dedication ensuring the humane treatment of local animals. He volunteered nearly 2,500 hours to Paws Humane as a dog trainer, a caretaker, and a foster home inspector. His efforts directly resulted in the adoption of over 25 dogs, while personally fostering seven cats and two dogs that could not reside at the shelter. During his off time, he regularly visits Paws Humane to clean kennels and assist with obedience training. Representing the United States Army, please welcome Spirit of Service Award recipient, Sergeant Drew E. Hunnicutt. (Applause)

SERGEANT DREW E. HUNNICUTT: Good morning, Legionnaires. So I have to follow someone who got an award for public speaking. That's an outstanding young lady. *(Laughter)*

I'm deeply honored and humbled to receive this award, and I would like to thank a few of my influences. Thank you to my leadership and my mentors at the Ft. Benning CID office -- Chief Jones, Chief David, Chief Smith -- for your support while I balanced the mission and my volunteer commitments. Thank you to my current leadership, Lieutenant Colonel Sama, Sergeant Major Walker, Ms. Ward, Chief Craig, Sergeant First Class Montes, for your support for my wife and my attendance to this event. Thank you.

Thank you to the wonderful people at Paws Humane, especially Neetra and Carlene and Sergeant First Class Stricker. The amount of time you all give and the lives you all change, both human and animal on a daily basis is just amazing. Thank you to The American Legion for this honor. I was first introduced to The American Legion in Post 95 in Huntsville, Texas, during my undergraduate studies at Sam Houston State University.

The motto at Sam Houston State University is "The Measure of a Life Is Its Service." And my Kappa Sigma fraternity brothers and I were able to partner with Post 95 in the pursuit of a greater service.

Bear with me on this next part, but anybody who knows me knows that I'm a huge Dallas Cowboys fan. Earlier this year my all-time favorite Dallas Cowboy player, Jason Witten, retired, and anybody who watched his retirement press conference saw that a legendary player with a Hall of Fame career were completely overshadowed by his impeccable character. So I want to say thank you to No. 82 for the influence and inspiration and being a role model.

Last and absolutely most important, I want to thank my beautiful wife, Mary Katherine, who is right there with me in all my endeavors, especially for this community service. She is the most caring and supportive person I could have ever hoped to marry, and she contributed nearly all the hours that I contributed without qualifying for this honor. So I'd like to share this with her as well. So thank you for the time.

Adopt, don't shop. AEKDB. Eat 'Em Up, Cats. For God and country. Do what has to be done. And go Army. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next 2018 Spirit of Service Award recipient displays outstanding devotion to the youth in her local community. Ever the humanitarian, she volunteered 227 hours to the Family Tree Project, providing family counseling as well as individual and group sessions for at risk youth. As a youth sports coach, she provided mentorship and guidance, teaching hard work and resilience. Her strong desire to invest in her community is demonstrated in the countless hours she has volunteered to many local service organizations. Please welcome United States Navy Petty Officer Second Class Sha'Nae T. Wilson. (Applause)

PETTY OFFICER SECOND CLASS SHA'NAE WILSON: Good morning, everyone. Giving honor to God for a number of things, but mostly for the blessing of opportunity as well as the courage to pursue those opportunities.

Thank you to The American Legion. I am both overwhelmed and humbled to be standing here today. Thank you to my parents, who ran a strict and loving household. Special thanks to my mama for prefacing every play date with "Don't be a guest in someone's home and not help out." This was a value that ultimately emphasized the importance of leaving every space better than I found it. This value was reinforced by the faculty and staff of a small Jesuit college in my hometown of Mobile, Alabama, and it's a value I still carry with me today.

Thank you to my division for letting me rope them into various volunteer opportunities, and thank you to my chain of command at the Joint Typhoon Warning Center for their support and for cultivating some of my better qualities. Finally, to the people of Oahu, who have the most welcoming and chill and down to earth spirit, the spirit of aloha. I've loved every chance and opportunity to engage with the community there, and I thank you. Mahalo and good evening. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Marine Corps Sergeant Molly Hampton is with Headquarters Marine Corps Digital Engagement Team at Pentagon in Washington, D.C. She has served as Henderson Hall's Single Marine Program President this past year organizing numerous community service and recreational events monthly for her fellow Marines. Sergeant Hampton has volunteered more than 150 hours feeding the homeless around the city, assisting a horse therapy program for disabled children and veterans, and participating in various other small projects. She also volunteers at a local family farm by helping with social media strategy and creative production. Sergeant Hampton balances her job and volunteering with being a full-time college student pursuing a degree in Psychology. Please welcome Marine Corps Sergeant Molly Hampton. (Applause)

SERGEANT MOLLY E. HAMPTON: Like the Millennial I am, I have my speech on my phone. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to thank The American Legion and the Marine Corps for making it possible for me to be here today and experience the selfless servitude and spirit of The American Legion. I'd also like to thank my dad, the man who has never stopped believing in me and has empowered me to fearlessly follow my dreams without losing sight of what really matters. He drove here to see me receive this award, and it means the world to me. I love you, Dad. *(Applause)*

And for my mom, who I know will watch this at home, you've taught me compassion and selfless service by your example every day. You have loved me fiercely, even when I least deserved it. I owe it all to you. I always tell the Marines I work with: It's not about the awards, it's about the people. It's always about the people. In my short experience in the Marine Corps, I've seen that the military does an excellent job giving credit where it's due. But we cannot get lost in what we wear on our chests or what's displayed on our desks or at home. My director actually keeps his awards stashed away in a drawer because he says that's where they belong. Ironically, that's probably one of the best things I've learned during my time in Marine Corps, because it taught me that while we often get praised for what we do, it is not the praise that matters.

What matters is the spirit behind our actions and the will to continue to work harder tomorrow than we have today. I'm absolutely humbled to receive this award, but I stand in front of you to say: It doesn't end here. For my fellow award winners and all of you in front of me, I vow to

continue to work hard each and every day and strive to make a difference for as long as I live. Thank you and God bless you all. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient has exemplified service before self by dedicating his time and efforts to many charitable organizations within his community. He organized 492 volunteers, raising over \$165,000 for Dover Air Force Base private organizations, four non-profit organizations, and the Delaware local community. Furthermore, he was hand-selected by leadership to manage three local events, supporting over 5,000 airmen and families. His efforts culminated with him garnering the 2017 President's Outstanding Volunteer Service Award, a first for Dover Air Force Base. Please welcome U.S. Air Force Spirit of Service recipient, Staff Sergeant Robert Andrews. (Applause)

STAFF SERGEANT ROBERT P. ANDREWS: Good morning, Legionnaires. I just want to say "Wow." This has been an honor. First, I would like to say thank you to my command chief, Chief Master Sergeant Anthony Green, and my commander, Lieutenant Colonel Brooke Brander-Soto, for flying all the way from Dover, Delaware, to support me on this special occasion. I would also like to thank my Airman Leadership School family, to include all prior students and my current students; my supervisor, Senior Master Sergeant Barnshaw; and my co-worker, Tech Sergeant Chad Hardesty, Tech Sergeant Brian Lecates, and Staff Sergeant Brianna Wahlberg, who supported me throughout this whole year. I know they would be here if they could.

Next, I would like to say thank you to my wife, Tech Sergeant Crystal Andrews, for being so supportive in my endeavors. And trust me, I have many. I've always appreciated your support and encouragement for my passion of true selfless service. Becoming new parents to our beautiful son, Austin, this past year, I know it wasn't always easy. But again, I want to say thank you, my love. I couldn't have done it without you.

Finally, I would like to thank The American Legion for choosing me to represent the Air Force for this award. It is an extremely humbling experience. To be honest, I wasn't expecting to come this far. However, you have my word, as the award recipient, I will continue to champion the value and impact of true selfless service, as well as this organization this award represents. I thank you all. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient is a leader exemplifying the Whole Airmen Concept. In addition to serving her country as a medical technician, she is proactively addressing the issue of youth homelessness. She volunteered at the Covenant House, an all-youth homeless shelter, and organized an annual "Sleep Out" to raise money and cooperation among local churches and organizations. Academically focused as well, she completed her Bachelor of Arts at Rutgers University, maintaining a 3.93 GPA, and is continuing her post-graduate studies. For all of her hard work, she was awarded the Army Achievement Medal. Representing the Air National Guard, please welcome Staff Sergeant Heather Hyon. (Applause)

STAFF SERGEANT HEATHER J. HYON: Good morning. My name is Staff Sergeant Heather Hyon. I serve as a medic and an EMT for the 108th Medical Group of McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. *(Cheers)* There you go.

I actually flew in just a few hours ago, and I will be flying out of Minnesota in the next two hours or so to finish out FOMT, which stands for Flight and Operational Medical Technician, school, where I have been learning how to better support our fliers and therefore better serve our mission. That's where my heart is at work. Outside of the Air National Guard, my heart is with the homeless -- homeless veterans, adults, and especially our homeless youth -- and that is what this Spirit of Service Award, I imagine, is for. Although I feel very undeserving of this award, because there's so, so much still to be done within our communities, I'm so thankful, firstly, to The American Legion for having me here, albeit brief and about 30 degrees colder.

It's been a wonderful time so far. Thank you so much for this high, high honor. I want to thank my family and just my communities, my supervisors, my medical group, I guess the entire state

of New Jersey and the Air Force, for supporting me and encouraging me just to be the best version of myself and to continue pursuing the things that I'm passionate about to serve America. God bless, everyone. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our final Spirit of Service Award recipient made an impressive habit of giving back to the local community of Guam. From organizing an event to promote child safety and security to collecting trash as a part of the Guam International Coastal Cleanup, he has made his presence felt throughout the island. Recently, he made a significant commitment by enrolling in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. In his role as mentor, he has dedicated over 15 hours a week establishing a supportive relationship with a 10-year-old boy. Representing the U.S. Coast Guard, please welcome Petty Officer Second Class Brian Gogo. (Applause)

PETTY OFFICER SECOND CLASS BRIAN GOGO: Good morning. Or "Hafa Adai," as we say on the beautiful island of Guam. I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to National Commander Rohan and The American Legion for giving me this award and for the opportunity to learn more about The American Legion and the role it plays in shaping our country's value systems as well as supporting our military servicemembers and veterans.

I'd also to thank Senior Chief Boatswain's Mate Larson and Boatswain's Mate First Class Fairchild for nominating me. I would like to express my appreciation to the U.S. Coast Guard for allowing me to serve my country while at the same time offering me the opportunity to do so, most recently on my island home of Guam. Last but not least, thank you to my mother, my father, family and friends that have also supported me through the years.

Born and raised on Guam, I quickly learned the importance of family and community. I also learned how patriotic a small island community can be, with almost every family on the island having a son, daughter, father, or mother serving or having served in the military.

Being able to help the community as a military member is an honor and privilege I don't take lightly. As National Commander Rohan indicated to myself and my fellow award winners, it's all about family first, starting at home in our local communities, mentoring our youth, promoting patriotism and national security and supporting our servicemembers and veterans in positive ways. Again, congratulations to my fellow Spirit of Service Award brothers and sisters, and thank you to The American Legion, and happy 100th anniversary. Go Vikings. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Ladies and gentlemen, again please show your appreciation to our great Spirit of Service winners. They are all now members of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

Melissa, thank you for your words of inspiration and encouragement. All of us can learn from your example and are proud to call you a fellow Legionnaire. Please join me here at the lectern so that I may present you with a special pin and a Legion cap and welcome you in to our organization. *(Applause)*

Congratulations, once again, to our American Legion Youth Champions, our Spirit of Service Award recipients, and everyone involved with that fantastic opening, and thank you to both of our Theodore Roosevelts. I ask that we all pause for a moment of reflection.

Special Remembrance **Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin, National Commander**

On December 28, The American Legion lost a past national commander, and I lost a friend and a mentor. Past National Commander Keith Kreul was a U.S. Army veteran and member of Post 184 in Fennimore, Wisconsin. He led our organization during a tense time for our country -- the Soviet Union shot down a civilian airline, the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut was destroyed by a terrorist, and American servicemembers liberated Grenada from communist aggressors. Commander Kreul appeared before a Commission on Central America chaired by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. From a political viewpoint, he said, "The United States has an interest

in promoting the continuation of democratic values." In short, he was a cold warrior at a pivotal moment of the Cold War. This was not an easy stance to take in progressive Wisconsin.

But I think history proves that Commander Kreul and The American Legion had it right about the cruelties of communist regimes. Keith's year also coincided with the 40th anniversary of the original G.I. Bill. He said at the time that the bill was a reminder that, "We are here to serve." And serve he did. He advocated strongly for our youth programs, Agent Orange, awareness and better care for elderly veterans. Thank you, Keith. You will be missed by your friends and your wonderful family. Please join me in a moment of silence for this dedicated and accomplished Legionnaire, Past National Commander Keith Kreul. ...*The convention observed a moment of silence.*

We also lost another extraordinary Legionnaire on Saturday, a Prisoner of War, career naval officer, and American patriot, Senator John McCain. Our condolences and thoughts are with his family. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Our next speaker has had a truly amazing Marine Corps career. He served eight months as a sniper in the Gulf War, completed two combat deployments in al Anbar Province and served as the NATO Regional Command, Southwest, Sergeant Major for Nimruz and Helmand Province Afghanistan. His rise through the ranks was largely due to his gentle and nurturing leadership style. It is a style that could only begin to blossom at Parris Island, South Carolina.

In 2011, he was named the 17th Sergeant Major of the U.S. Marine Corps. He served in that position until his retirement from the Corps after 34 years in 2015. He still serves in many ways, including as military advisor for Veterans United Home Loans, director of the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation, director of the Young Marines, and ambassador-at-large for the Marine Corps League. He is a member of American Legion Post 18 in Bloomington, Indiana. He co-authored the leadership anthology "Breaching the Summit" with five other senior enlisted leaders from the different military branches. Ladies and gentlemen, retired Sergeant Major of the United States Marine Corps, Michael P. Barrett. *(Applause)*

Address: Michael P. Barrett
Sergeant Major of the United States Marine Corps, Retired

Thank you, ma'am. Would you send a copy of that introduction to my mother-in-law? I want her to know how awesome I am. My wife and I have been married 36 years this past August 4, and she still thinks I'm a dirt bag. *(Laughter)*

Good morning, and thank you for that wonderful reception and this incredible opportunity. As the spirit was 100 years ago, so it is today. The start of today's events, the call to order by Commander Rohan was truly grand, parading the unfurled standard of freedom and independence and our allegiance to them, followed by a moment of reflection to those who have not made it home yet or who have given their all, and a blessing from our national chaplain, always a reminder as to who we are and our humble beginnings.

Adam and Eve were the primitive hunting band, the hunting band became the tribe, and the tribe became the Army. Our warrior ethos evolved from carrying a spear and throwing rocks, from an animal skin-wearing hunting band to today's American warrior-hunter breed. Every warrior's superior qualities proceeds from this -- their courage, their selflessness, their sacrifice to one's comrades, and their will to bear adversity.

It all comes from the hunting band's need to endure, praying for America, their warrior breed to endure. And Roy Helms, our national sergeant-at-arms, leading us in our solemn vow, our promise that we would be faithful, unwavering and unbowed, to malevolence. Was it not our very first official act of the school day, standing beside a desk in some classroom in America with the flag next to the blackboard, with our hands pressed over our hearts, our eyes intent on the flag, we pledged our allegiance. With the respect and awe that our young minds didn't quite understand yet, we made a promise not to kneel when it gets tough, but to stand undivided when it does. *(Applause)*

Our deep social and spiritual beliefs, our robust patriotism represents a country with a moral

imperative, liberty and freedoms protect by rights, and a corps of Marines that stands shoulder to shoulder with the strongest Army, the most powerful sea forces, and an Air Force that provides the full spectrum of sea, air, and land supremacy and lethality. Ladies and gentlemen, go to sleep tonight knowing that everything is going to be just fine. *(Applause)*

My heart is happy for many reasons, none more so than to be asked to be a part of this, this Legion, this legacy. My efforts in drafting thoughts for today started nearly four decades ago after meeting a marine recruiter named Gunnery Sergeant Ron Swan and after standing inside of a MEP station before a commissioned officer of the armed forces with the American flag in my hand held high, I gave my oath of enlistment. I wore the cloth of this nation for 12,410 days, and I have things to remember every single one of them.

The second you bust a hatch in my office and you walk into it, there's a picture staring you dead in the face. It's a picture depicting hand-to-hand combat in the wheat fields of Belleau Wood, June 1918, World War I, prominently showing a marine running the business end of his bayonet through the chest of his enemy, the example of professional steadiness and personal valor. Affixed to that on a wonderfully etched brass placard I have: "And then I heard the voice saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here I am. Send me.'" From the Book of Isaiah.

It reminds me to think of Sergeant Andy Nowacki, who was killed in action on February 26, 2005. You see, Andy's verve for life, his love for family and friends, his courage, his humor and wit, his selfless giving way, his character, his example, he was the role model. So it made sense to me that Andy always rode in the turd of our lead vehicle manning the 50 cal every time a convoy was dispatched outside the wire. It's not that he didn't trust anyone else. It was because he was fearless, because he was always setting the example of professional steadiness and personal valor, always demonstrating his love and his commitment to and for his brothers and sisters in arms, selflessly relieving them of the possibility that something could, something would go wrong. "A greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He was a Marine. That makes him a warrior hunter. He was also a police officer in northeast Ohio. He was a first responder. He was a peacemaker. He changed lives. He saved lives. And I believe, if he were standing beside me right now up here on this stage, he would say, "Sergeant Major, I was just doing my job, I was doing my duty," intimating that he was ordinary.

I submit to you that he was so much more. He was extraordinary. Just like all of our fallen, they were extraordinary. Pericles, a statesman, a philosopher, and a warrior for democracy in 431 B.C. wrote and gave the great Funeral Oration. He asked his fellow citizens every day to look upon the physical might and moral efficacy of our country and become lovers of her. And when you have appreciated her greatness, consider that all this has been established by brave men who knew their duty and were moved to great deeds by a sense of honor. Today each of us enjoys the gift of freedom, preserved for by men and women whose courage to serve presented them with defining moments of their own. These stalwart warriors whose sacrifice that we admire and memorialize every day laid down their lives or faced a life-altering threat not to uphold one moment, but one country. Carrying on the legacy of all who wear and all who have worn our nation's cloth is a moral imperative. You know what's important to people by what they spend their time on. I like to refer to that as character revealed.

The Spirit of Service Award is so much more than an annual event. It too is a moral imperative. Thomas Robbins, a chaplain, he wrote in 1822 about why societies honor certain occasions of importance. He also talked about courage, virtue, and patriotism. He said the manner and character of a community are essential to national prosperity. He who loves his family, who possesses a disposition of charity and benevolence towards his neighbors and acquaintances, who conducts with integrity and kindness in all his ordinary interactions with his fellow men, who seeks to do good in all his opportunity is a patriot, is a friend to their community and to their country.

Author Samuel Smiles, I think, sums it up best when he talks about our Spirit of Service Award recipients -- Sergeant Hunnicutt, Petty Officer Wilson, Sergeant Hampton, Petty Officer Gogo, Staff Sergeant Hyon, and Staff Sergeant Andrews. He said, "The great high-road of human welfare lies along the old highway of steadfast, well-doing." No matter where these warrior hunters are, they make things happen. We have soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, coast guardsmen, and

all six geographic combatant commanders' areas of responsibility doing the heavy lifting for our nation right now. They are forward deployed, forward engaged, shaping, training, deterring aggression, and responding to every crisis, conflict, and contingency around the world. Prepared, ready, and standing at the door of crisis with the people, with the tools, and with the training to knock on that door diplomatically, they can pick that lock skillfully, or they can smash it in violently. They're doing it all. *(Applause)*

From humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the Pacific Rim to counterinsurgency in the Middle East or along our own borders, providing relief efforts to those who have been affected by a hurricane or fires that are scorching our own backyards, or just lending a hand to a neighbor. They live hard, they train hard, they fight hard, and they provide our nation with a capability to contain a crisis, to fill a gap, or to hold a line. They do not know when or where or who they're going to have to fight or help next, but they and their families have to be ready for them to leave tonight. Saying good-bye again, again, and again is a hell of a thing to have to endure. They intuitively know the joy and sense of purpose that only comes through great challenges and subordination to a calling greater than self.

They know what it means to keep company with the finest men and women in a world under the toughest conditions. They follow their battle colors into harm's way, and they do so without having to ask why. And at the very center of a 21st century calling to service, the servant leader, the warrior hunter stands up. The motivation that binds us is our respect for and our commitment to those who have chosen to put their lives before others, upon whose young shoulders freedom, liberty, our American ideals ultimately rests. Now, I have sat and I have stood with presidents, other world leaders, members of Congress, ambassadors, cabinet secretaries, impressive in their own rights and accomplishments, but none of them have impressed me more than the young man, the young woman who subordinates their needs for others, putting it all out there and leaving it all on the battlefield. *(Applause)*

I've witnessed a 19-year-old lance corporal throw his body on top of his platoon commander in an L-shaped ambush in Saqlawiyah, Iraq, because Lance Corporal Ian Dollard recognized the fact that Lieutenant Brisker was not going to survive a fourth hit to his already bullet-riddled body. Sergeant Mary Ann Miller, a member of the female engagement team on patrol when a Suicide Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device killed and wounded 50. She placed herself at the point of friction, anticipating the complex attack that normally follows. With shrapnel wounds to her torso, her arms and her legs, she ultimately helped carry the dead and the wounded out of the impact zone, up a hill, to a casualty evacuation site.

I've watched a corpsmen run out into the middle of no man's land in a hellacious fire fight in Falahat because he simply heard: Corpsmen up. Wounded. He still dragged his wounded Marine brother to safety. Sergeant Joe Wrightsman was leading a partnered Afghan National Police patrol in Garmsir in the southern portion of the Helmand Province crossing a river when he looked over his shoulder and he saw an Afghan police officer swept away in the current. Joe Wrightsman dropped his helmet and weapon and went right in after him, despite the width, the depth, the speed of the current, the weight of two men. Joe Wrightsman drowned that day. What's profound about that is Joe Wrightsman went into the water after a man whose name he didn't know and a language he didn't speak because, dammit, it was the right thing to do. Indomitable in crisis. *(Applause)*

Indomitable in crisis, fearsome in battle, generous in their nature, and humble in their manner, a minute does not pass where I am not wowed by the selflessness, the courage, and the endurance of our 21st century warriors and protectors. That is character revealed. There is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer. Thank you, God bless you, and until we meet again, always faithful. *(Applause)*

...At this time, the convention viewed a video.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: A life member of American Legion Post 639 in Claysville, Pennsylvania, our next speaker earned the Medal of Honor for the amazing bravery and valor of his actions during the first major battle involving Americans in the Vietnam War, Ia Drang Valley, the same battle famously depicted in the Mel Gibson movie "We Were Soldiers." As a

platoon leader in the 1st Cavalry Division Air Mobile, our distinguished guest was moving with his men through the valley to relieve a friendly unit that was surrounded by an enemy of regimental size. He led his platoon through withering fires on November 14, 1965. After seeing four enemy soldiers moving toward his position, he moved quickly and annihilated all four. When his platoon was under machine gun attack, he deliberately drew the machine gunfire toward himself, then attempted to destroy the nest with an anti-tank weapon. He charged 30 meters across open ground and drew significant fire while hurling grenades at the enemy position, killing some of the eight insurgents manning it. Although severely wounded and out of grenades, he continued the momentum of the assault with his rifle and killed the remaining insurgents. His selfless action broke the enemy assault and rallied his unit to continue toward accomplishing its mission. For his action, he received the nation's highest award for military valor. In 1995 he retired from the Army as a colonel and today raises pigs on his North Carolina farm. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome a true American hero, Walter "Joe" Marm, Jr. (*Applause*)

**Address: Walter Joseph Marm, Jr.
Medal of Honor Recipient**

It's an honor for me to be here. As the commander said, I've been a member of the Claysville post for 50 years. Claysville is in western Pennsylvania. I was born and raised in a small, little town in western Pennsylvania called Washington, PA, the home of the Whiskey Rebellion.

It's also the home of PONY league baseball. PONY is for 13- and 14-year-old boys. A lot of people don't know what PONY stands for, but it's for Protect Our Nation's Youth, P-O-N-Y. And growing up they would have the World Series there every year, just like Williamsport does for the Little League that just concluded. I'm a big baseball fan. I went to many of The American Legion Post 11 games in Goldsboro, North Carolina. I was hoping they were going to make it to the championships in Shelby, but they didn't make it. One of our newest Vietnam recipients was there, and he coached baseball in high school and American Legion ball for about 35 years. His name is Jim McCloughan from Michigan, and a great American. (*Applause*)

Now, I spent 30 years and 10 months in the Army. I went out kicking and screaming. You can't stay more than 30 years as a colonel, but I had 10 months enlisted time. It was very, very unique back then. I took my first train ride from Pittsburgh down to South Carolina and got all my gear at Fort Jackson, then went down to Fort Gordon for my basic and advanced individual training. In basic training, we had the M-1. In advanced individual training, we had the M-14. Then in OCS we carried the M-16 rifle. So it's kind of unique to have all those weapons and to work with them and to shoot them. So that was very, very special.

The commander mentioned the book "We Were Soldiers Once...and Young." It took a long time. We would go to reunions and ask our battalion commander, Colonel Moore, and Joe Galloway how the book was coming along. It was published in 1992 after many, many years of research, and they wanted to get it right. Ten years later, they came out with the movie. Mel Gibson starred as Colonel Moore, and Sam Elliott played the sergeant major. I thought he made the movie with some of his one-liners. It was a very, very good movie. People ask me how accurate was the movie. They were making a Hollywood movie, not a documentary. So it's about 70 percent accurate.

It was a very, very intense battle. We went in with, I said, about 450 soldiers. We were a little bit light. But each company, we had three rifle companies -- A, B, and C. I was in A company. We had a little over 100 soldiers. We went in on Sunday morning, on the 14th of November. It was a three-day battle -- the 14th, 15th, and the 16th of November. The whole division went over on merchant marine ships and aircraft carriers. 400 helicopters had to get over there on aircraft carriers. One of our units, they were the recon unit, it was the first of the 9th Cavalry, was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Stockton. When they were testing the helicopters out in war games against the 82nd and the 101st, it proved to be very successful. They were able to outmaneuver them. So had there not been a Vietnam War, I don't think the Army would have purchased or had an air mobile division, because it was so expensive with 400 helicopters, but it

was our Jeep. Everywhere we went in Vietnam, we went by Huey helicopters primarily.

Colonel Stockton was quite a character. They gave him a mule that he named after his wife, Maggie, as a gift during the testing phase, and he took Maggie to Vietnam on an aircraft carrier. He also is famous for the Cavalry Stetson. We were wearing baseball caps back then as our normal wear, but his troops would go out and were purchasing these black Stetsons. The general didn't like it. He told Colonel Stockton to take that Stetson off and put the baseball cap back on. So he went back and talked to his troops, and he came back and talked to the general, and he said, "Sir, can we wear the Stetsons for ceremonial occasions?" The general scratched his head and said, "Okay, ceremonial occasions." Well, everything was a ceremonial occasion. (*Laughter*) So they continued to wear it. Even in Vietnam, they would wear it.

We were a group of draftees, enlisted, just a composite group in all races and religions, but it was an outstanding unit, and I'm very, very fortunate to have served with a unit that had been training and working in testing the air assault concept for about six months before we went over there. I was in Ranger school in the last phase. It was a very tough course. My best preparation for Vietnam. It was in the Florida phase. They called out 40 names. They said, "Your orders are now being changed. You can make a phone call home to your wife or your parents and tell them you aren't going to where you're supposed to be going, you're going to report in to Fort Benning." And the rumor on the street, it wasn't official yet, but that unit was heading to Vietnam.

After Ranger school, I reported in and was assigned to the first of the 7th, which is General Custer's unit from Little Bighorn. During that battle, we thought we were in another Little Bighorn, but we had a lot of assets Custer didn't have. We had the entire division ready to support us. On the second day of the battle, the 15th, we had B-52 strikes come in and decimated the side of the mountain called Chu Pong to help put out the enemy. But it was a very, very intense battle. My action happened on the first day of the battle. There was one platoon that was trapped, and we were trying to get up to it. We made two attempts that day, and on that second attempt, we prepped it with artillery fire and mortar fire. So that softened the enemy up a little bit.

The movie had it right, which came out, like I said, about ten years later. You think of Vietnam, you think of heavy jungle. This was not. This was elephant grass and shrubs and trees. It wasn't heavy jungle. But there were no roads and trails in it, so the enemy thought they were pretty safe. They had not experienced the helicopters.

But the enemy units were fresh too. They had just traveled down from North Vietnam, but their heavy mortar battalion and their anti-aircraft battalion had not arrived yet. So that was a plus for us. So we had tremendous support. It was a total team effort. The Air Force provided over 400 air strikes against the enemy targets, and we had a lot of our own organic 105 howitzer support from 12 howitzers that were strategically placed.

But people often say: Well, why did you do it, and why didn't you get your men to do it? In the heat of battle, a couple things happened. One of the company runners come over to me and said, "The commander's been killed. You're in charge." I says, "Wow, just like in Ranger school, they put you in a critical position in a very critical time." So I told my platoon sergeant to take over, and I was going to go over and take over the company. So I went over to the company area, and there's my company commander talking on the phone, and he hadn't been shot or wounded. So I missed the first word because of all the battle noise: "If my company commander gets killed or wounded, you're in charge." (*Laughter*)

He was a great commander and made it through the whole battle. Of the four companies -- A, B, C, and D -- two of the commanders, B company and D company, were wounded and evacuated from the battle area. But the other two company commanders made it and were great leaders, as was Sergeant Major Plumley and the battalion commander, Hal Moore.

Now, the embedded reporter came in the evening of the first day. They were bringing in our ammunition and taking out the wounded. The morning of the second day the enemy made three attacks on us early in the morning, and he was hugging the ground. The sergeant major come up to him, and he kicked him in the stomach gently and said, "Sonny, you can't take any pictures down there." So Joe Galloway, the embedded reporter, got up and started recording the battle and taking some pictures of the battle.

But back to the first day, you're familiar with the bazooka. We called it a light anti-tank weapon. It's a one-shot disposable tank killing weapon. I told my men to shoot this LAW, this anti-tank weapon into this solidified rock anthill, which was about seven feet high and had shrubs and trees all around it. That was right to our front, and that's where there were bad guys all around there. He tried to do it, and it didn't go off. I took it from him, and I re-armed it, which I closed it up and I opened it back up, and I shot the LAW into the bunker. It went off and made a big boom, and I thought we had destroyed the position.

So we started moving forward again and were taking more enemy fire. This is when I told another one of my men in the heat of battle, I was using sign language, to go up and throw a grenade over the top. But he thought I meant throw it from where we were at, and it deflected and landed in front and didn't do any damage. So rather than waste any more time, because it was starting to get dark, I just told my men to hold their fire, don't shoot me up, and I ran forward and got to the big solidified rock anthill and threw a grenade over the top and then went around to the left side. There were some more bad guys that were trying to shoot me, and I was able to shoot them before they shot me.

Right after that, though, I turned to my men, and I told them: Let's go, we've got to get to the platoon that was trapped on the side of the mountain there. That's when I got shot by someone further in the background, not from that position. Now, that platoon that was trapped on the side of a mountain, their whole chain of command were killed or wounded, and a young buck sergeant named Ernie Savage, an E-5 sergeant, took over. He put a ring of steel of artillery and mortar all around his position and withstood three enemy attacks that night, and we were able to get up to him. *(Applause)*

He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest award for valor in combat, along with the medic who kept the wounded alive named Doc Lose. So that's very special that they received that award. But after three days of intense fighting, we were evacuated out of the battle area. There's about 12 of us that are going back to Vietnam, sponsored by The Greatest Generation that took World War II vets over to Europe and Korean War vets to Korea. Now they're starting to take Vietnam vets back to Vietnam. We're going to go in November, right around the time of the battle. So that will be very special to go and visit the battle area again in November of this year.

It's an honor for me to wear the medal. I wear the medal for all the brave men and women that I served with. There's so much valor and bravery that goes on in combat that can't be recorded. So it's just an honor for me to wear this for them because I'm just the caretaker of it for them.

I was very early in the Vietnam War. It happened on a cold December day, on the 19th of December, 1966, 13 months after the battle. I spent three months recuperating in Valley Forge Army Hospital near Philadelphia from my war injuries. My mouth was wired shut, and I was on a strained baby food diet for three months, while my jaw healed up. So I'm very fortunate. I feel that God works in strange ways, in mysterious ways; that He has a plan for each and every one of us, and we just have to figure out what that plan is. Another inch or two, it would have hit my jugular vein and killed me. So I'm very fortunate to be alive and to be with you today. *(Applause)*

Thank you. This is my first American Legion convention in 50 years. I should have been here more often, but I'm very impressed with all you do for our country. It's a great organization. Thank you for all you do and all you're doing for our great country. I want to finish it by quoting Shakespeare when he said: We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; for he who sheds his blood for me shall be my brother. And we are truly a band of brothers and sisters. God bless you, and God bless America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Joe, I know that you are over a 40-year life member of The American Legion Department of Pennsylvania. I have asked Past National Commanders Ron Conley and Dominic DiFrancesco to join me in presenting you this American Legion lapel pin. We are proud to serve with you in The American Legion. *(Applause)*

One hundred years after World War I, we have with us today the chairman of the Army Historical Foundation. Of course, his career is historical in itself. He served as the 32nd chief of

staff of the United States Army from 1991 to 1995. His positions also included commanding general of the 1st Infantry Division; deputy commandant of U.S. Army Command; and General Staff College and assistant commandant, U.S. Army Armor School. His assignments included two tours in Vietnam. He has also served as president and chief operating officer at the Association of the U.S. Army. He is a member of American Legion Post 556 in the Department of Illinois. Please give a warm American Legion welcome to General Gordon R. Sullivan. (*Applause*)

**Address: General Gordon R. Sullivan, Chairman
Army Historical Foundation**

Hi, folks. Nice to be with you. You're probably wondering why a guy from Quincy, Massachusetts, is a member of the Wheaton post outside of Chicago. It's because that post is named for the first battle of World War I fought by the Big Red One at Cantigny, France. I would note that it was a victory. So all of the CGs have always been members of that post as long as it has been a post. But my actual post would be the Morrisette Post, and I know there are people in the room who are members too. So at any rate, I'm proud to be a Big Red One soldier.

Commander Rohan, we appreciate your service here, and I know your colleagues in the room do also. Members of the American Legion Family, proud of you. Thanks for the opportunity to thank you for everything you do for the American soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and members of the Coast Guard and their families. I can tell you, as a former chief of staff for the Army, it was nice to know that you were with us as we struggled through some tough days after the first Gulf War, when it was time for what was then known as the peace dividend, which meant we were going to get smaller.

And just as an aside, I would tell you that getting smaller was probably, looking back on it I'm not sure that the peace dividend is what we got. What we saw in Crimea and Ukraine suggests to me that our longtime adversary during the Cold War is back. They looked pretty well trained to me and pretty well disciplined. So that's why you're seeing the emphasis you are from the joint chiefs on readiness. That's an aside from me. It's not on the script. (*Applause*)

Since 1919, 100 years, 100 years you have demonstrated outstanding compassion and vigilant dedication to resolving the concerns of the American warriors and veterans. As a former Army chief of staff, I recognize full well that we not only have a moral obligation to train, equip, and lead as best we can those in harm's way, we also have a solemn obligation to take care of them, however and whenever they return home, and to do our best to take care of the survivors, if that's the case. And you, the leaders and members of the Legion, and those before you, have for the past century served selflessly as the leading stewards of that solemn obligation. I note from an article in the paper this morning that The American Legion stood up just yesterday, and the flag is now at half-mast for a great American hero, the late Senator John McCain of Arizona. (*Applause*)

I noticed that you also had some thoughts about the parade that is not going to be. I guess it worked. Your work and legislative achievements on Capitol Hill continue to pay off for our veterans and with the improvements in the veteran administration services, health care, additional education, and employment opportunities and regarding the G.I. Bill, I think the adjustments which were made for that will be felt in a positive way by survivors into the future. So, again, thanks a lot for what you have done over the years.

Now let me go to the Army museum. National Museum of the U.S. Army was first mentioned by the Congress of the United States in 1814 when the Department of Navy -- I don't even know whether we had a Department of Navy in 1814, -- and the Army, or the War Department, as it was called then, was told by the Congress of the United States to build a building to put the artifacts of each of the services on display for the American people. Frankly, I'm not sure what we had at that point for artifacts. But the Army has never had a national museum. We have a lot of museums, but not a national one, and we have revitalized that.

We began in 2016 working diligently to build an Army museum, National Army Museum down at Fort Belvoir. In just two years, the building's frame has been completed, and construction crews have begun installing the massive stainless steel panels that will make up the museum's

distinguished exterior. The museum will be 185,000 square feet, state-of-the-art building, and the galleries will tell the story of the Army, as it deserves to be told from the national level. Essentially, what it is is a history of the United States of America since 1636 as seen through the eyes of the American soldier. The Soldier's Story gallery will feature personal accounts from soldiers of all generations.

Now, in 1636 it was the Massachusetts Bay Colony that first created, that is the Brits, that first created the militia, which later became the Army National Guard. The first gallery will be on the founding of the nation, and I'll talk about that in a minute. The Soldier's Story gallery will feature personal accounts from those soldiers. If you ever see anything that looks like this again, this is a little brochure, one page on both sides, which talks about soldiers' stories. You don't have to spend any money for this. Send us your story, and you will be added to a long list of American soldiers, to include the Army Air Corps during World War II, who have fought for the nation in the Army and with our sister services. And by the way, the Army Reserve and the Army Guard. It includes everybody.

The Fighting for the Nation gallery will tell the Army's remarkable stories of triumph and sacrifice from the Revolutionary War to the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Army in Society gallery will depict the interaction between the Army and the American people. This is a perfect example of what it's all about right here in this room. The Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard coming together to let the American people know that there are people like us who are willing to stand up and say, hey, look at us. We are proud to have served. (*Applause*)

I have been in or around the United States Army since 1959. I have served on active duty for 36 years, I ran the Association of the United States Army for 18 years, and I'm now building the Army Museum, and then I'm going to go fishing on Cape Cod for the rest of my life. But I'd do it again if I could. (*Cheers and applause*)

The Army in Society gallery will depict this interaction, and we will show the people how we and other organizations like us, now I'm speaking about the services, the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard have associations of their own to do it, and they also have museums. We're the only service that has never had a national museum, by the way. The galleries that we will have have compelling artifacts, each with matchless provenance. They are the real ones, the signal flags that we used at Little Round Top, many of the original plans for activities, World War II, overlays of major battles down at Anzio and North Africa and so forth and so on. They will talk about technology. After all, it was an Army bus which took men to the moon, and many of the other NASA programs were on what at the time were Army rockets. It later shifted to the NASA and the Air Force.

Now, I've got some artifacts I want to talk about in particular. We put these inside the museum building before it was actually built, and we built around these artifacts. One of them is a Bradley cavalry fighting vehicle that led the attack from Kuwait to Baghdad and was the first one on the airfield at Baghdad.

We have the tank, Cobra King, an M4A3E2 Sherman Jumbo tank, which was the first tank to break through German lines to link up the 101st at the Battle of the Bulge. Later was part of the Hammelburg Raid and was shot up there. It was put at Vilseck. Those of you who have been to the Army or been to the training areas in Germany probably saw that tank and didn't know what it was, but the historians did. As soon as we started moving heavy equipment out of Europe, we brought it back, spiffed it up a bit, and it's now in the museum.

We have one of the few remaining LCVP Higgins boats, certified now, to have carried the 4th Infantry Division troops at Utah Beach on D-day, and we also have a certified Renault FT-17 tank, whose American crew -- it's a two-man Renault tank, and this one had machine guns on it, and it fought with the 1st Infantry Division at Exermont, France, in the First World War. There were two crews. The first one got wounded. Somebody found an artilleryman that claimed he could command a tank. He became a major in the Mass Guard and fought in World War II. He grabbed this guy out of the chow line and asked him if he could drive. The trooper said yes. And he said, okay, let's go, so off they went. He lamented the fact, in the speech that he gave, that he said, "I don't even know the kid's name." And he was killed, and he felt bad for the rest of his life about it.

He said, "You know, I didn't have time. We didn't have time because the troops were moving, and we went with them."

We also have World War I Liberty truck, Korean War vintage Jeep. I think probably I was in the Army when we had vintage jeeps too. A Huey helicopter. Got to have a Huey. Along with a reproduction of a 1908 Wright flyer. You might be interested to know that the Wright Brothers' aircraft was the first contract let by the Department of Defense, what was to become the Department of Defense. It was the first official contract let for a military weapon, what became a military weapon.

There will also be a Veterans Hall currently sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Military Order of the Purple Heart. But that hall will serve as a multipurpose place for veterans of all services. It will be a great place to host meetings, dinners, reunions, and official functions in a patriotic atmosphere. It will seat about 250 people at banquets and so forth and so on, and we're already starting to book people, outfits for reunions and the like.

Our Registry of the American Soldier, which many of you have already enrolled in, will be enshrined in the Veterans Hall. If you are not enrolled, please take advantage of this opportunity. We need your story: What did you wear? What did you feel like when you landed in Iraq or Afghanistan? What did you do? What did you eat in Korea? It probably wasn't hot; you can be sure of that.

FROM THE FLOOR: Tootsie Rolls.

GENERAL SULLIVAN: Yeah, Tootsie Rolls. How about eggs and lima beans? (*Laughter*) M&M's that look like M&M's and that doesn't melt in your hand? That was an innovation that was done for the troops, by the way, because the troops complained during World War II that the stuff melted in their hands, and the M&M's people figured out a way that they will not melt in your hand. So anyway. Thanks to the M&M's people we actually have something in Godforsaken places that actually has color. (*Laughter and applause*)

If you think somebody's not looking out for you, you know, in spite of all the jokes that are made, there are people like I guess up at Natick. I don't know if it's always been Natick that does it. But there are people that have a heart, you know, that don't give them something that's O.D. because all they're seeing is O.D. and a lot of pain. So give them something when they sit there or stand there in the pouring rain that doesn't melt in their hand and looks like something they had as a kid. (*Applause*)

There are some highlights you can look forward to when the Army opens the museum in 2020. A project of this magnitude and national significance demands continuous attention. We're getting close to completion, but we're not there yet. Even when we get the first building up, there are other things that have to be done. That's why fund raising just is going to go on. Because the Army keeps rolling along like every service. You never know what is going to happen next, but you can rest assured that the service represented in this room will be involved in it.

Let me go back in time. The 2005 National Convention of The American Legion in Honolulu passed a resolution. It's number happens to be 85. That resolution recognized the long overdue need for the Museum of the United States Army to commemorate veterans service and sacrifice. It also encouraged the Legion's departments, posts, and nearly two million members to support the \$200 million capital campaign to build the museum.

Accordingly, I want to thank thousands of American Legion members who have already purchased their individual granite brick, which has the person's name on it, date of service, so forth and so on, and anything else you can fit on it. We had an example. This little thing here is a brochure about it, that talks about it. There's a \$250 one, if you wanted to give one to your father or grandfather or whatever or in memory of. You get a little one that you could put on your desk or in a bookcase and so forth that says that you did it. There's a big one for \$500.

I'm also proud to tell you that 159 American Legion posts are among the 171,000 donors who have supported the museum to date with various amounts. There are 159 posts will be prominently recognized on the Veterans Wall of Honor for their \$2,500 gift contributions, and I want to give them special thanks. These are the nine. American Legion Pacific Palisades Post 2038 of California. I'm going to ask all of you to stand up from these posts that I read, assuming the post

is represented in some way in this room. American Legion Post 159 from Chincoteague Island, Virginia. Across the country, right, gang? California. Virginia. Hollywood American Legion Post 43 of California. American Legion Post 168 of Red Bank, New Jersey. American Legion Post 308 of Orleans, Massachusetts. Thanks a lot, guys. Sharon, American Legion Post 299 of Pennsylvania. Vernon J. Baker American Legion Post 241 of Spokane, Washington. American Legion Kenneth H. Nash Post 8 of Washington, D.C. American Legion Post Joe Stickell, Post 15, of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania. Now, two other posts have donated at least \$2,500, but one earmarked, its gift as a memorial bench, and the other for commemorative bricks. They are the Sgt. Walter Scott Brown American Legion Post 226 of River Edge, New Jersey; American Legion Post 405 of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Now, how about the representatives or everybody who's in those posts that's here stand up and let everybody see you. *(Applause)*

Now, if I missed anybody, it's not on purpose I can assure you. If you've visited our booth here at the convention, you've heard we've just launched our unit tribute plaques in honor of Army units of any size and era. Only 375 of these customized granite, 12-inch by 18-inch plaques at 5,000 each will be available to commemorate units with text inscriptions and full-cover distinguished unit crests and/or shoulder sleeve insignia for display along the paths of remembrance. So you know if you were in as Joe Marm of the 7th Cavalry, if you're in the 7th Cavalry or 16th Infantry or 18th Infantry, 9th Infantry, you know, on and on and on, you can find, in all likelihood, a crest that represents your unit now. There's 375 of them, different units. So that's going to cover a wide swath of outfits. You can find more information on the bricks and so forth as you look.

I think this museum is going to represent the spirit, and it's almost spiritual, because it starts at the beginning and it recognizes the men and women who have over 30 million, as best we can estimate, that served in one form or another in the United States Army. I think the American people will be astonished at what the Army, along with its sister services, the Navy, the Marine Corps, the United States Air Force and the Coast Guard, have done for them since the 1600s. We are proud in the Army to have stood side by side with all of you through the years in the defense of this republic, defending an idea. America will survive thanks to men and women like you and thanks to The American Legion.

The Legion is where the doughboys who fought in World War I and died in huge numbers for our country and freedom in Europe. I want to thank each and every one of you for what you have done in whatever service and for what you are doing by being members of this wonderful, caring organization, The American Legion. Happy birthday. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The American Legion is proud to bestow its highest honor on our next guest. She has quite a résumé. In addition to service as a U.S. Secretary of Labor, U.S. Secretary of Transportation, director of the Office of Public Liaison and commissioner of the Federal Trade Commission, she was elected as a U.S. senator from North Carolina in 2002. She served as president of the American Red Cross from 1991 to 1999. While her devotion to charity is legendary, veterans are one of her very top priorities. Married to longtime senator and World War II veteran Robert Dole, she not only understands the issues facing the caregivers of our heroes, she has lived it. In fact, she established the Elizabeth Dole Foundation in order to bring attention and assistance to the group of often-forgotten family members who work tirelessly to improve the quality of life for their heroic loved ones. The Elizabeth Dole Foundation made a critical difference in the expansion of benefits to pre-9/11 veteran caregivers, so that they are equal to those who serve the current generation. Like the American Legion Family, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation believes that all generations of veterans and their families deserve our support, regardless of the era in which they served. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal to former senator, former secretary and lifelong humanitarian Elizabeth Dole. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal
Senator Elizabeth Dole**

Oh, my goodness. Thank you so much. Before we get started, let me pause and reflect on the passing of two dear friends and colleagues, both Legionnaires, Senators Paul Laxalt and John McCain. They were both true servant leaders and heroes on and off the battlefield. And I'm sure you agree they will be sorely missed. (*Applause*)

Commander Rohan, thank you for that wonderful introduction and thank you for this enormous honor. You and your tremendous team are making such a significant impact every single day in the lives of our veterans and their families. I'm so grateful that you made "Family First" the theme of your command. And if I may so, you, commander, are an inspiration to countless young women across America who may be thinking about serving their country. Thank you for your service and your strong leadership. (*Applause*)

Now, as many of you know, I'm married to a Legionnaire. Last month Bob celebrated his 95th birthday. Can you believe it? (*Applause*) He still spends many Saturday mornings greeting veterans at the National World War II Memorial. You know, The American Legion was instrumental in the creation of that memorial. If you haven't been there in a while, we're taking good care of it.

The memorial is a powerful, magnificent tribute to those, many of them Legionnaires, who fought so heroically to save the free world. The Legion and each of you represents a proud tradition older than the country itself, a tradition of selfless, courageous individuals willing to join the ranks and serve. Patriots such as you won our nation's freedom, twice brought peace to a warring world, defended vast oceans and violent skies and fought in frozen reservoirs, thick jungles, dust-filled deserts and sheer mountain ranges. In times of peace you spurred technological innovation. You built feats of engineering and rode the rockets that launched America toward a new frontier. And when disaster has struck, whether at home or abroad, you have put yourselves at great personal risks to deliver food, aid and invaluable hope to the hardest-to-reach places.

The American Legion keeps alive the precious ideal that the truest leaders are also public servants. It is an ideal that was formative to our democracy and remains critical to its survival. Servant leaders are not driven by power. They are driven by a call to serve. Their motivation is echoed in how President Lyndon Johnson described the presidency when he said, "The burden of the president's responsibility literally opens up his soul. No longer can he accept matters as given. No longer can he write off hopes and needs as impossible."

Servant leaders take on causes bigger than themselves. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. articulated this very principle when he withdrew his nomination to lead The American Legion at your first national convention. Roosevelt proclaimed: We are gathered together for a very high purpose. I want every American through the length and breadth of this land to realize that there is not a man in this caucus who is seeking anything for himself personally, but that he is simply working for the good of the entire situation. (*Applause*)

His father, our 26th president, put an even finer point on that sentiment when he wrote "There must be shame at the thought of shirking the hard work of the world."

Leaders who act as public servants see the humanity in others. They take time to understand each other, appreciate each other. They look beyond political parties and see the good in one another. President Lincoln was a model of this respectful nature. He once admonished a group he heard disparaging Southerners by warning "Don't criticize them. They are just what we would be under similar circumstances."

President Calvin Coolidge also urged us to "Embrace competing thoughts and experiences." In addressing The American Legion's convention in 1925, President Coolidge remarked, "Differences in opinion are elements of strength rather than weakness. They broaden our vision, strengthen our understanding, encourage the true humanities and enrich our whole mode and conception of life."

Leaders who acknowledge the humanity of others build people up rather than cut them down. This approach opens doors to greater compromises and collaborations across party lines.

Inevitably, servant leaders are more effective at solving our nation's biggest challenges. Servant leaders are also humble and willing to accept the consequences of their decisions. On the eve of the D-Day invasion, General Eisenhower drafted a statement to be released if the invasion failed. In it he wrote, "If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt, it is mine and mine alone."

In the final analysis, that is what great leaders do. They don't pass the responsibility or blame to someone else. They stand ready to make the hard decisions and to live with failure or success. To their core, servant leaders focus more on the legacy of their country and its people ahead of their own. Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross, dedicated her life to caring for wounded servicemembers, as you know. Reflecting on what it means to serve others, she once said, "You must never so much as think whether you like it or not whether it is bearable or not. You must never think of anything except the need and how to meet it." There have been times when this sense of service has felt in short supply among our nation's leaders. But I've always maintained my faith in Americans and their willingness to stand in support of each other.

My work with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and specifically with America's military and veteran caregivers reinforces that faith every day. Five and a half million Americans care for a wounded, ill or injured servicemember or veteran. The vast majority of these young spouses, mothers, dads, siblings and other loved ones are not professional social workers or health-care providers. Yet, they have dedicated their lives to this new role -- administering medications, performing at-home medical procedures, preventing triggers that can set off an extended emotional response and dressing, bathing and tending to the personal hygiene of their loved ones.

Living up to the words of Clara Barton, these hidden heroes do not dwell on whether the responsibility is bearable. They simply focus on doing what is needed. Experts estimate that veteran caregivers provide nearly \$14 billion a year as an unpaid workforce. 14 billion. On top of everything else, caregivers usually assume responsibility for the household, paying the bills, handling legal and financial challenges and raising children.

Caring for a wounded veteran is complicated and all-consuming. And ladies and gentlemen, it takes an enormous toll. Caregivers experience elevated rates of isolation, depression, physical ailments, family strain and financial and legal troubles. The veteran caregiver crisis is a societal issue that requires a national response. That's why the Elizabeth Dole Foundation has built a national coalition of more than 300 organizations, including The American Legion and the Auxiliary to introduce new services and programs that empower, strengthen and honor our veteran caregivers.

It's why we recruited Hollywood's biggest star, Tom Hanks, to chair our Hidden Heroes awareness campaign, which has introduced veteran caregivers to the nation. It's why we put our faith in a fabulous Legionnaire, Val Nicholas, to orchestrate a partnership with Comcast-NBCUniversal that has brought our campaign into nearly every home in America. It's why we built a strong partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The VA remains crucial to the health and well-being of our veterans and their families, as you know. And our nation owes a debt of gratitude to The American Legion for being the force behind its creation. *(Applause)*

It's why we established a bipartisan Military and Veteran Caregiver caucus on Capitol Hill, which proved that issues can still rise above political divides. And the support we generated was critical to our recent historic success. Again, in partnership with the Legion, are you seeing a theme here, in pushing for Congress to pass the Mission Act that expanded eligibility for the veteran caregiver's stipend beyond post 9/11 caregivers to caregivers of all war eras. Finally, all caregivers will have equal access to this vital resource regardless of when their loved one served. I am so grateful we had the full support of The American Legion on that initiative *(Applause)*

Together, with our partners, we've made tremendous progress. But there's much more work to be done. Each of you and your posts can do your part to assist the veteran caregivers in your community through our hidden hero cities. This program challenges leaders of cities, large and small, to proactively find and connect with local military and veteran caregivers. This is critical because many caregivers go about their work in isolation.

At the same time, we count on these cities to survey and publicize local services and resources that can help caregivers manage their many responsibilities. Just yesterday we celebrated

commitments from the mayor and other leaders of both Minneapolis and St. Paul. You can learn if your city is a Hidden Hero city by visiting our state-of-the-art website, hiddenheroes.org. If you don't see your community on the list, please contact us to help secure their commitment. If they are on the list, please make sure your post gets involved. Thank you again for this tremendous honor.

Before arriving today, I read over the list of previous award recipients. I was not surprised to find my old boss, President Ronald Reagan, or as he might be better known around here, Legionnaire Ronald Reagan of Pacific Palisades Post 283. *(Applause)*

President Reagan was the epitome of a servant leader. In fact, he chose to share the end of his life with the nation so that we might better know the difficult road travelled by those caring for a loved one. As the president said his long goodbye, Nancy Reagan endured a caregiver journey familiar to the millions of Americans caring for veterans. There were long valleys of sadness, wishing for the old days. There were occasional peaks when life seemed a little like it used to be. The president had professional round-the-clock care, but it pained Nancy to leave his side.

She felt anxiety and guilt. But most of all she felt an overwhelming love for her husband and wanted to be there for him. Lunches with friends were cut short. Telephone calls were brief. As the president struggled with the effects of the disease, she became more isolated with him. She fiercely protected her husband and the way the nation remembered him: Strong, wise, and unmatched in wit.

The president foresaw Nancy's difficult journey. Ever the loving husband, President Reagan's letter to the nation included a plea for America's support. "I only wish there was some way I could spare Nancy from this painful experience," he wrote. "When the time comes, I'm confident that with your help she will face it with faith and courage."

Like Nancy Reagan, America's military and veteran caregivers assumed their role with faith and courage. But their health and well-being and the well-being of their children and their wounded loved one heavily rely on the nation standing by their side.

Thank you, Commander Rohan, and thank you, Legionnaires, for supporting America's hidden heroes. Thank you for dedicating yourselves to your country, to your fellow Americans and to causes bigger than yourselves. Thank you for living the words of Lincoln and Johnson, Reagan and Roosevelt. And thank you for continuing the tradition of servant leadership that has shaped our nation and made the United States the greatest country the world has ever known. God bless each and every one of you. God bless this great land of the free, America. Thank you so very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The man who has led our Sons of The American Legion over the last 12 months was a charter member of the Ralston Squadron 27 and is now a member of the Papillon Squadron 32 Detachment of Nebraska. His eligibility is from his father, Danny L. Smith, an Air Force veteran who served during the Korean War. He has proudly promoted the principles, programs and pillars of The American Legion. He has worked in construction for more than 45 years. Please welcome the immediate past national commander of the Sons of The American Legion, my friend, Danny Smith. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Danny J. Smith, Nebraska
Past National Commander, Sons of The American Legion**

Good morning! I want to thank Commander Rohan for the kind introduction, and you for that warm welcome. But I'm going to be honest with you, I should really stand and applaud you for what you have done for this organization and your service to this country. Thank each and every one of you. It truly is appreciated.

National Commander Rohan, other national officers and staff, past national officers, department officers, delegates to this convention, and distinguished individuals with us this morning; my brothers and sisters in this, our great American Legion Family: It is indeed an honor to be here to represent our nearly 370,000 members of the Sons of The American Legion this year

as national commander. And you have just heard that I am a proud son of a Korean War Air Force veteran. But what most of you don't know is I'm also the proud son-in-law of a World War II Merchant Marine and Korean War Army veteran. Now, I understand that that does not make me eligible for the Sons of The American Legion. But it is, indeed, something to be proud of.

Hey, welcome to Minneapolis and your 100th National Convention. And congratulations too on nearly 100 years of service to your comrades, your communities and the children and youth of our country. Now, we have come together here in Minneapolis as family to celebrate and reflect on what has been a remarkable year of service to the ideals and principles on which The American Legion was founded.

Throughout this past year, the Sons of The American Legion have joined forces with The American Legion and also the American Legion Auxiliary to provide the much needed service to our nation's veterans. We helped develop our Children and Youth. And we lobbied our elected officials. We have proven that there is strength in numbers. While providing a gentle hand to support and comfort those in need. Serving together as family, we have stood side by side on several somber occasions, paying tribute to those that have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

We reached out to provide comfort and support for those that continue to suffer from the wounds and ravages of war. We have visited and extended a helping hand to comrades, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters across this country and around the world. We have felt pain when they hurt. We have laughed when they laughed. We have helped to dry a tear and we share the smiles. We have welcomed all with open arms and embraced all that we serve. We serve together as family placing family first as stated in National Commander Rohan's theme.

And we helped to raise millions of dollars for your programs. Our theme for this past year has been "Following Their Footsteps, Making History." A theme which I felt embodied our mission as Sons of The American Legion. Not only following in the footsteps of our parent or grandparent, but also in the footsteps of The American Legion. I asked our members to make history with significant investments of dollars and hours of service to your programs, and they responded with some significant numbers.

We joined in with The American Legion placing family first, and we supported your National Emergency Fund and your Endowment Fund, along with your many other programs. I'd like to take a minute or two here just to share some of what we did this past year. This is what has been turned over to me, at least on paperwork, and what's been reported to date. Under your Americanism pillar of service, \$2,740,649. Children and Youth programs: \$1,317,183. Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation: \$1,338,476. Other programs, \$4,130,849. Now, I'm throwing a lot of numbers at you, and I know that can be boring and maybe not what you want to hear. But it is important that you know what we did. Total investments over \$10 million. That's actual dollars invested in your programs. *(Applause)*

Total hours invested in your programs, 1,978,324. That value of those hours of service, \$45,600,368. Total value invested by our organization in your programs, right at \$56 million in value of service and actual dollars collected. *(Applause)*

Now, last year we didn't quite hit 50 million. I asked and they responded. I asked for a historic year and I definitely believe that is some historic investments in your programs. Now, here's what's really, I guess, a little sad, but we can get over it. That's only 30% of our squadrons reporting. So in actuality I think we're up probably a little closer to \$160 million invested in your programs. Now, I hope you're as proud of your sons and your grandsons as I am.

We definitely had a historic year, or at least I feel that we did. I hope that we were able to serve you when you needed us, and those ideals and those principles on which your organization, The American Legion, was founded. No, ladies and gentlemen, we are all unique. Not only do we have our own unique appearance, we come from various backgrounds, cultures, religious beliefs, parts of the country, and even the world. Yet we all have several common bonds.

We all have ties to the armed forces of the United States of America, either through a family member or you, yourself, have served. We love our country. We definitely respect the flag of our country and we all possess a passion to serve. Now, surely your reason for serving is as varied as our backgrounds. And your area of service is as varied as the programs of The American Legion.

Nevertheless, the passion is there. We serve because we feel it is our duty. You know, we are a service organization. How or who we serve really doesn't matter. What matters is that we, as brothers and sisters in this great American Legion Family, work together to promote, support and serve those ideals and principles on which The American Legion was founded. So to those of you that served this country and never received the dignity and the respect that you surely deserve, I want to say thank you, God bless you and welcome home, a welcome home that is long overdue for many.

I want you to know that my family appreciates you and your service to our country. To all of you, thank you for your service to our country and to the ideals and principles of The American Legion. You folks are awesome. And I'm proud to call you my brothers and sisters. Thank you for your service to our country and the ideals and principles of The American Legion again.

Thank you for your hospitalities and the courtesies extended this past year. It truly was appreciated and at times overwhelming. God bless all of you, God bless these United States of America and God bless the American Legion Family. Thank you so much. It's been great. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Soldier's Wish is an organization that is dedicated to meeting needs for military personnel, veterans and their families by the authority of our National Executive Committee, The American Legion has established an official relationship with this outstanding group. Please welcome the executive director of Soldier's Wish, Mark Ochsenbein. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Mark Ochsenbein, Volunteer Executive Director
Soldier's Wish**

Thank you so much and thank you for that. Like she said, I'm Mark Ochsenbein, and I'm the volunteer executive director for an organization that's called Soldier's Wish. Soldier's Wish is an organization that supports our veterans, supports our active duty and a group that many times gets left out, and that's our families, the families that are behind, left behind while their husband, wife goes down range to fight the fight.

There's always something critical it seems like happens back at the house when mom or dad are down range. So we try to support those the best we can. Yesterday we were able to help a Navy veteran who is 93 years old. It was a great honor to meet this guy. He was on the first lead destroyer that went in on D-Day. He was on the USS Herndon. It was an honor to meet him. He is a life member of The American Legion and he has been asked by France to come back to France next year for the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

You know, today we're going to give a wish here, because that's what we do. We found out about this wish through Randy Tesdahl. He's the Department of Minnesota adjutant. I want to thank Randy and Jeremy for all the hard work they've done on this wish. Being a retired colonel in the Army, you don't like to cry. You don't like to have tears. But I've never cried more in this job because of our brave men and women. So I'm going to try to get through this one. This is going to be a tough one.

Today this wish is on behalf of Zan Washington. Zan joined the Army National Guard on October 4, 2011, not that long ago. She completed Phase 1 of the Officer Candidate School. She started Phase 2 but did not complete it because she wanted to finish her bachelor's degree in criminal justice. She went to MP school. And was a military policeman until September 13. She had to transfer units and the needs of the guard, she was reclassified to be an automated logistics specialist. During all this, Zan also completed a masters in forensic mental health.

In Zan's personal life she's passionate about two things: Football and children. And her first passion, Zan was a professional women's football player and she played with teams throughout the United States. Her second passion is to help children by working at a shelter for homeless youth in Minneapolis. Zan threw herself into her work and quickly became the manager of outreach services for the shelter. Zan was also looking to start coaching kids football after things at the

office calmed down.

On January 25, 2018, Zan was in a tragic fall, an accident. When Zan arrived at the hospital, the doctors gave her zero to 1% chance of living. They said that if she did live, they expected minimal, if any, improvements in her life. But you know what? They didn't know Zan.

Zan is a soldier. She's a warrior. Zan spent six weeks in a coma and the family was told to expect the worst. But like I said, Zan is a fighter. She came out of the coma in March and has fought through infections and has had to fight off pneumonia on several occasions. And with all this, just learning how to live. But again let me say, Zan is a soldier and a fighter. She is still in the National Guard. She's a specialist. Every day she makes strides to get to get to what is now her new normal. Zan, come on out, right here. *(Applause)*

Zan is currently quadriplegic and on a ventilator to allow her to breathe and to sustain life. But mentally, Zan never lost anything. Zan wants more than anything to get back to work and to helping those less fortunate than herself. And you know Soldier's Wish is about making our active duty military veterans and their families have a better quality of life.

It is our hope that her wish today will help open up for her a world of opportunities. Zan wants and needs for her mental health to be able to continue to work with marginalized children in this city. Zan has not and will not let this injury define her and what she needs most now. She depends on another company to transport her around. She has to wait for them to get there at their time schedule. Zan is always the first person making sure that everyone else is taken care of. Zan today, you're going to receive a mobility van. *(Applause)*

You know, Zan, in working with Cummings Mobility and The American Legion, the Department of Minnesota, particularly Adjutant Randy Tesdahl and Jeremy. Soldier's Wish was able to get you a mobility van to give you much more independence so you can get back to helping the homeless youth in the Twin Cities. Thank you so much for your service and what you do. We hope that this van will open up so much more for you. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

Thank you so much for allowing us to come in here today to do this. It's always my honor to help our veterans. We help veterans throughout the United States and I will tell you if you want to help out, get on The American Legion website and go to the charities page and make a donation. Make a donation, because it helps the charities to be able to go out and help our veterans. You have no idea what it means to be able to do that. Thank you all so much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Every national commander relies on previous national commanders for advice, wisdom and guidance on how to best lead our organization. I have been very fortunate to benefit from the knowledge and openness of Past National Commander Dave Rehbein. With a degree in physics and a master's in metallurgy his intelligence is without question. But what is even more impressive is his dedication and devotion to The American Legion and honoring our great history. He is an inspired choice to serve as chairman of the 100th Anniversary Observance Committee of The American Legion. Please welcome Past National Commander David K. Rehbein from the Department of Iowa.

Introduction of the 100th Anniversary Observance Honorary Committee Past National Commander David K. Rehbein

Thank you, commander. Commander Rohan, Adjutant Wheeler, distinguished guests up here on the dais, Legionnaires, delegates, guests, as I stand here at the podium, I think about 99 years ago as temporary chairman Henry Lindsley gaveled the first convention to order at a spot not that far from here.

Now, that convention began implementing the vision that had been borne in Paris, nurtured in St. Louis and was being clearly formalized here at that convention in Minneapolis. It was a shared vision. The four pillars; Americanism; Children and Youth; National Security; Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation. Four pillars that still stand today. Four pillars that still support everything The American Legion stands for and does.

Guided by that vision, the legacy grew over the next century. You've heard those two words

quite often today: Legacy and vision. We took that as the theme of the 100th Anniversary Committee as we began planning for this centennial. That planning began five years ago under the leadership of Past National Commander, Past National Adjutant Bob Spanogle. I was fortunate enough to inherit a very strong foundation that had been put together under his leadership as we finished the planning for the centennial.

Well, planning is over. Execution has begun. If you were in the exhibit hall, you saw some of the results of the legacy that was laid down for us. You saw the G.I. Bill exhibit. That really tells the story of The American Legion, how that G.I. Bill came to be in 1944 and how it continues to grow and improve under the care of The American Legion.

You also saw chronology of many of the important events in our legacy, in our history. I hope as you looked at that chronology you did not see that as a finished product. I hope you take pieces of things that you saw in that chronology home for you to learn more about. Because that's what that chronology is really about, to re-acquaint everyone with the high points of our history, of our legacy. But it doesn't tell the whole story. It doesn't talk about the people. It doesn't talk about all of the work that went into making those accomplishments the high points of our legacy. So vision and legacy have combined and have created an organization whose respect was demonstrated this week when our Commander held up Senator McCain for the honor and remembrance that was deserved to him. Thank you, commander, for doing that. *(Applause)*

We have an organization because of that legacy, because of that original vision, that when this organization says something, Washington listens. That's important. It's important that we have that. It's important that we keep that. You'll see more of the legacy over the next year. There are more things coming.

Already we have a centennial print that's hanging in the National Executive Committee room, that copies were available at Emblem Sales in the exhibit hall. If you didn't get one, you need one. It embodies who we are, what we stand for, and the connection that all of us that have worn the uniform carry within us. You will see material coming from a company called Fathead that you can put in your post, wall clings that talk about the four pillars, that talk about the preamble, that help talk about the legacy of The American Legion.

You will see a second exhibit coming. The funding has just been approved for another exhibit on the story of what The American Legion has done in the toxic substances area over the years -- radiation exposure, Agent Orange, burn pits. Without us, without us, those servicemen and women suffering because of those toxic substances would not be considered service-connected. That's part of your legacy. *(Applause)*

There will be a commemorative coin that will be unveiled here. The first strike ceremony will be in January. There will be three of those. So look for those in January because collectors want them. I want some. And I hope you will want a set.

But if all we do for our centennial is look back, we betray that legacy. Because that legacy was formed from vision. And now it is time for us to form a vision for the second century. Our founders led us. Their vision led us to here. Where will our vision for the second century take us. That's an answer, that's an answer yet to be determined.

Our commander gavelled open the 100th convention of The American Legion. She also gavelled open the second century of The American Legion. So when we leave here, we leave here with the seeds of that vision. We leave here with the seeds to grow that legacy. In another hundred years, a commander will open a convention celebrating the second century. Honoring the legacy that developed from those seeds that we plant here. So when that second century comes, part of our responsibility is to make sure those seeds get planted right, that they grow, that we hand over to the next generations that are coming an organization that has the strength of the one that we received from the generations that preceded us.

It's my pleasure as part of my presentation to introduce to you a gentleman who you already met, but I want to do the introduction because he embodies the legacy that we celebrate. But he also embodies that vision, because I know from my conversations with this man he has his eyes firmly fixed on the future, as did his grandfather. Don't be fooled by the famous name of the chairman of our 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee. He may be the great grandson of a

beloved president and grandson of one of our legendary founders, but he is also and maybe foremost a distinguished Legionnaire and great American in his own right.

A Harvard graduate, he served two years in Vietnam as a Navy SEAL. He is an avid conservationist and has served on the governing council of the Wilderness Council since 1998. An investment banker and managing director at Barclays Capital Corporation, he is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Economic Club of New York and the Foreign Policy Association.

He is a Paid Up For Life Member of The American Legion Department of New York and the recipient of the 2018 James V. Day Good Guy Award, presented by the Legion's Past Department Commander's Club. Ladies and gentlemen, and delegates to this convention, it's my great pleasure to present to you the chairman of our 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee, Theodore Roosevelt IV. (*Applause*)

**Remarks: Theodore Roosevelt IV, Chairman
100th Anniversary Observance Honorary Committee**

What a pleasure it is to be here with all of you. But I do sympathize with you. You've been in your seats for a long time, and you probably are hungry or thirsty. So I will try to keep things moving along.

First of all let me thank Commander Rehbein for his generous introduction and he was far more generous than I deserve. I also would like to salute the Legion and National Commander Rohan for her leadership in ensuring that Senator McCain got the honors that he deserved for a lifetime of service. (*Applause*)

Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. came to this city with one priority a century ago, the future of The American Legion. He and his fellow founders identified the needs of returning World War I veterans with dogged persistence pursuing those needs, and this included the creation of the VA and the passage of the G.I. Bill.

With great respect for the Legion's founding legacy, the 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee focused on a second century vision for the future in four key areas: First: Strengthening relationships with post-9/11 generation veterans, groups like Team Red White & Blue, Team Rubicon, The Mission Continues and Student Veterans of America. Second: Demanding, in tandem with the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission, an efficient, effective VA health-care system. Third: Improving career opportunities for veterans and their families. It is utterly essential that companies and industries in this country understand that the very best employees that they can hire are veterans. (*Applause*)

And finally, giving voice to the Legion's vital mission to improve treatment of PTSD and TBI and reducing dependency on prescription drugs. Remarkably, these areas are not that dissimilar to what the founders of The American Legion sought to address. What we now call PTSD, the early Legionnaires called "shell shock." And like today, they demanded federal recognition for sufferers, resources for treatment and support for families.

The American Legion job fairs and career events of the day were executed by local posts in the 1920s that recruited and even transported veterans to logging camps, mines and farm fields for seasonal work. Student veterans, athletes, community volunteers and first responders went by different names than those we know today, but purpose-driven veterans like them have been around all of the last century.

The American Legion welcomes them, one war era to the next, and joins forces with them for the greater good. It's important to remember that there was no VA when The American Legion was established. Now, millions of veterans receive health care, home loans, education and training through the VA. At any one time today, some 3,000 American Legion service officers are working on nearly 800,000 VA benefits cases, free of charge.

Does say a little bit about the complexity of working with the VA. And millions of volunteer hours are being logged at VA health-care facilities every year by members of the American Legion Family. A healthy VA for the future must always be a priority for The American Legion, regardless

of what century it is. The American Legion 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee consists of distinguished people whose lives have been touched by this organization and its progress.

Some of those committee members were kind enough to join us and will share their thoughts with you today. I've had the immense good fortune over the past several years to get to know some of them well. And my respect and admiration grows commensurately with the passage of time. In my introduction of each of them, I will be briefer than I would have liked, but their backgrounds are so interesting and so distinguished that in the interests of time, I must respect the need for brevity.

I'd like to begin with a fellow Vietnam War veteran to come up and take the microphone and talk about The American Legion's place in her life both as a combat nurse and later as the leading force to recognize the military service of women in the Vietnam War on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., Diane Carlson Evans. (*Applause*)

**Remarks: Diane Carlson Evans, Co-Founder
Vietnam Women's Memorial**

Thank you, National Commander Rohan. We're so proud to have a woman in our 100th anniversary leading this great organization. Wouldn't the founders just be so happy. Chairman Roosevelt, thank you. It's been such a pleasure to get to know this great gentleman and the rest of the committee members that I have had the privilege and honor to serve with over the last couple of years.

But my brother and sister veterans whom are sitting before me, and in particular a shout out to River Falls, Wisconsin, Northfield, Minnesota, and Helena, Montana -- all the posts that I have belonged to over the years who have embraced me and helped me move along in my mission with their help. We've talked this morning about the preamble, and you'll remember that one of the ten cardinal principles of our preamble is to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state, and nation.

The founders of The American Legion believed that United States citizenship meant more than identifying oneself as a place of residence in the United States; that with that citizenship comes responsibility. The American Legion Citizenship Award presented to me upon my graduation from high school in 1964 impelled that sense of responsibility in me a very long time ago. Feeling undeserving, the award haunted me because I wondered why I was chosen and what could I do now to deserve it. Good citizens aren't born; they're created. They're shaped by circumstances and the people around them. And I believe that begins at home, at school, in our churches, and in our community.

Just one hour northwest from this convention center in Buffalo, Minnesota, I grew up on a dairy farm, in our family since homesteading it in 1863, and it is still farmed today by my family. My Swedish grandparents who crossed the ocean quickly learned English, built a one-room country school across from the farm, built roads, built a church, and helped the new immigrants who came by the thousands to homestead-rich Minnesota farmland.

My dad helped put up the first telephone poles and was the guy the neighbors called to climb back up them and fix them when the party lines went dead. My dad didn't work for Ma Bell, Northwestern Bell, he was a volunteer. Dad was on the school board. That meant he painted the school, fixed the water pump, chopped the wood, stacked it, and stoked the fires every morning in our potbelly stove before school. And every fall he removed the screens and installed the storm windows; another volunteer duty.

My mother was a registered nurse, and she was the Florence Nightingale of the community to all the farm families who didn't want to go to the doctor or couldn't afford it. So they called mom for free advice. They shared their tools and their farm equipment with the neighbors, and they shared us six kids to go out and help the neighbors when they needed us. My parents were good citizens.

Always interested in building a better nation, the founders of The American Legion believed that such building must first start with the individual in his own community. That means "educating

the citizen young, old and future, in his and her responsibility to be active in making the hometown a better place in which to live, discharging the duty of voting in elections, paying taxes promptly, and contributing to the community chest funds and to blood banks."

Now, the word "inculcate" refers to "impress by frequent admonitions and to enforce by frequent repetitions." Well, my mother gave us frequent repetitions, and my dad gave us frequent admonitions, and all six of us were reminded that these duties of good citizenship remain to be carried forward and are never finished. My oldest brother joined the Army 101st Airborne in 1963. My next brother was drafted in 1965. I joined the Army Student Nurse program in 1966. After graduating from nursing school and then basic training, I volunteered to serve in the Vietnam War and do what my brothers were doing and the farm boys all around me were doing; serving our country.

As a citizen of this nation, I felt this was my duty, too, and I had that American Legion Citizenship Award hanging very heavy around my neck. My parents were left with the youngest three to admonish and repeat the importance of personal obligation to community, state, and nation. My parents' youngsters grew up in the Vietnam era. When we left, they lost three pairs of hardworking hands and the innocence of sleeping soundly at night knowing their kids were safe. We weren't.

I spent every day in country with my medics, fellow nurses, doctors, and those wonderful helicopter brave pilots, trying my best to save as many lives as humanly possible. We were a team then, a team willing to sacrifice our lives for others. That experience shaped the rest of my life, and, yes, it continues to do so today.

The greatest privilege of my life was to serve as a trauma nurse in a combat zone caring for the wounded and dying. In 1982, with the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, our wall of names, I realized I had unfinished business left. My work for my brother and sister veterans was not over. I had to find my voice and start to fight again. This time I needed the help of The American Legion.

I told a few members of my dream to honor my sister veterans of that war with a monument recognizing their service and sacrifice and that I needed help. They didn't hesitate, but they told me it would take hard work starting at the post level. Some wise members told me how it's done, and they would be at my side all along the way. Certainly, they were guided by one of The American Legion's ten preamble principles: To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in great wars. What a wonderful principle to begin with.

And that quote from the preamble means the inerasable recollection of the comradeship, the bravery of pals, the teamwork of the sacrifices, the miseries and the hardships of military campaigns shared in common. It means that the bond that binds all ex-servicemen and women together in mutual affection, respect and gratitude. It also means keeping green forever the memories of the supreme sacrifices of those gallant American patriots necessary to the winnings of war.

The preamble's words that responsibilities are never finished are as true today as 100 years ago. I trust that in the next 100 years Legionnaires will continue their resolve with passion and foresight to preserve the intent of the ten clauses of the preamble by leaving more footprints of those men and women who personify good citizenship. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THEODORE ROOSEVELT IV: Diane, thank you so much for that. It's such an inspiring story. Please help me welcome Jamie Corkish, an American Legion Junior Shooting Sports champion who set an Olympic record on her way to a gold medal in the 2012 London games. Because of a rule change, her record will stand for all time. Following that historic moment, she devoted her time and talent to help other young shooters achieve their dreams. Jamie. *(Applause)*

**Remarks: Jamie Corkish
Olympic Gold Medalist**

Wow, thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. First, I would like to thank The American Legion

for inviting me to this amazing event. It truly is an honor. I look around, and I am not an honorary guest here; all of you truly are.

It is a pleasure to be able to attend this event with so many veterans and heroes. You all have unique stories, and being able to pass those stories and experience onto the next generation to learn and embrace all you have done in life is a tremendous honor, and I encourage you all to continue to do that.

In 2002, I was invited to compete at the American Legion Junior Shooting Sports National Championship in Colorado Springs, Colorado, at the Olympic Training Center. This match is unique in that there's a scholarship to be won, and in the shooting sports, that scholarship means a lot. Most shooters don't go on to use shooting as a way to have income in their life. So those scholarships truly are an amazing way to help the youth be able to get a college education and go on to a career.

What is most important to me is not only the support of the national American Legion but also the support of the veterans in the communities around the country. I started shooting competitive BB gun when I was eight years old in my basement. As a younger sister, all I ever wanted to do was to beat my brother in anything he tried to do. My competitive drive started at a very, very young age.

At 15 I transitioned in competing in the Olympic-style shooting events. It was at the age of 16 I set a goal to not only represent the United States at the Olympics, but to bring home a medal for the United States of America. It would be 12 years later -- a college degree, years of training, many, many failures, and few successes, and many people to help me along the way -- that I completed this goal. Early in my shooting career, I was lucky enough to meet my mentor and the most successful rifle shooter of all time in the world, Colonel Lones Wigger, a veteran who shared his military and competition stories with me and helped me pave the path to a successful career. Lones was my hero and longtime mentor and friend. Sadly, we lost him in December.

In 2008 I made my first Olympic team. In my first event and the very first Olympic medal awarded at the Olympic Games, women's air rifle, I finished fourth. I was ecstatic, surprisingly, because I really did not enjoy shooting this event. It was only days later that I had the chance to meet my goal in three position, my favorite event. However, my last shot of the games took me from a medal position to fifth place. I was devastated, to say the least. I made a decision to work every day the next four years to not allow that to happen again.

In 2012 I had another chance. I made the 2012 Olympic team and again shot air rifle to try to win the first Olympic medal for the United States, to which I finished fifth. Days later, I had another chance. I had many chances, luckily. I not only won the gold medal in London, but I also set an Olympic record in the women's three position shooting event in London. The most amazing thing about winning a medal is the time you get to spend on the podium. It's emotional. If you watch the Olympic games, you see many people crying on the podium. It truly is an emotional time, to hear our national anthem and to see the Stars and Stripes rising high.

But for me, that emotion came from all those that had an influence on my shooting career, my family and coaches, and the many men and women that supported me through the way, including the many veterans at The American Legion. Each and every person I have come across in life has had some kind of influence on me, and that time spent on the podium was reflecting upon every single person I've ever come across in life.

The medal I brought home wasn't just for me. It was for me to share with the many people of the United States of America. When I went back home to Pennsylvania after winning the gold, I had veterans from our local American Legion post come to the courthouse to help me celebrate my win with the community. I will forever be grateful to all of the many men and women that not only serve this country but that also choose to give back to their communities, especially through the youth organizations.

I wouldn't have had the opportunity to experience early success and a college scholarship through The American Legion if it weren't for those that choose to mentor the youth throughout their communities. I can't thank The American Legion enough for the support and emphasis they put on our youth. We've all had mentors through life, and the young people today continue and

need our support. Thank you again for giving your valuable time to help them learn and pave a path for the future.

Today I have the opportunity to be a mentor. I coach junior shooters across the country. I'm a hunters education instructor, and I volunteer at schools to talk about hard work, dedication, perseverance, and drive. It's an honor to be able to be a positive influence to the next generation. I thank each one of you for putting your time into our youth and for providing them with a mentor that they can learn from. I can only hope my children have a mentor as great as the veteran I had to learn from. You are providing our youth with a great opportunity, and I thank you for your service then and now. *(Applause)*

THEODORE ROOSEVELT IV: What a great story about determination and tenacity. Thank you, Diane. An NBC News vice president, Val Nicholas, an Army veteran who also has volunteered as an American Legion post service officer and as a judge of The American Legion National Oratorical Contest, will join us and share some of his thoughts with us. Val. *(Applause)*

**Remarks: Valdice Nicholas, Vice President
NBC News**

Good afternoon, American Legion. I have been around for a while. Thank you to Senator Dole. She and I and a number of others helped get that Hidden Heroes thing off the ground, and it's just turned into something magnificent. Over the years I've won a number of Emmys and all sorts of other things in television, but I have to tell you: This is the single greatest honor of my life, to be able to stand here before my fellow veterans, Auxiliary members, and Sons, and I thank you for this privilege.

But I would be remiss if we did not do a shout out to the person who changed the president's mind with a single letter, backed by all of us, to have the flags returned to half-mast and to issue an official note praising John McCain for his incredible service to this country. American Legion, let's hear it for National Commander Denise Rohan. *(Applause)*

I'm here to talk about service. I could not talk about service without doing a quote from an American hero. And this hero said, "Everyday people service their neighborhoods and our nation in many different ways, from helping a child learn and easing the loneliness of those without a family, to defending the freedom of our country overseas. It's the spirit of dedication to others and to the country that I believe service should be boldly and deeply encouraged." And that American hero was a naval officer, a P.O.W., and a United States senator, and his name was John McCain. *(Applause)* Yeah, give it up for him. Bona fide hero.

To serve means putting the interests of others above your own. Or as another naval officer once said, "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few or the one," and that officer was Lieutenant Commander Spock of the United Starship Enterprise. I think because he was in Star Fleet, he still counts as a veteran. He's one of us.

I was a service officer for many years at Post 1 in Leonia, New Jersey. I helped a lot of our brothers and sisters get their rightful benefits. Because any of you who had to maneuver your way through the VA, you know what that's like. But I always found the small victories were the most rewarding. There was this one family who had gone through everything to try to get their flag, their funeral flag for their fallen one, and they'd gone through everything, and it was just a nightmare. So somebody sent them to us. So I called them, the agency, and I don't evoke what I normally call the double-N word, but I told them to call me back at my office at NBC News. Well, surprisingly, they got the flag the next day. It's weird how that works. Who says that the fake news never gets anything done? *(Laughter)*

When it comes to service, I always say, you can't help everybody, but you can help somebody. You can't save everybody, but you can save somebody. And you can't serve everybody, but you can damn well go down trying to do that. That's why I never quit, and that's why I have this card, which says I'm paid for life, and I will continue to do it for life. *(Applause)*

Service is made up of purpose, duty, honor, loyalty, and the most of all, the most important

thing is confidence. Confidence is contagious. A quick story. I was in armor, and one day me and my tank driver, a kid named Ed Bach from Indianapolis, we decided we needed a day off. And you can't just take a day off in the Army. So we knew where there was this giant mound of dirt. So we took a vehicle and a trailer and a bunch of shovels and then some beers and our comic books, and we'd sit around reading comics and drinking beer until a senior officer would come by, and then we would jump up and shovel like crazy. And they'd walk by and go, "Carry on, troopers. Man, if I had 100 guys like that, I could win this war." We were so confident that not once all day long did anybody ask what the hell we were doing. In fact, I thought we were going to get promoted. *(Laughter)*

So in closing about service, I'd like to propose a toast. Here's to us and those like us, damn few left. We few, we happy few, in the greatest service organization on this planet. The American Legion is still serving America. Why? Because we raised our hands and we said that we would protect the nation. But we also said we would never leave anybody behind, and as far as I know, we never put our hands back down. *(Applause)*

So God bless you, God bless The American Legion, and God bless these United States of America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THEODORE ROOSEVELT IV: Lastly, Susan Eisenhower, an international and well-respected and distinguished foreign policy analyst, with particular expertise on Russia and the author of numerous books, will come up and talk to us. Susan. *(Applause)*

Remarks: Susan Eisenhower The Eisenhower Group

Well, thank you very much, Ted. I appreciate those nice words. I hope you'll forgive me if I've abandoned the remarks that might have been appropriate a couple of hours ago, because I think there's some things I want to say directly from my heart.

First of all, I want to thank Ted Roosevelt as chairman and Commander Rohan and others for giving me this opportunity to serve on the 100th Anniversary Committee. I live in Washington, D.C., and I must say that I can't begin to tell you what an honor it was to be on the committee, but how deeply moving it's been to be here today and to hear all of these extraordinary stories of what is happening out there in America.

Commander Rohan, I would like to commend you as well for an extraordinary act on behalf of the American people that Senator John McCain received the respect he deserved. I see this in some way as a kind of gap between the civilian community and those who have served their country in the military, and that makes the mission of The American Legion more important than ever to bridge that gap and to bring young people into this large community.

Let me say I was also very moved by the wonderful display this morning about the history of The American Legion. There is no question that this institution has become one of the most influential advocates for veterans in our country and how moved I was by the story of Ted Roosevelt's grandfather and the vision he had and the tenacity to get this started. This is an extremely difficult thing to do, and what an extraordinary legacy the Roosevelt family has. I regard it as a tremendous privilege for me to be able to call Ted Roosevelt IV my friend.

Now, the 100th anniversary of The American Legion is extraordinarily significant to me for another reason. Many of you know about my grandfather, Dwight Eisenhower, who I will say something about in a minute. And wasn't he good looking there with his American Legion cap on? I noticed that picture. *(Applause)*

But I would like to say that now, understanding more fully the extraordinary work of this organization, I would like to think that my maternal grandfather, Percy W. Thompson, was the great beneficiary of so much of this organization's work. My maternal grandfather, Percy, fought in combat in the First World War, the Second World War, and the Korean War. *(Applause)*

Then at the age of 70, he retired as a military officer, read for the Florida Bar Association, and became a lawyer in Gainesville, Florida, accepting only the indigent and others who could not

afford legal services. No doubt he was helped by The American Legion along the way, and I suspect that he was a Legionnaire as well. So let me say as I stand here today, I want to commend The American Legion for everything they've done, where I met them for the first time on a person-to-person basis in Normandy, France.

It has been remarked today we're going to have the 75th anniversary of the D-Day events this June and followed the following year by the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. This is an extraordinary milestone in the fight during World War II against tyranny. In my travels to Normandy, one of the most extraordinary things I've observed is this deep wellspring of affection for the American people and for our alliance during that war because not only did we come to liberate France and Europe, but people in Europe were so struck by the compassion with which our servicemen fulfilled their duties and our mission.

As a matter of fact, people in Europe knew then, and I believe still know today, that they can think of our servicemen as their allies. Their allies in more than just a military sense, but in a spiritual sense. So the extraordinary thing was is after World War II is over, 25 years before this organization had been founded, and our servicemen knew that they could come back and see The American Legion and know that they had an ally in the United States, an ally that would look after them, look after their interests, go on to establish a GI Bill that is still with us today, to get them the kind of health care they needed.

Now, you know this better than I do. I've never served in combat, and I've never actually served in the military, though I've served on many government commissions as a way to fulfill my patriotic duty, but I have had an experience myself with having The American Legion with me at my side. I don't know how many of you have been following the story of the Eisenhower Memorial that was begun about 15 years ago. As a matter of fact, I'm deeply grateful as a member of the Eisenhower family to thank Senator Bob Dole and Senator Elizabeth Dole for their stalwart support of that effort. But behind us all the way was The American Legion as well.

The original design, which was rather extraordinary, was all about Ike. While many people who have gone on to be acknowledged in Washington through a memorial might have liked that, I can tell you my grandfather never thought of anything he did as being about himself. It was always for others. The family led a rather noisy campaign, I would say, to try and refashion this memorial that would be more reflective of his own deep inner philosophical thoughts and his own approach to life. What we so appreciated was The American Legion standing with my family during a very, very difficult time. You know, nothing is more difficult, of course, than agreeing upon historic memory.

In any case, the memorial today is going to show as its backdrop, not the scene of the American countryside, though that is very important, but it's actually going to be the backdrop of the beaches of Normandy in peacetime. I think this is appropriate because, of course, Ike didn't do it alone, and that backdrop is going to symbolize, of course, the people who followed him on this great and historic moment and then into the heart of Germany for victory in Europe. Also, Ike will no longer be a figure as both general and president alone. The memorial, when it is unveiled, will see a General Eisenhower speaking to combat troops before they go to Normandy, and also as president of the United States consulting with his advisers.

Ike was a great leader. Many people have said that. I'm humbled by my relationship to him and the fact that I knew him so well, but how much happier he will be to be standing in Washington against a backdrop of Normandy in peacetime surrounded by the people he counted on in combat and in making our country a better place. Now I know what it's like to have The American Legion as an ally, and I just can't thank you enough. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THEODORE ROOSEVELT IV: You have now seen and heard from four of the other committee members, and you now understand, as clearly as I do, why it's been such a privilege to be able to serve on this committee. I'm immensely grateful and immensely honored to have been able to do this.

Ladies and gentlemen, I appreciate the opportunity to play some small role in the great story of The American Legion. It is a story that belongs to all of you. Because it is the fruit of so very

many labors, so much goodwill, so much tenacity.

I know and trust that the foundation of The American Legion is sound; that it will always pursue its mission consistent with its founders' values with one clear vision -- what do our servicemen and women need today? As long as our veterans need advocates, as long as troops need support, and children need mentors, The American Legion will play a vital role in the future of our nation.

On behalf of my fellow honorary committee members, congratulations to The American Legion for reaching this rare milestone. 100 years of service to community, state, and nation. I am confident that Grandfather and his fellow veterans of the Great War would be pleased today. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: What a great committee we have. The woman elected in Reno to lead the organization of which I am also a very proud member is eligible for membership in the American Legion Auxiliary through the service of her late father, World War II veteran Roland Duscheck. A retired schoolteacher, she served as Wisconsin's department president from 1994 to 1995. She is a graceful example of service, not self. She is also my friend. Ladies and gentlemen, the leader of the nation's largest patriotic women's organization, the American Legion Auxiliary, national president Diane Duscheck! *(Applause)*

Greetings: Diane Duscheck
National President, American Legion Auxiliary

Thank you very much. So Commander Denise, Legion officers, members, guests, I have to tell you it has been quite an honor this year to travel with Denise. And, obviously, since we're both from Wisconsin, we've known one another almost forever.

But I have to tell you that I have great appreciation for everything the commander has done this year. I got to see your commander in action, especially when we were traveling overseas and we would receive briefings from some of the commanders to hear about what their troops were doing in that overseas theater and how they were put in the face of danger and the different kinds of challenges that they had, and Commander Denise would listen to those briefings, and she was always asking questions.

One day as we were sitting there, the briefing was done, and she looked at this commander, and she said, "Commander, how are you doing, and what can we do for you?" I can tell you that that man's mouth dropped open, and he said, "No one's ever asked me how I'm doing." He was actually at a loss for a while. I think he had to think about what was going on. He said, "Well, maybe I can get back to you on that."

So it was amazing to see somebody who has these kind of values and who is thinking family first to actually step up and think about family first. I'd also like to thank Commander Denise for looking at the American Legion Auxiliary as part of the family because, two things that she did, is she came to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, which is very dear to the heart of the American Legion Auxiliary, and she came to American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation to address the young ladies who were there. In both cases people were so excited to see the national commander of The American Legion actually participating in the American Legion Auxiliary activities. So, commander, thank you so very much for that. *(Applause)*

To all of The American Legion, I want to thank you for sharing your Youth Champions with us. The American Legion Auxiliary members were so excited to have the Youth Champions come in this year and actually share their message. I have to tell you, I have met some wonderful young men and women as we've traveled around this year, and it's amazing to see how invested our young people are in taking care of America and one another. Even a seven-year-old who raised over \$1,500 so that he could buy jelly and socks for veterans who were in a homeless shelter. If you're wondering why there's no peanut butter included in there? It's because everyone brings peanut butter, no one brings jelly. *(Laughter)*

On the way home from Indiana Girls State just a couple weeks ago, one of our young ladies

who was an Auxiliary member and who was also at the Girls State there was asleep in the back of the car, as all children are on the way home from Girls and Boys State, when there was a car that went off the road, down into a culvert, into a field in front of their car. So the dad pulled over. Parents jumped out of the car. Faith woke up in the backseat, and she's much taller than her parents are, and she said she bypassed them going down the hill in order to get to the car.

They helped remove the gentleman from the car and did CPR on him for 20 minutes until an ambulance could get there and then helped the EMTs get this gentleman on a stretcher, carry him through a water-filled ditch, up an embankment, get him to an ambulance so he could be taken off to a hospital. You know, that's the kind of young person that we're seeing. It's just that no one in the news wants to report about them. But they are out there, and we're excited to see them. (Applause)

When I look at the three Ds that you had in leadership this year, Commander Denise, Commander Danny, and myself, I have to tell you that The American Legion, hands down, you have the comedian in the group. The commander was comic relief more than once, but she was also always helpful. I have to say, commander, I really appreciate you telling me how to find my room at night when I don't quite know where it is. I've lost my room more than once, wandered hallways, putting my key up to the door to see which one will open.

When I mentioned this in Georgia, the commander was sitting back, and she said, "Well, my aide told me to take a picture of either the little folder that the key comes in or to take a picture of the door when I get up to the room, and then I always know what the number is." I looked at her, and I'm thinking, "Well, I've been lost many times." And she goes, "Yeah, I could have told you sooner, but I didn't." (*Laughter*)

So I finally know the trick now. She can't fool me forever. But I want to thank you, Commander Denise, for a wonderful year. It has been truly remarkable to be sharing the stage, so many conferences and conventions with you. To The American Legion, thank you for having someone so great as your leader. I really appreciated it. Thank you all very much. (*Applause*)

So we run into a problem every now and then. People have told me how wonderful my husband, Mike, is, which I appreciate, were I married to a Mike. And they always get us mixed up. So do you see the similarity or the difference here? Maybe?

I'm leaving the commander with backpacks. I handed out backpacks to a lot of the Auxiliary members, and their task was to take the backpack, fill it with items, and then hand it off to some children of military and veterans who would appreciate some kind of a perk maybe for school or squishy toys in there. But we have enough for your grandkids in here too.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Our next speaker was elected as the 40th governor of Minnesota in 2010 and was re-elected in 2014. He was previously a U.S. senator. He was also a state auditor and a legislative aide to Senator Walter Mondale. During his time as governor, Minnesota added more than 302,600 jobs and earned CNBC's ranking as America's top state for business. Please welcome the governor of Minnesota, Mark Dayton. (*Applause*)

**Welcome: Honorable Mark Dayton
Governor of the State of Minnesota**

Thank you very much, commander. On behalf of the people of Minnesota, I'm very pleased to welcome all of you to our state for your 100th National Convention. As you've probably been told 100 times by now, your very first convention was held here in Minneapolis on November 11, 1919. Those attendees learned that day why few organizations voluntarily come to Minnesota in the middle of November and why no one schedules an outdoor parade, which evidently occurred that day in snow and temperatures of 11 degrees.

This year you wisely picked a week in August but had to move your parade indoors due to thunderstorms, proving that there is no justice. However, your week here also coincides with the Minnesota State Fair. If you're willing to share your fun with a few friends, like the 220,000 people who visited the fair last Saturday, I can promise you a never-to-be-forgotten experience. I can also

promise you that your waistline will not forget your visit.

Before I continue further, I would like to pause and pay tribute to one of our country's greatest patriots, Senator John McCain. While I served in the United States Senate, I had the honor to work with Senator McCain as members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Whether we usually agreed or occasionally disagreed, I always knew that his views reflected his deep patriotism and steadfast devotion to this country that he loved. In his farewell, read by a spokesman yesterday, Senator McCain said, "To be connected to America's cause -- liberty, equal justice, respect for the dignity of all people -- brings happiness more sublime than life's fleeting pleasures. Our identities and sense of worth are not circumscribed but enlarged by serving good causes bigger than ourselves."

Those words describe the essence of The American Legion. All of you demonstrated your patriotism to our country and your devotion to our ideals by stepping forward to serve and defend us in a time of war. There could be no greater measure of patriotism than your willingness to risk your own lives to keep the rest of us safe and free.

But your involvement in The American Legion reflects your understanding that your commitment to our country must extend beyond your patriotic military service. Over 2,000 years ago, the Roman politician Cicero said that in a democracy the most important office is that of citizen. You, as citizen leaders in your organization, personify that truth. I commend Commander Rohan for her Family First priority to help families of Legion veterans with housing, food, and other living expenses.

One of the recipients of an Operation Comfort Warriors grant was featured on your website. Michael Bacon suffered a moderate traumatic brain injury during an IED explosion in Iraq in 2006. He said, "After you suffer an injury like mine, getting help can sometimes be difficult. But for an organization like The American Legion to come to me and say, 'What do you need?' is incredible. It's really hard to describe how that feels. I can continue living the life I want to live, the life I had before I was in the military."

We extend similar helping hands here in Minnesota through our Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program. In 2006, when I served in the U.S. Senate, I helped obtain the first federal funding for Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program. I wish Minnesota's National Guard was then one of the pioneers. Now over of 200 Minnesota communities and 65 companies have completed the guards training and joined the Yellow Ribbon network to support our soldiers across the state. Members provide our returning veterans with everything from jobs and transportation to a home-cooked dinner or a freshly shoveled sidewalk after a Minnesota snowstorm.

Our major focus has been on finding jobs for our veterans. Someone once said that the best social service program is a job. I'm very proud of Minnesota's businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies whose combined efforts have lowered our state's unemployment rate for veterans from 6.5 percent two years ago to 2.6 percent today. (*Applause*)

So on behalf of all Minnesotans, I extend our welcome and our heartfelt appreciation to each of you for your military service to our country and for your continued patriotic service to The American Legion. Commander Rohan, it's now my honor to issue this proclamation, it's the largest one I've ever seen, which declares this week as The American Legion Week throughout the state of Minnesota. Thank you for being here. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Our next speaker was elected as the 48th mayor of Minneapolis in 2017. He is a former Minneapolis City Council member, civil rights attorney and advocate for social justice. He attended the College of William and Mary on a track scholarship and competed in the 2007 Pan Am games. In 2012, the city of Minneapolis honored him with its inaugural Martin Luther King, Jr. Award for his civil rights work. Please welcome the mayor of Minneapolis, Jacob Frey. (*Applause*)

**Welcome: Honorable Jacob Frey
Mayor of the City of Minneapolis**

Thank you so much, Commander Rohan. It is an honor to be here today, and I would like to acknowledge your excellent work on behalf of The American Legion and recognize you as the first female national commander. That is quite an honor. (*Applause*)

Governor Dayton, thank you for being here today as well. You have provided excellent leadership for our state's National Guard and strong support for servicemembers and their families throughout Minnesota. A couple of other Minnesota leaders here today that I want to make sure to acknowledge are Michael Schaffer, the 2017-18 Minnesota Department Commander, and Jeff Olson, the president of the National Convention Corporation of Minnesota. We will be hearing from you shortly, but I wanted to make sure that we thank you for your work.

Yesterday, just yesterday I had the privilege of meeting with Senator Elizabeth Dole at her foundation's Hidden Heroes activation event. Senator Dole is another American trailblazer as the first female senator from North Carolina, but perhaps more importantly, her work to bring awareness, support, and resources to military and veteran caregivers is profound, and it is vital.

I'd like to take a moment to honor the late Senator John McCain as well, as a prisoner of war, as an elected official. Senator McCain's commitment to service was never in question, his integrity and honor always a guiding force for the late senator. I know the exact same is true for our servicemembers and many of our Legion members we're so lucky to have here today in Minneapolis, and we are honored to you in our city.

Your timing was just a little better than it was for your inaugural convention back in 1919, the first time around. In November 99 years ago, Legion members got to experience 11 degree weather here in Minnesota and snow. So I like to think that although we have a little bit of rain right now, the warmer temperatures as well as the State Fair are an additional bonus and certainly an improved recipe than 100 years past.

Most importantly, I'd like to say thank you to the heroes who are here with us today, heroes whose service is essential. Often it remains unacknowledged and sometimes comes at a very high cost. Earlier this year, Minneapolis accepted the challenge to end veterans homelessness. No veteran who has served our nation proudly should be without a home. Housing is a right, and that right should not be deprived to those who have bravely served. We can and will end veterans homelessness here in Minneapolis, and we must end veterans homelessness in our country at large. Housing is a right, especially those who have served. (*Applause*)

Thank you. We need to make sure that everyone, everyone, has that safe place to go home to at the end of the night to rest their head on the pillow and rejuvenate for the next day. Yesterday I was proud to announce that Minneapolis officially signed on as a Hidden Heroes city, committed to supporting military caregivers in our city. We're going to be doing our best as a city to meet those high marks and do right by our nation's heroes.

But real lasting progress also starts in the community. Oftentimes, the hardest work is done and heaviest lifts are made by our nonprofit partners, like The American Legion. Your organization has done an incredible job at serving people from across our great nation. The American Legion has supported military veterans for generations. You have fought for veterans rights from Capitol Hill to local government and mentored millions of our youth through your programs. Thank you for the endless support of Minneapolis, of Minnesota, and our United States veterans.

Now, it would be a fool's errand to try and repay the debt I know so many across our city and region feel from your century of service, and it is an entire century of service. But as a small showing of my gratitude, I have signed a proclamation that declares August 24 through August 30 shall be American Legion Week in the city of Minneapolis. I'll read that proclamation now:

Whereas, The American Legion was founded by Theodore Roosevelt III and is the nation's largest wartime service organization; and

Whereas, Members of The American Legion committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome programs in our communities, advocating for patriotism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continued dedication to our servicemembers and veterans; and

Whereas, The American Legion's success depends on active membership, participation, and volunteerism, and the organization belongs to the people it serves and the communities in which it thrives; and

Whereas, The American Legion was the architect of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, the GI Bill, when communities across the map were filling fast with men and women reeling from the effects of their sacrifices; and

Whereas, The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary in 1946 presented the American Heart Association with a \$50,000 grant that inaugurated a nationwide program for the study, prevention, and treatment of rheumatic heart disease; and

Whereas, The American Legion Department of Minnesota, in cooperation with the University of Minnesota and the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis, funds a research chair for the investigation of the brain and brain disease; and

Whereas, The American Legion Baseball program enjoys a reputation as one of the most tradition-rich amateur athletic leagues in The American Legion, Department of Minnesota sponsored many players who went on to be inducted into the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame; and

Whereas, The American Legion Post 581, which meets in the Minneapolis Veterans Home, is the only such post to meet in a state veterans home; and

Whereas, The inaugural convention of The American Legion was held November 10th through 12th, 1919, in the city of Minneapolis; and

Whereas, The American Legion Department of Minnesota has been selected to host the 2018 National Convention and thus launch the organization's yearlong centennial celebration; and

Whereas, The American Legion 2018 National Convention in Minneapolis will again make history by having the first female National Commander, Denise Rohan, presiding over the convention; and

Whereas, The American Legion has maintained its original purpose since inception; now

Therefore, I, Jacob Frey, the Mayor of the City of Minneapolis, do hereby proclaim August 24th - 30th, 2018, to be American Legion Week in the City of Minneapolis.

Congratulations. Thank you for your service. We are so honored to have you here in the city of Minneapolis. Thank you so much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Our next guest is a Vietnam-era veteran of the United States Air Force. He is a retired rural mail carrier and a member of American Legion Post 322 in Currie, Minnesota. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the 2017-2018 past department commander of Minnesota, Michael J. Schaffer. (*Applause*)

**Welcome: Michael J. Schaffer
2017-18 Minnesota Department Commander**

Good afternoon. And welcome, American Legion Family, to the great state of Minnesota. We're the Land of 10,000 Lakes; some really great fishin'; world-class mosquitos which we sent further east, but we won't mention the state; and road construction, which, unfortunately, is one of our two seasons in Minnesota. Are you having a great convention so far? (*Cheers and applause*)

All right. That's what we hope for. The doughboys returning homing from the Great War in 1919 met for their very first convention here in Minneapolis. Original site is just a few blocks from here. They were high-spirited, highly motivated and ready to create the best veterans organization the world had seen. In the course of three days, they formed the bedrock policy of The American Legion, that being the four pillars upon which we as an organization stand yet today.

They approved a constitution, including the preamble for God and country. They created a watchdog role for the federal agencies that were charged with aiding veterans. They approved a motto for God and country and 100% Americanism. They resolved to improve education in the United States with higher pay and more professional standards for teachers. They sought a cash bonus for veterans. They created the American Legion Auxiliary, and we know how valuable they

are to us. *(Applause)*

They marched eight abreast, thousands strong down Nicolette Avenue here in Minneapolis. In 1919, they marched, as the governor said on November the 11th and there was just a little bit of a snowstorm that day, which may well be the reason why Indianapolis and not Minneapolis got the nod to be the permanent home of our organization. It's not too late to reconsider. *(Laughter)*

Over the years the hopes and dreams of those young men and women who gathered here a century ago have come to pass. They did create the best veterans service organization the world has seen. Our history of The American Legion is a long one, a proud one, a nascent-changing history. I'm here to say we're just getting started.

You can still feel the spirit of the doughboy in this hall. Minnesota is indeed proud and very pleased to welcome you to the 100th annual convention. We hope that your stay here is a good one, that you meet an awful lot of Minnesota-nice. I want to thank you. God bless all of you. God bless The American Legion as we go forward for our next 100 years. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: A U.S. Army veteran, he is also a past chairman of the national Convention Commission. He has held many positions in The American Legion and is a member of American Legion Post 48 in Stillwater, Minnesota. Please welcome the president of The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Minnesota, Jeff Olson. *(Applause)*

**Welcome: Jeffrey Olson, President
National Convention Corporation of Minnesota**

Well, welcome to Minnesota and this great city of Minneapolis. We're so pleased and proud to have the seventh convention here in Minneapolis over history. That's a big, big commitment, and it's a great feeling to have this. Before I go any further, I already heard you said that you were enjoying the convention. I would like the people who served on our convention committees from Minnesota, please stand up. Give them a big round of applause, because they've worked hard *(Applause)*

So if you're having that good time, you see one of them, tell them thanks and give them a little praise. If you have a complaint, talk to me. Remember, I run marathons. You may have to be pretty fast.

This Minneapolis is one of my favorite cities in the world not just the United States. The beautiful parks; the beautiful malls; so many things to do; the great, great cultural center. I hope you have time to enjoy those. It's been mentioned, go to the state fair. It's a great state fair. It's a lot of fun but I know how busy you are. So come on back. Come back with some time to have a good time. See the city. See the state. Governor Dayton would never say this, but I've known him long enough, I guess I can do it for him. Spend some money. We need the tax money. So just welcome and have a great time and we'll see you again soon. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Our next guest is unable to be here but she will be addressing us by video. She's a former lieutenant governor of Minnesota and was sworn in as a junior senator from this state on January 3, 2018. Please, turn your attention to our video monitors for Senator Tina Smith.

**Video Welcome: Honorable Tina Smith
United States Senate**

Good evening. I'm Senator Tina Smith. I want to welcome you to Minnesota and to say I really wish I could be with you tonight in person. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of The American Legion. And I'm so happy that you've chosen to come back to Minneapolis, home of the first convention in 1919. Since you're all gathered here, I'd like to remind you of a little bit of shared history.

Minnesota was the very first state to volunteer troops at the outbreak of the Civil War while

we were the newest state in the Union. So I know that we share the value that the men and women who have honorably served our nation in uniform deserve our utmost respect. And we demonstrate our respect by making sure that when they return home, veterans get all the benefits and care that they were promised.

For the past 100 years, The American Legion has been fighting for our veterans with this goal in mind. You've been instrumental in creating the U.S. Veterans Bureau, which was the forerunner of the Veterans Administration. In the 1940s, in the midst of World War II, former National Commander Harry W. Colmery wrote the first draft of what would be later become the G.I. Bill of Rights, which enabled millions of veterans to go to school, get good-paying jobs and raise families. You have fought to bring prisoners of war home from Vietnam and Korea, to obtain benefits for veterans exposed to dangerous chemicals such as Agent Orange, and to improve quality and access to health care for veterans at the VA.

This is your legacy. And you are justifiably proud of this work. And there is more work to do. As U.S. senator, I look forward to continuing to work with you for policies that benefit veterans and uphold the promises our nation makes to the men and women and their families who serve in our military.

Thanks to The American Legion for all the work that you do. I look forward to working together to better the lives of our veterans. Enjoy the rest of your celebration, and thank you for coming to Minnesota. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Next, I would like to call the chairman of The American Legion Riders Advisory Committee, Bob Sussan, to the podium so he can help lead the presentation of the Legacy Scholarship Fund donations. Those presenting checks will please proceed to the microphone, announce the amount and donor and go to the front on the floor for a photograph. While the photographs are being taken, I ask National Vice Commander Bobby Bryant to assume duties at the lectern.

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

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

National Commander Rohan, national officers, distinguished guests, my fellow Legionnaires, good afternoon. My name is Bob Sussan, Fairfax Post 177 in Virginia. I'm privileged to be the national chairman of The American Legion Riders Advisory Committee. It is difficult for those of you who are not involved with the American Legion Riders to understand the passion that the men and women of the American Legion Family have for our fellow veterans, their families, the community and to the memory of our fallen comrades.

You're about to watch a short video taken on this year's Legacy Run during which we received seven mayoral proclamations; participated in seven wreath layings, one at CW3 Goodnature grave site with his Gold Star parents, and four at the grave site of local post founders or namesakes, with relatives in attendance; dedication at Veterans Walk outside town hall in Anoka. We've participated also in four OCW grants and met and had the opportunity to interact with two Legacy Scholarship recipients at our stops in Onalaska and Anoka. *...The convention viewed a video. (Applause)*

Thank you. The Tenth District commander in Wisconsin, and I'm not going to mention his name, Paul Bessler, reached out to us and pled the case for the ride to stop in his city. We made a stop in Galesville, Wisconsin, and the town welcomed us with open arms. We received a mayoral proclamation, laid a wreath at the local post's namesake, and even had a former Packers cornerback, Craig Newsome, there to greet us and presented the national commander with a jersey.

The metrics are still being compiled, but initial indications are that this was one of the most widely covered Legacy Runs by local TV, radio and print media with at least 68 newspaper and TV stories published during the ride. Indications that our national Facebook page had nearly 700,000 impressions and our Twitter hashtag over 3.5 million total impressions.

I'd like to kick off our donations with a few excerpts from a letter I received, and I think this says it all: "To Bob and the rest of The American Legion Family." Accompanied with this letter was a check for a \$1,000. "I want to thank each and every one for all you do. My name is Bruce Blanco. I'm a Gold Star dad. My son, Michael Blanco, was in the Marines. And this was his dream since early school. He graduated early to join and shortly became Lance Corporal Michael E. Blanco, U.S. Marine.

"Michael died April 15, 2010. Honestly, I did not know how to deal with the loss of my son who everyone referred to as my little me. Days after Michael's death, I retired as a police officer to take care of my family since I was mentally getting worse just sitting around the house. I thought about all that Michael had done in his short time on earth. And in some way I wanted to continue what he was doing. I joined The American Legion and the American Legion Riders. Today, I'm the director of the American Legion Riders Post 1244 and also Suffolk County chairman for the Riders. What a great group of men and women we have including veterans, Sons, Auxiliary and supporters.

"In all of our spare time, we try to raise money for our veterans in need as well as children of our fallen. Enclosed is our check for a thousand dollars for the Legacy Run. And I wish I was alongside you on the ride. God bless each and every person on this ride. Ride safe. And remember, there is an angel riding alongside of you, for all you do for others. Much love from my family to yours, Bruce Blanco, director, ALR Chapter 1244, Greenlawn, New York." (*Applause*)

PAST NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAGGAN: My name is Doug, secretary of FODPAL. With me is immediate past president FODPAL Milo and newly elected assistant secretary of FODPAL, Claire. Foreign and Outlying Departments of The American Legion are proud to present \$500 to the Legacy Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the Legion Riders of China, Post 1, \$2,250. Also, on behalf of Roland Abbott, from his widow, Margaret Abbott, \$150, for a total of \$2,400.

DELEGATE PISA (AK): The Department of Alaska Riders were riding in the rain and riding in the snow and fighting off the bear and the moose -- don't bother us, because we are not quitters. I'd like to present \$9,131.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: To our great friend and your national commander, Denise, along the run we presented checks and back stage we presented checks for a Department Wisconsin total of \$45,439. Commander Frank here is leading us to a better place this year because we are what, Frank?

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER KOSTKA (WI): Legion proud!

DISTRICT COMMANDER BESSLER (WI): In addition to moneys already received by the mighty Tenth District from the great state of Wisconsin, commander it is my district pleasure to present checks totaling \$723 on behalf of the Galesville, Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and citizenry. Post 354, my home post, of Ettrick, Wisconsin, and its citizens proudly adds \$901 to the \$100 already given by our Auxiliary unit, 354, for a grand total of \$1,001.80. This is a grand total \$1,723.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the great state of Massachusetts and our immediate past commander, Mike Davis; our current commander, Fred White; and his aide, Bob Lewis; and, of course, our very own NEC, Louis Brault, who is also our Legion Rider chairman, would like to donate \$1,100 on top of the \$3,850 we have already donated.

DELEGATE STRAUSS (SC): Hello, I'm Michael Strauss and I'm representing The American Legion Department of South Carolina's chapter director, Darrell Hodges. The first statewide Legacy Ride, the home to South Carolina, and it gives me great pleasure, with our department officers, Ron Price and Walt Richardson, who are also Legion Riders, to present a check from our seventh annual statewide Legacy Ride for \$65,204. To those Legacy Scholarship recipients, we want to let you know, South Carolina, we got your six.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the great state of Idaho, the Pocatello Post 4 Riders and the Mountain Home Riders, we'd like to present a check for \$1,000.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER WEISMANN (TN): Steve Weismann, commander of the Department of Tennessee, with Membership Chairman Luther Holsonback, I'd like to present a

check for \$2,000 from the Department of Tennessee.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of The American Legion Riders of Hardin Post 113 in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, I'd like to present this donation of \$500.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of Post 347, Lady Lake, Florida, the largest post in the world, \$3,500.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the Legion Riders, Saxton-Willis Post 64, Heber Springs, Arkansas, we gladly donate \$50 to the Legacy Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the Department of Pennsylvania, American Legion Riders, the entire Department of Pennsylvania Legion family, Past National Commanders Dominic DiFrancesco and Ronald F. Conley, we'd like to present a check for \$7,583.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of World War I Post 109 in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, I present a check for \$2,500.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the Department of Michigan, the founding state of the American Legion Riders proudly presents, from our state Legacy Ride, \$18,604.36.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the Naperville, Illinois Post 43, almost 600 members and 50 members of our Legion Riders chapter, who have already presented a \$5,000 check to our national commander, our post will also donate \$500. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: American Legion Riders, George P. Vanderveer Post 129, Toms River, New Jersey, from the great county of Ocean, we present a check for \$500.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the Department of Iowa, these are donations that came in after the ride went through. That was really neat to see. From Breda American Legion Post 607, \$125. From Breda American Legion Sons, \$125. A had a donation bucket out and collected \$50. From Diane Sunderman of Clarinda, Iowa, \$5. Everything counts. Peggy Brown from Lenox, Iowa, \$50. From the Hawarden American Legion Post 254, \$100. From the Hawarden American Legion 254 Auxiliary, \$100. For a total of \$555. Thank you.

DELEGATE OTTE (NE): Rollie Otte, from the Cornhusker state of Nebraska, along with Delegation Chairman Jim Costello, we are proud to present to our commander, \$17,815. Go, Cornhuskers. I might say that that commander has got true grit to ride with us in that rain.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In addition to previous donations, the Department of Wyoming is proud to present, on behalf of Ora Call Post 10, Don Stough Post 33 and Bruce and Nancy Gallagher, an additional \$375.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the Rocky Mountain state of Colorado, home of Past National Commander Tom Bock and the creator of the Legacy Run, we're proud to present \$9,251.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PLEASANT (OH): My name is Stanley Pleasant. I'm the delegation chairman from the Department of Ohio. I have with me Past National Vice Commander Jim Morris. On behalf of the Department of Ohio we're making a \$10,000 donation to the Legacy Run.

DELEGATE ATKINS (OH): My name is Andy Atkins, and I'm representing the Legion Riders from Hopedale, Ohio, Post 682, and they present a check in the memory of Rick Brown for \$1,500.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From Arizona, the great state, we're giving more than \$3,000 and more is coming in.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have an additional \$500 from Fountain Hills Post 58, home of the new military class honor guard champions.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the great state of North Carolina, home of The American Legion World Series, \$3,025.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the Department of New Hampshire, I'd like to present a check for a \$1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In addition, the Alton Post presents a check for a \$1,000. The Charter Chapter, Woodsville, New Hampshire, donates a check from its 35 members for \$1,500. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Legion Riders, Post 145, Douglasville, Georgia, \$1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of Past Department Commander Cary Kellett, the

more than 40 chapters and more than 1,000 riders of the Department of Missouri, today we presented a check for \$93,324.49. That goes along with the \$16,079 we gave Commander Rohan on her rain-swept ride across Missouri. Our grand total is \$109,403. And we've got 6,500 more coming probably next week. So we're working on it.

RIDERS DIRECTOR PARISAN (DE): Hello, everybody. I'm Charles Parisan with the Department of Delaware. I'm the Department of Delaware Riders director. With me I have the Delegation chairperson, immediate Past Department Commander MaryAnna Moderhak. We're bringing a donation of \$16,961.98.

DELEGATE JAMES (IN): Indiana, Tony James, Post 200, from Boonville, Indiana, fines for \$60 for wear your cover and \$100 from Bud's Harley-Davidson of Indiana.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Greetings from the Department of Alabama. On behalf of Department Commander Harry Christian, and the rest of American Legion Family, \$10,515 from our in-state Legacy Run, \$10,313 from Post 133 and Chapter 133, \$2,300 for winning the royal Legion Riders vest, for a grand total of \$24,433.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From Kansas, where we started the last two Legacy Runs within the state of Kansas, I have with me our organizer and road captain, Terry Harris and Mrs. Commander. From the state of Kansas, \$27,717.35.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of Ray Barrett and the Legion Riders of the Department of Mississippi, \$3,500.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of Ocean Beach, Post 129, Jacksonville, Florida, we have \$500 from the Riders, \$500 from the Sons of The American Legion, \$1,000 from the Auxiliary, and \$1,000 from the Legionnaires for a total of \$3,000.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: To continue on with the Department of Florida, we have from Post 103, \$1,500; Post 110, \$2,500; and \$5 from a gas station in Iowa.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: To finish up Florida, I'm going to tack on another \$50,000 from the American Legion Rider family, totaling \$57,005.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the Department of Illinois, in addition to funds previously donated, we are donating \$9,475.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NESSLER (NY): Rena Nessler, Delegation Chairwoman, Department of New York, the home of Past National Commander Fang A. Wong, along with current Commander Gary Schacher, Adjutant James Casey and our director of the American Legion Riders for the Department of New York, we donate \$15,447.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the New York Legion Riders, we'd like to donate a check for \$1,200.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the Golden State of California, home to Past National Commander Bruce Thiesen, in addition to prior donations, I have the Chapter 48 from Oxnard, California, obviously, would be \$500.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From San Mateo Post 82 in California, \$4,400 from our Riders chapter and our post.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the Legion Riders from Stevens-Christian Memorial Post 557 in Wintersville, Ohio, I'm so proud to present \$15,000 for the Legacy Fund. I'm also really honored to present \$500 on behalf of the newly chartered Legion Riders from Cadiz Post 34 in Cadiz, Ohio.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From Chapter 82 from the Department of Puerto Rico, a check for \$150.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the Garden State, Department of New Jersey, I'd like to give a \$1,000. And with me I have my ANEC, Berley Hanna, Jr.

DELEGATE LEMNAH (VT): My name is Marlys Lemnah from the Department of Vermont NEC. On behalf of the Green Mountain Post No. 1, American Legion Riders, I have a check for \$600. But I also have a matching check for \$600 equaling \$1,200 and the last 600 is in memory of three of our Legion Riders that we recently lost.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SCHAFFER (MN): I'm Mike Schaffer, delegation chairman of the Department of Minnesota. With me, in no small number, is probably the rest of the state of

Minnesota. This is the American Legion Family in Minnesota. This is what we do. Last year we turned in a check for \$200,000. Commander, I'm here to tell you today we blew that away. Commander, we've turned in a check \$251,000.

...National Commander Rohan resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: For a total of \$1,256,930.43. *(Applause)* Thank you. That was amazing. Today we are most fortunate to have a gentleman with us who has dedicated his life to Canada's veterans and their families. He served in the Royal Canadian Navy and is a native of Winnipeg, Manitoba. He has earned an American Legion Canadian Friendship Award in 2008, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, and the Order of Service in 2012. Please welcome the dominion president of the Army, Navy, Air Force Veterans in Canada, Ronald G. Smith. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Ronald G. Smith

Acting Dominion President, Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada

Good afternoon. What a tough act to follow, but I'll try. National Commander Rohan, National Adjutant Wheeler, special guests, comrades all, it gives me great pleasure to join you as you celebrate your centennial national convention and bring warm greetings on behalf of the executive and members of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada.

We had the honor and privilege just a couple of weeks ago to have National Commander Rohan, Jake Comer and Mike Rohan come and celebrate with us at our Dominion Convention in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Our members were so thrilled to be able to hear from her on all the programs and support The American Legion is providing to your servicemen and women across this great country and around the globe.

Over the past hundred years, the United States of America and Canada have fought shoulder to shoulder many times together in operations around the world. Our sailors, soldiers and air crew have shared operations, experiences and hardships, and continue to work together on operations in the Caribbean, Baltics, Ukraine, the Middle East and Africa. And we are additionally partners in NORAD, NATO and the UN.

It is simply natural, then, for us to share research and best practices on how to help our veterans and their families transition from the military to civilian lives with ease and support. In Canada, we have just rolled out the Veterans Family Program to help with this transition, utilizing the already-known strengths of our Military Family Resource Centres. I was happy to hear that you have strengthened your transition assistance as well with the recent announcement of an extension of access to Military OneSource benefits for veterans and their families as they transition to post-military life.

Hopefully we can learn from each other's successes to supplement these programs with new and innovative ideas that will help our veterans and their families. These services, along with the support of programs provided by the American Legion Family, can help to ensure better transition, treatments and employment opportunities and hopefully lead to increased suicide prevention, decreased homelessness and the strengthening of the family unit.

Together we should encourage continued research on a myriad of health benefits on both sides of the border. We are advocating to our Department of Veterans Affairs to invest in research in the efficacy of medical marijuana as a treatment option, including research variances in THC and CBD levels. Knowing how to treat may be optimized if proven to alleviate chronic pain, anxiety and several other potential uses, potentially in lieu of prescription opioids. We have heard the anecdotal evidence from our veterans, but clear scientific research is what will move our governments to action to better support the health and wellness of our servicemen and women with service-related injuries and illnesses.

We must always strive to move the chains further down the field. As much as has been accomplished by both our associations and respective governments, there is much more for us to do and learn from each other. May we continue to be allies and friends and collaborate on these

important objectives for the next 100 years and beyond.

Thank you for having me here this week and for all the wonderful hospitality. God bless. Shoulder to shoulder. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Royal British Legion provides lifelong support for the Armed Forces Committee of Great Britain. They proudly serve veterans and their families. With us today is the organization's national vice chairman. She is a registered nurse and recipient of the British Empire Medal, awarded for her work with veterans. Please welcome Una Cleminson. *(Applause)*

**Greeting: Una Cleminson, National Vice Chairman
The Royal British Legion**

Commander, honored guests, delegates, Woodrow Wilson, in 1917, was the president that increased the Army from 200,000 to over 4 million by the end of the First World War. It is not surprising that your Legion had such a good start with that many who qualified for membership.

American World War I deaths were 116,516, a high price to pay for freedom and the core of your need to remember their sacrifice, which we are doing most particularly this week. In 1918, Woodrow promised justice to friends and enemies alike. It remains a core U.S. principle. In two world wars, your comradeship was key to victory. We in the United Kingdom acknowledge debt to you, and I'm privileged to be able to confirm that to you personally. More recently, your agreement for the fallen in Korea to come home, should their families so desire, is an amazing achievement after so many years.

Like you, the Royal British Legion is in good hands. We have made a major breakthrough in identifying those serving and ex-serving boys and girls who need help. The Legion is leading other major service charities in the UK in providing a single, free phone number for those in need to ring. The Veterans' Gateway, staffed by Legion-trained operators, who put the case to whichever organization is best able to help and then ensure that the help is given promptly. For example, in the UK, PTSD cases are looked after by Combat Stress, housing by Haig Housing and employment by ourselves, together with much more. Thus whatever the problem, the Legion ensures the best help is given promptly. The main thing is that the cry for help is logged with an audit trail to ensure that resolution is reached and the case is not lost in the system.

Last year we responded successfully to 10,000 calls, a massive workload and testament to the veterans needs caused by the many deployments worldwide in conflicts, in many cases where the enemy doesn't wear a uniform. A benefit of this cooperation of the charities is the sharing of ideas and the pooling of experience. Our queen said, in a speech some years ago, "No one has the monopoly of common sense. We should all be mindful of this and become better listeners."

We're all here today because of our debt to the fallen. It doesn't matter who resolves a vet's problem, what matters only that it's done. *(Applause)*

There is much more the Legion is achieving, but I don't have time to put it before you now. We have a young and energetic management team and our future is bright. I look forward to speaking with you while here and listening to your experiences. When last with you in Louisville, we took back news of your campaign to sign up all the states and counties to the covenant. We implemented this in the UK with enormous success to the benefits of all our vets when dealing with central and local government. It's good to put on record our thanks to you for the idea. *(Applause)*

In 1952, one of Winston Churchill's advisors told him that by the year 2000 women would be ruling the world. Churchill's response was "They still will, will they?" Commander Rohan, perhaps you and I are testament to that. *(Applause)*

As Paul Johnson said in his excellent "A History of the American People": "The creation of the United States of America is the greatest of all human adventures. Long may they continue to lead the free world." God bless America and thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Taiwan is a nation that is always vigilant. Because of its proximity to communist China, the Taiwanese military is preparing for an attack that could come at any time. The Taiwanese people also know that taking care of veterans is an important priority when fielding a strong defense. We are fortunate to have with us a minister of the Veterans Affairs Council of the Republic of China. He is a former chief of the General Staff of the Ministry of National Defense. Please welcome Minister Chiu. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Kuo-Cheng Chiu, Minister
Veterans Affairs Council, Republic of China**

National Commander Rohan, my distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, and heroes, thank you very much for the warm welcome. I'm minister of the Veterans Affairs Council, the Republic of China. And as a senior veteran, it is my great honor to be involved in the 100th Annual National Convention of The American Legion. I want to pay tribute to everyone on behalf of the veterans from Republic of China.

Both American Legion and the Republic of China have a long history of connection and a relationship during World War II. Soong Mei-ling, Republic of China's late president Chiang Kai-shek's wife was invited to attend your 36th Annual Convention in Washington, D.C., during the year of 1954. In her speech, she expressed her sincere appreciation to American soldiers because they stand with Republic of China soldiers in the Far East war zone to defend democracy and freedom.

More than that, without your kind advice in helping us to establish our veteran affairs system, there would be none of today's achievements. You are welcome to come to Taiwan to witness the development of our veterans affairs development. This year you passed a resolution in support of Taiwan, Republic of China, which has not only inspired us but encourages us to play a role in the first island chain to contend the Pacific military threat expansion.

We sincerely appreciate and cherish this wonderful, wonderful friendship. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the national commander and the national president of the Auxiliary and the veterans personnel to visit VAC and to exchange ideas and experience our improving veterans affairs. I would also like to invite all of the Legionnaires to take a vacation to Taiwan to experience the beautiful scenery and experience the friendly humanities of Formosa. I wish you a beautiful and successful convention, and every one of you, in good spirits and health.

Lastly, I would like to present National Commander Rohan the Medal of Honor of Veterans Affairs Council first crest in recognition of her dedication to promote international justice and veterans welfare. Also, the friendship between our two countries. I would like Colonel Wong to please announce the citation. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

COLONEL WONG: Certificate of Award to accompany the presentation of the Medal of Honor of Veterans Affairs Council to Ms. Denise Rohan, National Commander, The American Legion, in recognition of her dedication in upholding international justice and in safeguarding international status of the Republic of China and improving welfare of the veterans. A Medal of Honor of Veterans Affairs Council first crest is hereby awarded on the date of the 28th of August in the year of 2018. General Kuo-Cheng Chiu, Minister, Veterans Affairs Council, Republic of China. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: While the Korean War is sometimes referred to as the "Forgotten War" by some Americans, it certainly isn't forgotten by the group represented by our next guest. The Korean Veterans Association has never forgotten the sacrifices and service of a brave generation of Americans who came to the aid of their country during its time of greatest need. Our next guest serves as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the Republic of Korea. He is currently the chairman of the Korean Veterans Association. Please give a warm welcome to General Kim Jin Ho. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Retired General Jin Ho Kim, Chairman
Korean Veterans Association**

National Commander Denise Rohan, member of The American Legion, distinguished guests and ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the 10 million members of the Korean Veterans Association, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to each and every one of you on the occasion of the Centennial National Convention of The American Legion.

Dear Legionnaires, you are veterans whose bravely fought in various wars, including the World Wars, Korean War, Vietnam War and the recent Global War on Terrorism. Your relentless dedication and sacrifice have allowed more people throughout the world, including those in the Republic of Korea, to enjoy freedom, democracy and fundamental human rights. *(Applause)*

I vividly remember a scene from back in 1950. I was 10 at that time. I recall waving both the Korean and U.S. flags at U.S. tanks that came to regain Seoul from North Korean forces. In 1968, I fought alongside U.S. soldiers in the Vietnam War as an Army Captain. Until the end of my military service in 1999 as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I fought to establish and preserve peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula with USFK soldiers. Through my experiences, I can testify that without the collective effort of the ROK-U.S. alliance, today's proud history of the Republic of Korea would not have been possible. *(Applause)*

I speak on behalf of my people that we will never forget the tremendous sacrifices of The American Legion and American sons and daughters who, during the Korean War, answered the call to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met. *(Applause)*

As you may know, the Korean Peninsula is still the only divided nation that is confronting militarily in the Cold War system. In 2017, tensions rose sharply when North Korea conducted its sixth nuclear test and launched ICBMs. In response, President Trump visited Korea and delivered his message. He said, "For the last 70 years, American and South Korean soldiers have fought together, sacrificed together, and triumphed together. Now, the only way to a better future for North Korea is to go toward complete and verifiable denuclearization."

His address to the National Assembly served both as a pledge to protect the security of South Korean people and a strong warning to the North Korean government. President Trump's strong response, which included military options and Korean President Moon Jae-in's mediation efforts all together successfully led to both the inter-Korean and U.S.-North Korea summits as well as the return of the remains of U.S. fallen warriors in the Korean War, following your proud tradition of no American left behind. *(Applause)*

I am confident that, as President Trump stressed, "We will have a new future of peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula, when we continue our cooperative effort as we have done so far." The establishment of a permanent peace regime will require special attention and encouragement from the international community, especially The American Legion. *(Applause)*

Here, I ask for your full support. Once again, I would like to congratulate you on this Centennial National Convention, and may God bless you, your families and the United States of America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: A member of the Sons of The American Legion Squadron 131 in Green Valley, Arizona, our next speaker dedicated his entire professional life to law enforcement. He retired in 2015 as a bureau chief for the Pima County Sheriff's Department in Tucson after 39 years of service. He now leads an organization that is composed entirely of the descendants of patriots who served in the American Revolution. Please welcome the president general of the National Society Sons of the American Revolution, Warren Alter. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Warren Alter, President General
National Society Sons of the American Revolution**

Commander Rohan, distinguished guests, Legionnaires, members of the ladies Auxiliary, and fellow Sons of The American Legion, it is an honor for me to address you this afternoon at your

100th Annual National Convention. On behalf of the over 37,000 members of the National Society Sons of the American Revolution, I bring you greetings.

Most of our president generals have been Legionnaires. I, like two of my predecessors, don't have the honor of having served in the military, instead choosing to serve our country as a law enforcement officer in southern Arizona for 39 years. (*Applause*)

However, you will note I'm honored to address you as a Sons of The American Legion. My father, Lieutenant Colonel Allen G. Alter, U.S. Army, had the privilege of serving this country in two different branches of the armed forces, Marines and the Army, and retired having served in three different wars -- World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. (*Applause*)

In memory of my father, I joined the Sons of The American Legion and am a member of Madera Post 131, Green Valley, Arizona. So what do the Sons of the American Revolution and The American Legion have in common? Many of our members are also Legionnaires or SAL. You, too, might be eligible to join SAR or DAR, and your children or grandchildren, the CAR, Children of the American Revolution.

But more importantly, all our members are direct descendants of our country's first veterans. Both our organizations hold the highest respect and regard for the fundamental freedoms and principles -- freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of peaceful assembly, to name of few. These liberties come at significant cost to our nation, starting with our ancestors in the Revolutionary War and continuing to today. We all must ensure that our country never forgets the price of freedom.

A favorite quote of mine from President Ronald Reagan: "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on to them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free."

We in the SAR look forward to continuing the partnership we have had with The American Legion to protect the freedoms earned by our forefathers and our foremothers and to share that message with our children and grandchildren to continue the fight. We are honored to help spread that message with The American Legion.

As president general of the SAR, I'm honored to make a special presentation to National Commander Denise H. Rohan. Commander Rohan, in recognition of your accomplishments, as a patriotic leader in this nation, it is my privilege to present you with the Sons of the American Revolution Distinguished Patriot Award. This award is given only once during the tenure of a president general. We award it to an American citizen for outstanding service and patriotism to our country. Thank you, commander, for your service. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: A veteran of the U.S. Navy, our next guest served as a submariner and diver, taking part in multiple deployments in support of the Global War on Terrorism. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree at Florida State University and a Master of Public Administration at Syracuse University. Please welcome the president and CEO of Student Veterans of America, Jared Lyon. (*Applause*)

**Greetings: Jared S. Lyon, President
Student Veterans of America**

Good afternoon. And thank you, National Commander Rohan, for the great introduction. I am so pleased to see one of our sisters in arms in charge of the largest American veterans organization. In addition, we have a unique convention in that you worked at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, one of the founding homes of Student Veterans of America.

Thank you very much all for welcoming me to Minneapolis. As a kid, I spent a few summers not far from here in Plymouth, Minnesota. Ladies and gentlemen, sisters and brothers in arms, it's a great privilege and honor to be standing before you today, and I'm proud to share that the partnership between Student Veterans of America and The American Legion has never been

stronger than it is today.

Now, more than ever, we're working together to improve the livelihood of veterans in college, who consequently burn the midnight oil, earning higher GPAs than their civilian classmates who have never served in the military and who lead in the classroom and in their SVA chapters on campus and in their local communities in all 50 states and four countries overseas.

Now more than ever, we and The American Legion, along with Student Veterans of America, are standing closer, shoulder to shoulder, to advance the interests of our community as one family, united by our proud service, wearing the cloth of our nation, and united in the idea that our service to this amazing country never really ends. And we can continue to serve the United States as veterans. Last summer we fought alongside The American Legion and many veteran organizations to secure the G.I. Bill for all future generations of American veterans.

After months of work, Congress passed the \$3.45 billion expansion in a two-week period, and they did it unanimously. This month veterans and civilians from coast to coast celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Harry W. Colmery Education Assistance Act of 2017. Thanks to this upgrade, servicemembers and honorably discharged veterans who were awarded a Purple Heart after September 11, 2001, will be entitled to the Forever GI Bill at the 100 percent benefit level for up to 36 months.

This was possible because of a great collaboration across many non-profits. I'd be remiss if I did not take a moment to personally thank the Legionnaires from your D.C. office who helped make this possible. Mr. Lou Celli from the great state of Massachusetts, Matt Shuman, and John Kamin, brothers, thank you for your leadership as it has continued to help ensure that veterans of all generations will have success for many generations to come. Thank you. (*Applause*)

This is but one example of the work we're all doing together to give veterans every chance to succeed upon their return home from military service. The education they obtain is repaid to our society many times over in what they continue, all citizens of the United States, the educated generation of veterans does to keep contributing as teachers, scientists, entrepreneurs, engineers, and in every role between our hometowns and our nation's capital. As we say at SVA, we are yesterday's warriors, today's scholars, and tomorrow's leaders.

We also say at SVA that our work is possible only because of those who have paved the way before us, like The American Legion, chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organization., devoted to mutual helpfulness, Legionnaires committed to community, state, and nation provides a blueprint for the work that we do at SVA. The steadfast and collective support of each one of you ignites our work and guarantees that the light of student veterans in school today will shine on for generations to come. I do not make these statements lightly.

To illustrate why we are so inspired by The American Legion's mission, work, and members, I'd like to share some of our brief history. I'm thrilled to tell you that 2018 marks the ten-year anniversary of Student Veterans of America. Since our founding, and thanks to the support of our mission from The American Legion, Student Veterans of America has grown to become the largest chapter-based student organization in the United States. We now represent 1,500 chapters and over 750,000 of the student veterans from the 1.1 million veterans currently enrolled in college today.

But not everyone out there is a believer that veterans have what it takes to be successful in higher education. They said veterans weren't good enough for college in 1944, and our brothers and sisters who served in World War II proved them wrong. They said we weren't good enough with the passing of the Post-9/11 GI Bill in 2008, and our brothers and sisters in arms of my generation, many of us who saw service in Iraq and Afghanistan, are proving the doubters wrong yet again.

Today student veterans have the highest grade point average nationwide. We graduate at significantly higher rates than just about any other student in college. We get marketable degrees like electrical engineering, biochemistry and health care, just to name a few. After World War II, student veterans led the nation to greatness by democratizing higher education for women, people of color, first-generation college students, and they quite literally built the American middle class.

You can rest assured that the most recent generation of veterans is not only proving the doubters wrong, but we are harnessing the transformative power of higher education to improve

the lives of us, our families, our neighbors, and our fellow citizens. We know we are the leaders of tomorrow, and thanks to our education, we are starting to lead today.

And because we've done the research at SVA, research that is, in fact, the first of its kind, studying more than 854,000 records of every Post-9/11 GI Bill user from 2009 to 2016, we know that student veterans are quite literally among the most successful students in higher education by any measure. But that doesn't surprise anyone here, I'm sure. Our research, dubbed the National Veteran Education Success Tracker, or NVEST for short, provides results that are nothing short of impressive.

When compared to our peers, student veterans represent the single best source of potential and current achievers in higher education. The Post-9/11 GI Bill has enabled over 400,000 veterans to complete a post-secondary degree or certificate. Twenty-three percent of these graduated student veterans are women veterans, our sisters in arms. Not only are women veterans overrepresented in higher education, but we are proud that our sisters in arms hold 47 percent of chapter leadership positions in SVA nationwide.

At SVA, we pride ourselves on being an inclusive organization where all veterans, regardless of gender or era of military service, are welcomed with open arms and an equal opportunity to continue to serve. In addition to our research, I know a lot about this generation of veterans because I myself am a post-9/11 veteran.

On August 5, 2001, I joined the United States Navy. I joined a peacetime military, but while I was in boot camp, our recruit division commanders gathered our division and rolled out a television to turn on the news on September 11, 2001. We sat silent as we saw our Twin Towers fall. This was not a training event. Evil men, hell-bent on destroying the very fabric of our nation, successfully carried out the largest attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor. From that day forward, and for everyone who came after me, service above self took precedent before all.

But those evil men did not break our resolve, and they can never break our fighting spirit. After finishing my time in the Navy, I used the G.I. Bill and was a chapter leader at a small state school in Tallahassee, Florida, Florida State University, earning a Bachelor of Science and later becoming a chapter adviser at Syracuse University, where I earned my master's degree. Today I am not only the president and CEO of Student Veterans of America, I am also a product of the G.I. Bill, and I count myself lucky that The American Legion has always advocated for education benefits for veterans.

And since you have that most famous Legionnaire, Harry W. Colmery, who fought for the servicemembers Readjustment Act of 1944, it should come as no surprise that our newest version of our G.I. Bill bears his name. It is in his honor and the honor of all the work, the amazing work, at The American Legion and the work that you do to support student veterans. Student veterans are, quite simply, talent hiding in plain sight, excelling alongside our civilian peers.

The data show us that today's student veterans succeed at higher rates than traditional students, with a 72 percent success rate compared to only a 66 percent rate for civilians who have never served in the military. There is this prevailing narrative about veterans in this country, and it just simply does not reflect the success we're having. Counter to the facts, a sadly elastic myth persists that veterans are charity cases, that we are broken, and that we are not smart enough. Whether spoken aloud or even lurking internally as a subconscious thought, this is a false perspective, and we must challenge it.

Likewise, if you ask the average American who the Greatest Generation refers to, they'll most likely answer it was the World War II generation of veterans, facing horrors abroad for the sake of their fellow citizens as well as the world's safety, returning home to usher in a new era of productivity and innovation in this country. If they've heard that phrase at all.

But what of this next greatest generation that we see now? The post-9/11 era of veterans who were called upon to service by unthinkable tragedy on American soil after the attacks on 9/11, an unbridled terror on the world stage, those of my generation who changed our life plans, put off education and careers to face unparalleled modern dangers, those same women and men who I've been telling you about, who are performing markedly well in the classroom and beyond. Today's veterans are continuing the legacy of our predecessors known as the Greatest Generation from

World War II, my grandfather's generation; and from the forgotten war in Korea; and from my father-in-law's generation who fought in Vietnam; and from the Gulf War. But despite not skirting our responsibility to continue to serve, we are not recognized as such in popular culture.

Whether it is because the media is dominated by sensationalized portrayals of veterans struggling to reintegrate, or because Americans are simply less aware of these leaders in America's classrooms and offices, the myth is one of the greatest barriers to our success and, relatedly, our nation, causing many of us to worry about our limitations rather than recognize our possibilities. It is a narrative that serves only the doubters and is simply not true.

This is where The American Legion and each and every one of you comes in, and, for that matter, where The American Legion and all of you have already been investing, nurturing, and leading over the last 100 years, helping to challenge that faulty narrative and replace it with a more inspirational and far more accurate one.

But while student veterans are succeeding, they would be better set up for success with your help. Across the country, student veterans rely on the leadership of The American Legion to inspire our local SVA chapters. Though we have already completed your service in the military, we are asking you to extend your commitment to serving and to mentor current student veterans, fund raising for local events and hosting local SVA chapters in your communities and posts nationwide.

As you learned in the military, no single person can fulfill the mission by themselves. It takes a group of dedicated patriots who share a sacred oath to make great and sustainable progress. The American Legion's commitment to supporting strong communities at your over 13,000 posts, forming the next greatest generation of leaders at Boys State and Girls State, contributing over four million volunteer hours and advocating for all veterans, our families, and survivors is a testament to the dedication of The American Legion and your ideals.

For those of you who serve in our communities, go to studentveterans.org and look up your closest SVA chapter. Connect with student veterans for coffee when you get back home and see how you can build relationships with student veterans right in your local community. Or you can always give us a call at our national headquarters in Washington, D.C., and we'll connect you directly.

In taking these steps, the support that you can offer will extend and reach far beyond what you can see, like ripples on a pond echoing forth as these students enter into our careers, building a new world each day, closer to a country free from fear and oppression and free from tyranny, a future in which servicemembers are no longer widely seen as a population who needs, but a population who offers help to others and leaves our country better than we found it.

As my old commander used to tell us, if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together. SVA needs The American Legion so that we can go far together, leading the rest of the country into a brighter future. So you see, this year SVA celebrates our humble ten-year anniversary, not just with you, but, more importantly, because of you. By including us in your great work, inviting us to your National Convention, collaborating with us back in Washington, D.C., and empowering our chapters nationwide, we at SVA owe so much of our success to you, The American Legion.

I want to thank each and every one of you for the difference that you've made and will continue to make, both in the lives of individual student veterans and their chapters and for the nation by fostering the next greatest generation of leaders. Thank you all so much for having me. God bless, and keep in the fight. Thank you. (*Applause*)

...At this time, the Convention viewed a video.

Report: National Commander's Report to Convention
Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin, National Commander

My fellow Legionnaires, Legion family members, friends, what an exciting time to be a member of The American Legion. A centennial observation is a significant milestone that very few organizations can achieve. But to gather here with the same mission, the same pillars, and the same commitment to serve as our founders did a century ago is truly a remarkable achievement.

Now, I know that the calendar says 99 years, but our founders wasted no time during American Legion year zero at our very first National Convention here in Minneapolis in 1919. Hardly anyone here today remembers that first convention, except perhaps past National Commander Dan Ludwig. (*Laughter*)

It was here that our constitution and preamble were adopted. Those first delegates voted 361-323 to locate the Legion's national headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana, instead of putting all of our programs in Washington, D.C. They knew that while it was extremely important to influence policies in our nation's capital, we must always be present in communities that were outside the corridors of power and media attention, communities that comprised factory workers, farmers, office workers, storekeepers, and laborers. These were the families that produced the doughboys, and, yes, the doughgirls, who led America to victory during the Great War.

During the opening, you may have noticed that I did not pound the gavel as forcefully as previous commanders. It has nothing to do with gender stereotypes and everything to do with our history. This gavel is the same one that was used here in 1919. (*Applause*)

Even though it is an antique, the real value from that Convention was the legacy, the gift, that was left for all of us here. By the end of our first year, those early Legionnaires created an organization that had more than 843,000 dues-paying members. Air travel was still in its infancy, and most who came here to Minneapolis did so by train or horseless carriage. But as difficult as travel was back then, what was most impressive is the delegates that gathered here to produce a message. It's a message that continues to resonate and inspire service in communities from coast to coast and even overseas.

It was in Minneapolis, where Legionnaires first pledged, among other things, to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to our community, state, and nation. It was in Minneapolis where a resolution passed to support the Boy Scouts of America, an organization in which The American Legion continues to charter 1,700 units, comprising a total of 64,000 young people.

We believed from the very beginning that a veteran was a veteran. It didn't matter whether they served in Paris, France, or at Parris Island, South Carolina, The American Legion welcomed you into our ranks, regardless of race, religion or gender. This was all well ahead of society, which had not yet granted women the right to vote, and our own military, which would was not racially integrated until another 29 years later.

From the passage of the G.I. Bill to the creation of the current Department of Veterans Affairs, The American Legion has accomplished a great deal since 1919. At 99 years old, people might understandably ask The American Legion, "Aren't you tired?" The answer is, "Hell no!" (*Cheers and applause*)

The best is yet to come. Just a couple of months ago, President Trump signed the VA Mission Act, a law that will dramatically improve the quality of life for thousands of veterans and their families. It infuses needed funds into the Veterans Choice Program and expanded the VA caregivers program to benefit families regardless of when that veteran served. While we recognize that VA is not always a practical option for all veterans, the expansion of Choice for some should not require the cutting of services to others. (*Applause*)

We believe that our veterans fought for the red, white, and blue, not for Blue Cross and Blue Shield. (*Applause*)

They deserve a real health-care system, not just a thank you and a voucher. That is why we are opposed to sacrificing the best health-care system in America at the altar of privatization. At the same time, we are committed to making the VA even better. (*Applause*)

Let me give you an example of how VA makes life better for so many veterans. Three weeks ago, Past National Commander Dave Rehbein led a System Worth Saving visit to the VA health-care system right here in Minneapolis. The system here serves close to 100,000 unique veterans and employs more than 1,000 vets. They're not perfect. After all, who is perfect? The System Worth Saving team found that patient wait time was not a problem there despite having to serve a sizable population. Moreover, the average wait time for an established mental health patient is only one day. What about the quality of care, you may ask. The Minneapolis VA Health Care System has earned the coveted five-star rating for six consecutive years. (*Applause*)

This is a testament to the quality here locally. There are many other VA success stories in communities across the country. The impact of American Legion volunteerism can be felt not just in the corridors of just about every VA hospital, but on the outside as well. American Legion Family members are like Energizer bunnies. We keep going and going and going, trying to make life better for veterans and their families everywhere.

Even when it feels like it's time to take a nap, a visit to an American Legion post or a Legion youth activity is like a double shot of caffeine. You certainly didn't get tired when you gave generously to the hurricane victims in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico. I also know you won't be too tired to continue to give to the victims impacted by hurricanes in Hawaii and the wildfires out West. The American Legion Family wasn't too tired to help brand-new families, those welcoming infants this year, with an Operation Comfort Warriors grant, appropriately awarded this past spring close to Mother's Day.

We are also doing great things, but we absolutely have to grow as an organization if we are going to continue to serve our country in a manner worthy of The American Legion name. Now, I will admit: I do get tired of people asking me how to recruit new, younger members. Ladies and gentlemen, all of our members -- old, young, and middle-aged -- are equal in the eyes of The American Legion. (*Applause*)

Fifty years ago, the consensus among the national media was that young veterans would never join The American Legion. That was a direct quote in "The Wall Street Journal" at the time. Well, those young veterans were the Vietnam veterans, and they did join. Maybe not right away, but they did join in very big numbers. But we cannot be complacent and wait for people to come to us. We must be present for active-duty troops and their families of those deployed. We know that Vietnam veterans were not adequately appreciated by their fellow Americans, and we must never let that happen again. (*Applause*)

We shouldn't just be there for troop send-offs and welcome homes, but when those television cameras are off, we need to be there as well. Help the families whose loved ones are deployed -- mow their yards, shovel their snow, fix those leaky faucets. And when our heroes come home, when they come home, give them a place to go where they will feel comfortable, share their friendship and their thoughts, and listen, really listen. Get them help if they need it. Give them something to do to make them feel like a needed part of our great American Legion family. God knows, we could all use some extra hands at the post.

As important as it is for us to recruit members into our organization, we will never meet our membership goals if we do not retain the members who have already joined us, who are already part of our family. We must personally engage with all of our Legionnaires so they can understand that they are a very valued member of our family. Even if they won't go to a meeting, they should know that their input is welcome and their membership is very appreciated.

A year ago, I shared that a quarter of a million dollars was being spent sending past due notices to our members after the first of the year. I asked departments to please concentrate on getting those members who traditionally paid late to pay early. I was excited to see that at least 42 departments were successful in getting more than 40 percent of their traditional late payers to renew early this year. This successful gain required many personal contacts made at the post level. Not only does early engagement often lead to retention, but it usually leads to more robust programs that can only come from a large corps of our volunteers.

This year I was able to witness the fruits of our local programs at the national level. When I flew into Washington, D.C., last month, I was very tired. As I got out of the car at Greenbelt Maryland Post, I was greeted by our American Legion Boys Nation senators. As I shook the hands of those 100 boys, the staff and the volunteers, I could not help but feel very rejuvenated. The next day I had the opportunity to meet with the 100 ALA Girls Nation attendees. I felt the same sensation. And the same sense of pride occurs when I meet with our other amazing Youth Champions, whether they are baseball players or participants in oratoricals, shooting sports, or junior ROTCs.

Thanks to their interactions with you, our American Legion Family volunteers, many of these young people have already decided that they want to give back to our nation in a meaningful way.

Some will join the military. Some will serve as first responders or perhaps teachers at a school. Some of our alumni have become doctors and are working to treat or heal ailments suffered by our veterans. Some will join our American Legion Family, perhaps as Legion Riders raising money for our Legacy Fund and other programs.

This is who we are in the American Legion Family. We are people who change lives. As we get excited about our future, we must always honor our past, but we must also do so wisely. Recently, I issued a statement expressing concern about an expensive military parade planned for Washington, D.C. We are deeply appreciative that the administration tabled the plan for now. Our concern wasn't due to any lack of appreciation for our troops, but it was because we felt the money would be better spent on treating their wounds and assisting their families. (*Applause*)

Sadly, it is far too early to declare victory in the War on Terrorism. I woke up one morning eight months ago at the Dragon Hill Lodge located at a U.S. Army garrison in Seoul, South Korea. I woke to the news that North Korea had just launched an intercontinental ballistic missile test, one with greater capabilities than its previous attempts. The world, and our son, was understandably alarmed, but our stoic military members stationed on the peninsula shrugged it off and said, "It's just another Wednesday in Seoul."

Since that time, the president of the United States met with the leaders of North Korea, and there have been other talks of officially ending the Korean War, a conflict that only ended with a truce rather than a treaty. We still have some very real doubts about whether North Korea can be trusted to destroy its nuclear program, but we celebrate the recent repatriation of remains of what are probably American war veterans. This is just another reason that The American Legion advocates for those missing in action, so these fallen heroes can be reunited with their families.

Now, I am fond of saying family first. It's been the theme for my year. I say it because most veterans themselves prioritize their families. If you take time to care for the family, they reason, you are taking care of me. Sometimes the reverse is also true. Those family members would say, veterans first. Take care of my husband, my wife, my son or daughter who is in harm's way defending us.

We know that our American Legion Auxiliary believes this, and we see the same passion in our Sons and in the American Legion Riders. The American Legion has always understood that veterans benefits are a cost of war. We will continue to strongly oppose and fight attempts to diminish the benefits offered by the Harry W. Colmery Forever G.I. Bill and remind the Pentagon that "forever" does not mean a mere 16 years. Promises made to our military must be promises kept.

This is a message that has resonated since our very first American Legion convention 99 years ago, and the same message goes for military families. It rings true throughout the entire American Legion family. Each and every one of you have something so special. It made you put the uniform on in the first place. (*Applause*)

And even though you've taken the uniform off, you continue to serve this great nation. So in closing, I will again pledge: Family First today, Family First tomorrow, Family First always! God bless each and every one of you, and thank you. (*Standing applause*)

Thank you. I now call on National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler of the Department of Virginia to issue the Call for Convention.

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

Call 100th National Convention of The American Legion. The 100th annual National Convention of The American Legion is hereby called to meet in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 24-30, 2018, starting at 8 a.m. each day. The convention business sessions were held in the Minneapolis Convention Center, Hall B, August 28-30.

Purpose

The annual National Convention is The American Legion's legislative body. The convention

is called for the purpose of setting The American Legion's programs for the coming year, amending the National Constitution and By-laws, and transacting such other business as may be brought before it.

On Thursday, August 30, 2018, by twelve o'clock (noon) of the final session, or at the conclusion of all other business of the National Convention, whichever first occurs, officers for the ensuing year will be elected, these being the National Commander and five National Vice Commanders, in that sequence.

Representation

Representation in the convention shall be by department, and in accordance with the provisions of the national constitution (sec. 3, art. V):

"... each department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each one thousand members, or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the national treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said convention (July 30, 2018), and whose registration fees, as fixed by the National Executive Committee, for its total authorized delegate strength, have been paid; and to one alternate for each delegate."

In addition to the above, the members of the National Executive Committee are delegates to the National Convention with vote, which "shall be exercised with their respective departments, except that the vote of the national commander shall be exercised only in his or her capacity as chairman of the National Convention." (sec. 3, art. VII, Section 3)

"Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote." (Sec. 4, art. V).

Delegates to the National Convention shall be accredited in writing to the national adjutant in the number and manner prescribed by Articles V, VI and VII of our national constitution.

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

Alternate Delegates

Alternates shall have the power to vote only in the absence of the regular delegates. The selection of alternates to represent absent delegates is a matter for decision within the respective delegations. The vote of any registered absent delegates and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his or her department.

National Executive Committee

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

Department Officials

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

Convention Committees

Americanism

Americanism - One Delegate

Children & Youth - One Delegate

Constitutional Amendments - One Delegate

Credentials & Rules - One Delegate

Finance - One Delegate

Internal Affairs

Membership - One Delegate

Other Internal Matters - One Delegate

Legislation - One Delegate

National Security

Aerospace - One Delegate

Conventional Armed Forces - One Delegate

Foreign Relations - One Delegate

Law and Order & Homeland Security - One Delegate

Military Benefits & Quality of Life - One Delegate

National Guard & Reserve Forces - One Delegate

Unconventional Forces & Intelligence - One Delegate

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Health Administration - One Delegate

National Cemetery - One Delegate

Veterans Benefits - One Delegate

Veterans Employment & Education

Employment & Veterans Preference - One Delegate

Veterans Education, Other Benefits and Homelessness - One Delegate

Madam Commander, that completes the Call for the 100th National Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Adjutant. I now declare the 100th Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be regularly convened. (*Applause*)

The Chair recognizes George West of New Hampshire, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Rules, for the purpose of making a report.

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

To the 100th Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29 and 30, 2018.

Thirty nine delegates to the Committee on Credentials and Rules met at 8:30 a.m., August 26, 2018, in the Hilton Minneapolis Ballroom, Salon A, Third Floor.

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

The Committee proceeded to the business agenda by considering the Rules of the Convention. A motion was unanimously approved by the Committee to adopt the Standing Rules of the Convention as they appear in the revised Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion as approved by the National Executive Committee in May 10-11, 2017. Each Department Delegation Secretary was provided a copy of the Uniform Code at this Convention.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried to accept the Delegate Strength Report as reported by the National Adjutant certifying membership 30 days prior to National Convention. It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the report be based upon the provisions of Section 3, Article V, of the National Constitution: Five delegates for each Department, plus one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer thirty (30) days prior to the opening of the Convention (July 27, 2018); and one alternate for each delegate. In addition, in accordance with Section 3, Article VII, members of the National Executive Committee, which committee includes the National Commander, who exercises her vote only in her capacity as Chairman of the National Convention, and five (5) National Vice Commanders are delegates to the National Convention. For a total of 2,245 delegates to the National Convention.

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

In accordance with the membership report certified to the Convention Committee on Credentials and Rules by the National Adjutant on July 28, 2018, and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 2,244 plus the National Commander allocated as follows:

Alabama	27	Montana.....	17
Alaska.....	13	Nebraska.....	37
Arizona.....	48	Nevada.....	15
Arkansas.....	19	New Hampshire.....	23
California.....	102	New Jersey.....	51
Colorado.....	30	New Mexico.....	17
Connecticut.....	25	New York.....	113
Delaware.....	17	North Carolina.....	48
Dist. of Col.....	8	North Dakota.....	20
Florida.....	130	Ohio.....	101
France.....	10	Oklahoma.....	25
Georgia.....	51	Oregon.....	25
Hawaii.....	9	Pennsylvania.....	159
Idaho.....	16	Philippines.....	7
Illinois.....	91	Puerto Rico.....	10
Indiana.....	87	Rhode Island.....	11
Iowa.....	52	South Carolina.....	30
Kansas.....	33	South Dakota.....	26
Kentucky.....	28	Tennessee.....	32
Louisiana.....	28	Texas.....	78
Maine.....	25	Utah.....	15
Maryland.....	59	Vermont.....	17
Massachusetts.....	43	Virginia.....	55
Mexico.....	7	Washington.....	33
Michigan.....	76	West Virginia.....	23
Minnesota.....	81	Wisconsin.....	62
Mississippi.....	20	Wyoming.....	12
Missouri.....	47		

The Credentials and Rules Committee did not receive any resolutions for consideration or action. It was also regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the report on behalf of the Committee.

This concludes our report. Comrade Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of New Hampshire, I move that the Report of the Convention Committee on Credentials and Rules, to include the aforementioned Delegate Strength Report and the adoption of the Standing Rules of the Convention as they appear in the Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion, be approved. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: I heard a second. Is there any discussion? All in favor, say aye. All opposed, say nay. The report of Credentials and Rules is adopted. Thank you. The Chair recognizes Gaither Keener of North Carolina, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Finance, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Finance
Gaither M. Keener, Jr., North Carolina, Chairman

Thirty-Nine members met at the Minneapolis Convention Center in meeting room 103 E at 9 a.m. on Sunday, August 26, 2018, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Shawn Long, CPA (Indiana), National Finance Director, opened the meeting as staff liaison and informed the committee that

nominations were in order for Chairman and Secretary. Gaither M. Keener, Jr. (North Carolina) was elected chairman, and Carl E. Levi (Tennessee) was elected secretary, by unanimous vote.

Paul Morin (Massachusetts) made a motion to empower the Secretary to deliver the report if the Chairman was unable. The motion was seconded by Ron Corbett (Nebraska) and passed by unanimous vote.

Reports were received from Kenneth Danilson (Iowa) Chairman of the Marketing Commission and Walter Ivie (Texas) Chairman of the Media and Communications Commission.

Chairman Keener reported that the 2017 consolidated financial statements were audited by Crowe Horwath, LLP who issued an unqualified opinion.

The Chairman then introduced the National Treasurer, George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Indiana), who updated the committee on the economy. Treasurer Buskirk completed his report with a recommendation for national per capita to remain \$18.50. George Lussier (Virginia) made a motion to keep dues at \$18.50. The motion was seconded by Philip Dorsey (Maryland) and adopted by unanimous vote.

Chairman Keener finally introduced Shawn Long, CPA (Indiana) to report on the financial position and activities of the National organization.

A motion was made to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee by Myron Kirby (Illinois) It was seconded by Alan Lennox (California) and approved unanimously.

A motion was made to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to make technical corrections to the resolutions without changing the substance or meaning by Paul Evenson (South Dakota) It was seconded by Jim Chapin (Wisconsin) and approved unanimously.

As being no further business, the meeting recessed subject to the call of the chair at 9:45 a.m.

Madam Commander, as a duly elected qualified delegate of the Department of North Carolina to this convention, I move that the report, action and recommendations of the convention committee be adopted, approved and ratified by this convention. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Thank you. I heard a second. Is there any discussion? All in favor, please indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. The report of Finance is adopted.

Tomorrow, Operation Comfort Warriors donations will follow the Report of the National Security, and NEF donations will be collected after the Department Membership Awards. Also tomorrow, donations to the Child Welfare Foundation and the National Commander's Fund for TFA and Service Officers will follow the Children & Youth awards. Legionnaires, please join me in a salute to our nation's colors. Hand salute.

...The delegates rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Two. The time is now 3:53. The Convention will stand in recess until 8:15 a.m. tomorrow morning. Thank you.

...At 3:53 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, August 29, 2018, at 8:15 a.m.

**PROCEEDINGS
SECOND DAY**

Wednesday, August 29, 2018

... At 8:15 a.m., the delegates assembled for the second day of the 100th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.

Call to Order

Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Convention will come to order. Sergeant-at-Arms, please render hand salute to the colors. Thank you. For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Robert A. Vick of Florida. Ladies and gentlemen, please uncover.

Invocation

Robert A. Vick, Florida, National Chaplain

Heavenly Father, as our convention continues, we are convinced more each day that The American Legion is blessed because we are willing to follow Your instructions and Your admonitions to us that we are our brother's keepers and that their welfare, especially those who cannot represent themselves, should be represented well by us who are able and who have been called to that task. Father, if we fulfill the requirements that You place upon us, it will be a glorious thing. We know that when we complete this convention, the die will have been cast and then only the things that we have done for You can we expect to last. Bless us as we perform our duties today. Make our fellowship precious. If we have fought against our brother, help us forgive him or her and understand that they're going through the same trials and tribulations that we are. We love You, Lord, and we're glad You love us, especially because we're not lovable. I pray this prayer in the name of my savior. Amen and amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Thank you, Chaplain Vick. Ladies and gentlemen, please remain standing and uncovered as Sergeant-at-Arms Roy A. Helms, of Wisconsin, leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roy A. Helms, Wisconsin, National Sergeant-at-Arms

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Convention is now in session. I will now call on our national vice commanders to join me on stage for our next presentation, which will be given by Bron Mogenis, trustee for the Chapel of the Four Chaplains Foundation, and the foundation chairman of the board, Louis Cavaliere.

ANNOUNCER: The Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion from the Chapel of Four Chaplains is granted for extraordinary contributions to the well-being of others at the national or world level, to world peace, or to interfaith or inter-ethnic understanding. The medallions are being presented by Bron Mogenis, trustee, Chapel of the Four Chaplains, and Foundation Board Chairman Louis Cavaliere. They are being awarded to National Commander Denise H. Rohan, National Vice Commander Larry J. Marcouillier, National Vice Commander William J. Flanagan, National Vice Commander Bobby D. Bryant, National Vice Commander Byron I. Callies, and National Vice Commander Paula R. Stephenson. Also being awarded is National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler.

Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion
Bron Mogenis, Trustee, Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation
Louis Cavaliere, Chairman of the Board, Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation

Good morning, commander, honorable guests, ladies and gentlemen. The first thing I ask is that you disregard some of the shortcomings that I may have. English happens to be my fourth language. So consequently, it's a little slower than the other ones. But that's not really true. I just wanted to get your attention. (*Laughter*)

No tradition of American society is more precious to or characteristic of our culture than that of our voluntary reaching out to neighbors in need. Such selfless service is part of both our civic and our religious heritage. The Chapel of Four Chaplains, a national nonprofit organization, is founded upon the one shining manifestation of our heritage that our four Army chaplains who were giving their life jackets to soldiers who had none, linked arms with one another and went down with the USAT *Dorchester* when it was torpedoed on February 3, 1943.

This historical event began at Torpedo Junction, the U-boat-infested icy waters of the North Atlantic during World War II. On January 23, 1943, the USAT *Dorchester*, an old steamer, quickly pressed into military service, left New York Harbor for Greenland. The *Dorchester* was escorted by three Coast Guard cutters -- two patrolling the flanks, the third bringing up the yards in the rear. Most of the men were seasick on the crane and nausea. The weather was bitterly cold and gale force winds, ice began building up on the deck and slowing the *Dorchester* to 10 knots. Moving among them were four Army chaplains: George F. Fox; Alexander D. Goode; Clark V. Poling; John P. Washington. The chaplains talked with and listened to the men, soothing their apprehensions. Their concern and camaraderie of the men and one another, they brought solace.

On February 2, 1943, the Tampa sonar system detected the presence of a submarine. They swept the area but failed to find the submarine position. That evening, the Tampa returned to patrol area up front and the other ships followed. The captain entered, ordered the men to sleep in their clothing with life jackets close by. They were only 150 miles from Greenland. With daylight, there would be air cover from the American airbase.

It was just midnight on February 3, 1943, an enemy submarine fired a torpedo towards *Dorchester's* flank. The missile exploded in a boiler room destroying the electric supply and releasing suffocating clouds of steam and ammonia. Many aboard died instantly. Some were trapped on the deck. Others were jolted from their bunks, groped and stumbled their ways to the decks of the stricken vessel. Then the ship began listing to starboard.

Overcrowded lifeboats capsized. Rafts drifted away from anyone who could reach them. Men clung to the icy frozen walls unable to let go into the icy water below. They opened the storage locker room. There was limited life jackets. The chaplains coaxed men frozen with fear over the side. Soon the supply of life jackets was exhausted.

Several survivors reported watching in awe as the four chaplains either gave away or forced upon the young men their own life jackets. These four men of God had given away their only means of saving themselves in order to save others. The chaplains gathered together and led the men around the prayer. They linked arms together. The slant of the deck became severe. And just that way, with their arms linked in brotherhood and their heads bowed in prayer, they sank beneath the waves. It was a heroic act.

Today, as for many years, the Chapel of Four Chaplains serves the memory of these brave men and carries the message of interfaith cooperation of selfless service. Today, we try to encourage acts of volunteerism, brotherhood and sacrifice. The chapel was established an honor program, a humanitarian award given for a lifetime or career of outstanding humanitarian service and as profoundly acted upon the common good.

It's unusual to be that selfless, that when you give your life jacket away, you know you're giving your life away. So these are the kinds of things that The American Legion tries to foster and bring about in today's younger generation growing up to see that we look at life as very important, look at religion as very important.

We must make sure that our heroes receive the support they need as they return home. Many of our young servicemen and women, wounded or not, need our help. They have been fewer

changed by war while serving our great nation. Thousands are in military hospitals recovering from the loss of limbs, traumatic brain injuries or worse. Many need jobs. Others suffer from emotional and mental scars of war.

The American Legion is dedicated to caring for our wartime veterans regardless of what war they had exposure to: Iraq, Afghanistan. And we do even more with the support of all the Legionnaires. There is no organization that does so much constantly as The American Legion. We must never forget those who sacrificed so much to protect our freedom to protect what we have today and enjoy today because they put themselves at risk.

So I'm here today, a retired FBI employee, a person who has always honored the flag, been in service. I'm attached to the 56th Hoover Memorial, and some of those things you don't forget. You can't forget. So the people that we are trying to nominate that we will nominate today, if I read your names, please make yourselves available. We'll have somebody go around to present the award: National Commander Denise Rohan. Paula Stephenson. Bobby Bryant. Larry Marcouillier. Byron Callies. William Flanagan. Last, but not least, Mr. Wheeler.

CHAIRMAN CAVALIERE: On behalf of the Chapel of Four Chaplains, I want to thank everybody, and I want to thank The American Legion for their support and posts from all over the country, we thank you, and this is all about family first, which is all about selfless service. And that's what we're all about, is celebrating that. Thank you very much. And let's hear it for this great crowd of awardees. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: It gives me great pleasure to introduce the 10th Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Robert Wilkie. Mr. Wilkie was confirmed by the United States Senate on July 23, 2018, and sworn in on July 30, 2018, after earlier serving as VA's acting secretary. Before coming to the VA, Mr. Wilkie was undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, the principal advisor to the secretary and deputy secretary of defense on total force management. He has over 20 years of experience at the national and international levels. As undersecretary of defense, Mr. Wilkie served James Mattis. As assistant secretary of defense, he served both Robert Gates and Donald Rumsfeld. Before that, Mr. Wilkie was special assistant to the president for national security affairs and a senior director of the National Security Council. He is an officer in the United States Air Force Reserve, and he previously served in the Navy Reserve with the Joint Forces Intelligence Command, Naval Special Warfare Group Two, and the Office of Naval Intelligence. Mr. Wilkie is a recipient of the Defense Distinguished Public Service Medal, the highest non-career civilian award for that department. Ladies and gentlemen, VA Secretary Mr. Robert Wilkie. *(Applause)*

**Address: Honorable Robert Wilkie, Secretary
United States Department of Veterans Affairs**

Thank you. Thank you very much. And, commander, thank you for this distinct honor. And thank you for the service that you have given to the Legion and to the nation and also to the service that the First Gentleman has given to you. Your family's tradition says a great deal about this institution.

Some of you may have seen a Senate confirmation hearing. That's something out of like a 1950's detective movie where there's one victim and the only thing missing is the bulb over your head. So I went through that. I've been through it several times, but most recently, back in July, and you know the lineup: There's the victim, me. My wife and family are sitting behind me. But behind them was The American Legion. And for those of you who don't know, the man who makes the Legion office in Washington work, Lou Celli, he was the one behind my wife. And the typical government operation, the sound actually travels from the back forward. So he was answering the questions before I was. To the point that when my wife saw a pause in the proceedings, she said, "They nominated the wrong guy." *(Laughter)*

I do want to thank him for all of his support. For those of you who are Air Force brothers, and for those of you from Alaska, there was one Air Force moment during that hearing. Senator Dan Sullivan, a Marine Reservist from Alaska, read a demand for me from one of his constituents, a

guy named Cajun Bob. Now, my father is from south Louisiana, and how somebody named Cajun Bob ended up in Anchorage, Alaska, I don't know. But Cajun Bob said that my mission was to "kick ass." I immediately told Senator Sullivan, "I am an Air Force officer; we don't talk like that." (*Laughter*)

But I want to thank you again and thank the Legion again for its courtesy to me. I want to start off on a somber and reflective note. A few days ago, we lost one of America's great warriors and a man whose lifetime of selfless service reminds all of us why we do what we do. I want to thank The American Legion for honoring Senator John McCain. I also want to thank the Legion for honoring people like my father, and Colonel Walter Marm, holder of the Medal of Honor. People like Dave Hackworth and Hal Moore and Creighton Abrams. Those men and women of Vietnam are the special generation and a generation whom history has already begun to vindicate their sacrifices, and we should never forget them. (*Applause*)

So let me begin with a story from a hundred years ago that some of it took place right here in Minneapolis. A hundred years ago the guns fell silent in western Europe. And out of that nightmare the American nation erupted onto the world stage and The American Legion erupted into the consciousness of the American people.

100 years ago, my great grandfather left a small-town law practice in Cleveland, Mississippi, and a part-time teaching job at Ole Miss law school to join up with the artillery of the all-American division, the 82nd Infantry Division, then mustering at Camp Gordon, Georgia. In his time in World War I, he saw thousands perish in a matter of minutes. Across the cantonment from his regiment was an infantry outfit with a reluctant soldier, a scratch farmer from Pall Mall, Tennessee, by way of Buncombe County, North Carolina, who would go on to become the greatest American hero of that war and be here in Minneapolis when The American Legion held its first convention.

In another part of the country was a young man who had been forged in the steel mills of Braddock and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Like my grandfather, he too left the law to join the Army. He was assigned to Kelly Field in San Antonio, Texas. He trained pilots. He trained them in the new art of flying to support their comrades on the ground. And he trained them to go behind enemy lines at great risk. That was Harry Colmery, the 19th national commander of this organization and the father of the G.I. Bill. His original G.I. Bill, in 1944, was heralded by President Roosevelt as one of the, if not the most significant pieces of legislation that that president would ever sign. When he signed the bill, the president said, "This is emphatic notice that the American people do not intend to let our veterans down."

So men like Captain A.D. Summerville, Sergeant Alvin York, and Lieutenant Harry Colmery, ordinary Americans called upon to do extraordinary things. We at the Department of Veterans Affairs are honored to serve their descendants. Millions of ordinary Americans who have answered a special call for us and for the world. The American Legion has been in the forefront of that noble mission since the beginning. You were powerful advocates for the establishment of the Veterans Bureau in 1921. In 1924, you told the president of the United States to expand access to include non-service-connected illnesses; legislation that changed what it fundamentally means to care for all of those who have worn the uniform. In 1988, it was you who sat with Ronald Reagan and led him to say that your seat at the table means that our veterans will never be forgotten in the national affairs of the United States of America. (*Applause*)

Last year, President Trump was here. He summed it up in his way: That The American Legion embodies the spirit of patriotism that is the true source of our strength and the best hope for our future. So on behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs and all of America's veterans, let me thank you. Thank the entire American Legion, past and present, for everything you have done to make this the last best hope of man on earth. (*Applause*)

I have been privileged to see this military life through many angles. I am the son of a gravely wounded combat soldier. One of the more traumatic days, the most traumatic day of my life, was being told that my father had been terribly wounded in the invasion of Cambodia in 1970. I was six. What we didn't know then was that we would not see him for a year. He spent that time in Army hospitals in both Honolulu and California. And when he returned to us, having gone to Vietnam at 6'2", 240 pounds, he came back 6'2", but weighing 115 pounds. I watched that

agonizing recovery. It was that moment that was on my mind when the president asked me to come serve with you.

I've also seen this veteran's experience through the lives of my schoolmates at Fort Sill and Fort Bragg, whose fathers did not come home. And I've also seen this veteran's life through the eyes of the children of the men who were held in captivity in Hanoi during those terrible years. So what I want to convey to you as the new secretary of Veterans Affairs, I want this to be a call to arms for each of you. In my tenure, in the short time that I am privileged to carry the flame that was lit on revolutionary fields in the 1700s, I pledge to you that this is a bottom-up organization. That the Legion has the seat at the table. That you have the open door to that tenth floor of the Department of Veterans Affairs. And I've told Lou, if I ever get stuck on that tenth floor, throw me out of the window immediately.

So let me tell you a little bit about my philosophy. VA is about serving veterans. So what does that mean? It is our responsibility to serve you well and honorably and showing you the same kind of dignity and devotion that you gave to America. So my prime directive is customer service. When a veteran comes to VA, it is not up to him to employ a cauldron of lawyers to get VA to say yes. It is up to VA to say yes to the veteran. (*Applause*)

That is customer service. Many of the issues I encountered when I was acting secretary were not with the quality of VA care but with just getting our veterans through the door to get that care. Those problems are administrative and bureaucratic. Alexander Hamilton was the one who said that "the true test of good government is its aptitude and tendency to produce a good administration." And that is where VA must go. Customer service must start with you, the customer. We have to talk to veterans. We have to listen to veterans. Because every major advance in relief for those who have borne the battle has come through the efforts of veterans themselves. Not waiting on the slow machine of government to move.

That's also true of the VA Mission Act, which was signed by the president in June. That act will fundamentally transform the veterans health-care system to fulfill the president's promise to give veterans more choice and prevent shortfalls in funding that have plagued the current VA choice program. So what does that do for our warriors? It consolidates and streamlines all of our community care programs into one. It expands our program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers to include, finally, eligible veterans of all eras in our history. (*Applause*)

And, importantly, it strengthens my ability to recruit and retain the quality health-care professionals that you deserve. The result will be a modern integrated patient-centered health-care system providing maximum choice of quality health-care options. So, what are those options? One absolutely essential option is the availability of care who specialize in treating veterans in the language of veterans. These people need to know what each of you have been through, what your special needs are, and who can meet those needs efficiently and effectively. This is not an option that the private sector can provide.

The private sector cannot replicate VA's expertise in things like spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, rehabilitative services, prosthetics, audiology, services for the blind and suicide prevention. I will say to you what I said to those senators in July: There is one unspoken fact of VA life that can never be replaced. It can never be replicated. It can never be privatized. That is the community nature of the VA experience. For your service to America, you deserve to come to and be treated by those who know what you and your families have gone through. (*Applause*)

As the commander noted, it was my privilege to serve General Jim Mattis and a high honor to be on his team at the DoD. He gave me one final order as I walked out of the "Puzzle Palace" a few weeks ago. He said that from here on out DoD and VA will be joined at the hip. And it is about time. (*Applause*)

I have been given instructions from him to make our new electronic health-care record system work. So that from the time that any young American enters the service to take his first or her first physical, to the time that he or she first walks into the VA, there will be a continuous holistic record. No longer will people like my father have to carry around an 800-page record that began for him in the Kennedy Administration. (*Applause*)

General Mattis said it simply: The time to talk is over. I pledge to you on his behalf that together we will create a real solution, a good solution and the best solution for all of those who have committed their lives to the defense of this great nation.

So I want to get a little poetic now. Senator McCain accused me of being Forrest Gump. He used to play a game in the years that I knew him called "Stump the Gump." He always said that I could find any answer dating back to the Roman Empire to give him, whatever he asked me. But because the service in uniform is so grounded in history and tradition, and this institution is grounded in the historical mission of the American warrior, I felt it was appropriate to look back on the words of a man that I happen to consider to be the greatest American of the 20th century, Dwight David Eisenhower.

As you know, in his campaign for president, President Eisenhower promised to visit the troops in Korea when elected. He actually bettered his promise. He went there in Christmas, Christmas of 1952, one month before he was inaugurated. And he said "I will bring you home." One of the things that the president inherited was the presidential yacht Williamsburg. Ike, being a man of the American Heartland, felt that a yacht for a president during a time of war was an extravagance, not worthy of a democracy on the battlefield. And he ordered it scrapped. But the one person whose orders Eisenhower could never disobey, Mamie said to him, "No. Keep it. But when you take it out, you take it out with soldiers."

So a few months after he was inaugurated, about 40 Korean war soldiers and Marines got aboard the presidential yacht Williamsburg. Many of them were missing limbs. Some of them were horribly disfigured. The presidential limousine pulled up to the pier there at the Washington Navy Yard. And those who have watched this procession through the years know what happened: The Secret Service immediately ran out, ran up the plank and started separating the president from his troops. And only as a five-star general of the Army could do, Eisenhower yelled, "Halt. Get behind me. I know these men."

He asked those soldiers who could to stand at attention. He said, "I want to address you at attention. My charge from you as your commander-in-chief is that you never put your uniform away. You are always on duty. You live to remind America two things: That the price of freedom is never free. And you remind your fellow citizens that they sleep soundly at night because of the sacrifices that you have made."

I don't think that The American Legion could have a better motto than to say that we are here because we ensure that Americans sleep soundly at night because of the sacrifices that we have made, our ancestors have made, and those who will come in front of us will make in the future. (*Applause*)

So Eisenhower, the year after he made those statements on the Williamsburg, appeared with you. He spoke to your National Convention in 1954. And he said, "To help keep America strong, to help keep her secure, to help guide her on the true path to peace, there is no group better qualified than you of The American Legion." Then he appealed to each and every one of you. "May courage, wisdom and determination make The American Legion an instrument of ever-increasing value to the whole of America and to the free world." President Eisenhower, were he here today, would be proud of all you have done and all that you are doing. Harry Colmery would be proud.

I know that I am proud to be with you today and to be working with each of you as we move forward. I'm also deeply honored to be here on the 100th anniversary of your first convention and the 100th anniversary of the end of the War To End All Wars when my ancestors and yours put down their arms to return home in the hope that peace would spread throughout the world. God bless you. God bless this Legion. God bless the United States of America and all the good things she stands for. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Mr. Secretary, before you leave. I would like to introduce you to our newest Legion member from North Carolina and present you with one of our diamond lapel pins. (*Applause*)

I now call on a Legionnaire from New Hampshire for a special presentation.

Presentation: Rick Bickerstaff, Department of New Hampshire

Hello. I'm Rick Bickerstaff from New Hampshire, Carl G. Davis Post 34. When Commander Rohan visited us out there last year, we were up in a little village called Bath. I wandered into an art studio, and a bell went off in my head. My wife had commissioned an eight-by-ten photo years ago that she took to an artist and he painted it of my son and I.

So I went and got an eight-by-ten photo of Commander Rohan and said: Can you paint this? He said sure. So it took a while. And we got it done in time to bring it here to convention. This portrait is from the New Hampshire Legion family thanking Commander Rohan for her service to this great organization. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: That was a nice surprise. Thank you. The Chair recognizes Robert Newman of Indiana, chairman of the National Convention Committee, on Internal Affairs, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs
Robert E. Newman, Indiana, Chairman

At 9:30 am, Sunday, August 26, 2018, the Convention Committee of Internal Affairs, consisting of the two Subcommittees of Other Internal Matters and Membership met in the Minneapolis Ballroom, Salon A, Third Floor at the Hilton Minneapolis for the purpose of electing a Chairman and Secretary for Internal Affairs. Robert Newman (IN) was elected Chairman and Randy Goodman (GA) was elected Secretary for the purpose of reporting to the Convention.

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

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

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

No further business was discussed at this point and the delegates were then released to the two sub-committees assigned to the Internal Affairs Convention Committee--- Membership and Other Internal Matters--- for the purpose of reviewing and acting on the assigned resolutions.

The Internal Affairs Committee was recessed at this point subject to call by the chairman if required.

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

Membership Sub-Committee
Randy Goodman (GA), Chairman

At 10:00 am, Sunday, August 26, 2018, 47 delegates assigned to the Convention Subcommittee Membership met in the Rochester room on the third floor of the Hilton Minneapolis. Randy Goodman (GA) was elected Chairman and Michael Strauss (SC) was elected Secretary. The sub-committee considered one resolutions and its disposition is as follows:

Referred to Standing Membership & Post Activities Committee

Resolution No. 10 (MI): Minimum National DMS Rate

**Other Internal Matters Sub-Committee
Robert E. Newman (IN), Chairman**

At 10:00 am, Sunday, August 26, 2018, 48 delegates assigned to the Convention Sub-Committee on Other Internal Matters met in the Minneapolis Ballroom, Salon A on the third floor of the Hilton Minneapolis. Robert Newman (IN) was elected Chairman and William Moore (KY) was elected Secretary. The committee considered 25 resolutions and their dispositions are as follows:

Approved Resolutions

Resolution No. 1: Minneapolis Reaffirmation of 2018 (Special)

Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, In November 1919, delegates to The American Legion's first National Convention in Minneapolis established its values of service to community, state and nation, as proclaimed in its Preamble to the Constitution; and

WHEREAS, Those values would form The American Legion's four pillars upon which our great organization of men and women still stands; and

WHEREAS, These pillars remain in place to support veterans, national security, patriotism, and the children and youth of America, who are the future of our great nation; and

WHEREAS, Upon these pillars The American Legion has built programs with unparalleled impact on American society during its first century of service; and

WHEREAS, Our forebears would surely stand today, a century after their first National Convention, and say of us, "Well done"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That we express our eternal gratitude for the wisdom of our founders in this, the beginning of our 100th anniversary, by confirming anew our commitment to their principles unto a second century of service; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That in affirmation of our consistent values, we pledge our unrelenting vigilance on behalf of the United States, its fallen warriors, our fellow veterans, and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That we honor those who served before, serve those in the military today and prepare the future for those who are yet to serve; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm the U.S. flag to be the premier unifying symbol of the United States, a great and beloved nation born of diversity and nurtured under that banner which has draped the caskets of millions of American veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That we believe that each post is a community-based wartime veterans organization known for helping all veterans, families and youth in the community and with the understanding that social programs will not supersede the reason The American Legion was founded in 1919 which was service first and leaders at every level be prepared to answer why The American Legion is relevant in their communities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm to the generations yet unborn their inheritance of a national legacy no less grand than that of our founders and to which we today are heirs: a free nation; strong, united and flourishing in peace and prosperity; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm to our nation's defenders, and the citizens they serve, our dedication to national sovereignty and security so inviolable as to render America forever free from aggression and domination by those who would do us harm; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm the principle of citizen soldiery by our unqualified support and dedication to those who, in times of war and peace, answer the call to service in our armed forces; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm to all Americans our commitment to the principle of government of the people, by the people, and for the people, a principle best embodied by national leadership unfettered and free from foreign influence and domestic distractions,

ever alert to the failures of policy by which the constraints on war are based; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That in our second century our primary mission is to connect and engage with veterans and their families in our communities and provide training and education for them in our basic principles in order to empower them to conduct our Four Pillar programs throughout their communities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That by the witness of the men and women of all free nations, and in the presence of our Creator, we do hereby commend this affirmation to all in whom these sentiments ring true.

Resolution No. 50: Increase Income Tax Deduction For Volunteer Mileage

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime era veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a firm supporter of the VA Voluntary Services Program which is the largest volunteer program in the federal government; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion statistics have shown for the last several years that over 7,000 volunteers have contributed over 800,000 volunteer hours annually, and the rising cost of gasoline is one of the barriers to new and current volunteer recruitment and retention; and

WHEREAS, As the federal budget is tightened due to the current economic situation, the reliance upon volunteers will continue to expand; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, being one of the nation's largest and most active community service organizations, recognizes the need to create an environment which would attract and retain volunteers; and

WHEREAS, One of the best ways to promote volunteerism is to help defray out-of-pocket expenses incurred by volunteers; and

WHEREAS, For tax year 2017 the standard mileage rate for business use of a vehicle was over 53 cents per mile, medical rate was 17 cents per mile; and

WHEREAS, The optional standard mileage rate for volunteers providing service to a government or charitable organization is still 14 cents per mile and has not changed since 1997; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion urge Congress to approve legislation to increase the volunteer mileage income tax deduction rate from 14 cents per mile to 25 cents per mile and to adjust this rate yearly based on regular CPI-based adjustments.

Resolution No. 84: Designate The Ghost Fleet Of Mallows Bay-Potomac River A National Marine Sanctuary

Origin: New York

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, One of the founding principles of the American Legion is to "preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars" as stated in the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, The wrecks of more than 100 abandoned World War One wooden steamships referred to as "The Ghost Fleet" are submerged but still visible in the shallow waters of southern Maryland's Mallows Bay in the Potomac River; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. government stimulated the creation of many emergency ship yards to organize the effort to build needed cargo ships in fourteen (14) states in the U.S. including New York; and

WHEREAS, To protect these World War One wooden steam ships the State of Maryland, with the support of Charles County, Maryland, submitted a nomination in 2014 to the National

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to consider Malloes Bay a National Marine Sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, This designation would protect these fragile historic resources and create a management plan that includes World War One educational and interpretive strategies designed to encourage sustainable tourism at the sanctuary; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion supports the designation of the World War 1 Ghost Fleet as a National Marine Sanctuary.

Resolution No. 86: Award Congressional Gold Medal To The 23rd Headquarters Special Troops And The 3133rd Signal Service Company

Origin: New York

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, During World War II, in the European theatre of operations, the American GIs of the 23rd HQ Special Troops and the 3133rd Signal Service Co., also known as the Ghost Army, wielded creativity and illusion to fool the German Army on the battlefield; and

WHEREAS, Using inflatable tanks and artillery, radio deception, sound equipment, and impersonation, Ghost Army soldiers contrived to confuse the enemy about where actual Allied fighting units were; and

WHEREAS, Soldiers of the Ghost Army risked their lives by diverting attention from real operations to their fake ones including phony convoys, phantom divisions, and phony headquarters; and

WHEREAS, In operations from July 1944 to April 1945 the Ghost Army carried out more than 22 deception missions on or near the front lines in France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany and Italy that cost them dozens of casualties, including the loss of three lives; and

WHEREAS, The men of these U.S. Army units are credited with saving the lives of thousands of GIs and helping bring about Allied victory in World II; and

WHEREAS, Their daring battlefield deceptions were kept secret for more than 50 years after the war and, owing to that secrecy, they never received public recognition for their accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, In evaluating the performance of these units after World War II, an Army analysis found that, "Rarely, if ever, has there been a group of such a few men which had so great an influence on the outcome of a major military campaign"; and

WHEREAS, The people of the United States are grateful for their extraordinary courage and remarkable ingenuity in the face of the enemy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That the American Legion urge the United States Congress to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops and the 3133rd Signal Service Company.

Resolution No. 106: Appreciation To Host City

Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, The 100th National Convention has been held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29 and 30, 2018; and

WHEREAS, There has been a spirit of cooperation and friendship along with mutual helpfulness evidenced by the Legionnaires of Minnesota, the officers of the convention corporation and the department, and by the officials and the people of Minneapolis, Minnesota; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29 and 30, 2018, That we express our deep appreciation to the Department of Minnesota, Governor of Minnesota Mark Dayton; Mayor, City of Minneapolis, Jacob Frey; the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota, including the fire department, police department, and other public safety officials, and to The American Legion National

Convention Corporation of Minnesota, Inc., Jeff Olson, president, around this nucleus has been built the moving force that provided for every necessity that made for a successful and enjoyable convention.

Resolution No. 107: Support For The United States WWI Centennial Commission Bells Of Peace Program

Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, The Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion, wherein the mission and guiding principles of The American Legion are articulated, states, in part, "to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars"; and

WHEREAS, The combat experiences of the founders of The American Legion during World War One shaped their attitudes, values and sensibilities and were paramount in their aspirations regarding what The American Legion should be and what it might become; and

WHEREAS, The United States World War One Centennial Commission is responsible for planning, developing, and executing programs, projects, and activities to commemorate the centennial of World War One; encouraging private organizations and state and local governments to organize activities commemorating the centennial of World War One; facilitating and coordinating activities throughout the United States relating to the centennial of World War One; serving as a clearinghouse for information about events and plans for the centennial of World War One, and developing recommendations for Congress and the president for commemorating the centennial of World War One; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a Commemorative Sponsor of the World War One Centennial Commission, and appoints one member of the commission; and

WHEREAS, The United States World War One Centennial Commission has called on all Americans everywhere to toll bells on November 11, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. local time in commemoration of the service and sacrifice of America's World War One veterans; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee of the American Legion has previously expressed its support for the work of the World War One Centennial Commission in Resolution No. 15 of the National Executive Committee of October, 2010; Resolution No. 13 of the National Executive Committee of October, 2015; Resolution No. 4 of the National Executive Committee of May 2017; and Resolution No. 3 of the National Executive Committee of October, 2017; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion calls upon all departments and posts to encourage their communities, towns, cities, schools, cemeteries, and houses of worship to toll bells twenty-one times on November 11, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. local time to commemorate the service and sacrifice of America's veterans.

Resolution No. 108: Support For Legislation To Introduce Atomic Veterans Service Medal

Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, Between 1945 and 1962, about 225,000 members of our Armed Forces participated in hundreds of nuclear weapons tests; and

WHEREAS, These men and women are collectively known as "Atomic Veterans"; and

WHEREAS, These veterans were placed in extremely hazardous areas and bravely served our country while being exposed to potentially dangerous ionizing radiation; and

WHEREAS, These men and women were often sworn to secrecy about their assigned duties and many remain silent even today; and

WHEREAS, More than 75 percent of Atomic Veterans have already passed away, never having received recognition from a grateful nation of their service during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, Our great allies Great Britain, New Zealand, and Australia have long recognized their own Atomic Veterans by authorizing a medal for their military personnel who served with the United States during nuclear testing; and

WHEREAS, Presidents William J. Clinton and George H. W. Bush acted to provide specialized care and compensation for veterans who suffered from a variety of illnesses and cancers as a result of exposure to ionizing radiation; and

WHEREAS, In the early 1990s, Congress passed the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) to provide lump sum compensation to approximately 4,000 veterans, uranium workers, and civilians who lived downwind from U.S. nuclear weapons test sites; and

WHEREAS, In July, 2017, the House unanimously approved an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act to create an Atomic Veterans Service Medal in the NDAA, which passed 424-0 by the House but was dropped in the Senate; and

WHEREAS, The United States will remain forever indebted to the bravery, valor, discretion, and dedication that the Atomic Veterans displayed during a time of great national nuclear insecurity; and

WHEREAS, The commitment and sacrifice of these veterans demonstrates a highly uncommon and commendable sense of duty, patriotism and honor during and after the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress has a proud tradition of recognizing other classes of veterans who served under unusually hazardous circumstances; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on August 23, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion fully supports legislation to award the Atomic Veterans Service Medal to members of the United States Armed Forces who were exposed to ionizing radiation as a result of their assigned duties during nuclear testing from 1945 to 1962; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress develop the criteria for award of this medal.

Resolution No. 109: Support For Review Of Minority Awards Of Medal Of Honor WWI

Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, At the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in what would become known as World War I, the United States initially pursued a policy of non-intervention; and

WHEREAS, German U-boats sank the RMS Lusitania on 7 May, 1915, causing President Woodrow Wilson to demand an end to unrestricted submarine warfare, to which Germany complied; and

WHEREAS, In 1917, Germany resumed a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, and with the subsequent sinking of seven U.S. merchant ships by submarine the United States declared war on Germany; and

WHEREAS, The United States drafted 2.8 million men and by summer 1918 was sending 10,000 fresh soldiers to France every day; and

WHEREAS, General John J. Pershing allowed African-American combat regiments to be used in French divisions; and

WHEREAS, The 369th Infantry Regiment "Harlem Hellfighters" fought as part of the French 16th Division, and earned a unit Croix de Guerre for their actions at Chateau-Thierry, Belleau Wood, and Sechault; and

WHEREAS, While 121 men were awarded the Medal of Honor for actions during WWI, not one African-American soldier was awarded the Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, Only two African-Americans, Freddie Stowers and Henry Johnson, were reviewed and awarded the Medal of Honor, but not until 73 years and 85 years after their combat actions in 1918; and

WHEREAS, Few other non-white soldiers, sailors, or Marines were awarded the Medal of Honor during WWI; and

WHEREAS, While the United States military conducted a review of Medal of Honor minority awards from WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War and all subsequent wars but no such systematic review was ever made of minority award of the Medal of Honor during WWI; and

WHEREAS, The United States will remain forever indebted to the bravery, valor, and dedication that the African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and other minorities displayed during a time of great national need; and

WHEREAS, The commitment and sacrifice of these veterans demonstrated a highly uncommon and commendable sense of personal bravery, devotion to comrades, duty, patriotism and honor in the finest traditions of the Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, The United States WWI Centennial Commission supports efforts to authorize a systematic review of valor medals awarded to minority servicemembers of WWI, who may have been denied the higher medals due to racial bias; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress has a proud tradition of recognizing all classes of veterans who served with uncommon valor; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion fully supports legislation to lift statutes of limitations and other obstacles that may impede proper investigation and appropriate actions for minority veterans of WWI whose military records and official descriptions of combat actions fully support consideration for award of the Medal of Honor.

Resolution No. 110: Support For Congressional Gold Medal For Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Of WWI

Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war against Germany, but was unprepared to fight a technologically modern conflict overseas; and

WHEREAS, The United States called upon American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) to provide the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) with modern equipment and trained personnel for the Army Signal Corps in France; and

WHEREAS, From May to November of 1917, the AEF struggled to develop the telephone service necessary for the Army to function under battlefield conditions; and

WHEREAS, On November 8, 1917, General John J. Pershing cabled the War Department and wrote, "On account of the great difficulty of obtaining properly qualified men, request organization and dispatch to France a force of women telephone operators all speaking French and English equally well"; and

WHEREAS, More than 7,600 women volunteered for only 100 positions and the first recruits took the Army oath as members of the United States Army Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Unit on January 15, 1918; and

WHEREAS, Telephone operators were the first women to serve as soldiers in non-medical classifications whose job it was to help win the war, not mitigate the harms of the war; and

WHEREAS, These women arrived in France on March 24, 1918 before most infantrymen of the armed forces in order to facilitate logistics and deployment and spent their first night in Paris under German bombardment; and

WHEREAS, The Army quickly recruited and trained five additional contingents of female Signal Corps operators, increasing calls to 150,000 each day, with simultaneous translations between American and French military officers, and these women under popular parlance were known as the "Hello Girls"; and

WHEREAS, When the war ended on November 11, 1918, 223 female operators served in France and had connected 26 million calls for the AEF; and

WHEREAS, Upon arrival in The United States, and despite the objections of General George Squier, the top-ranking officer in the Signal Corps, the Army informed all female veterans that they had performed as civilians, not soldiers, even though they had served in Army uniform in a theater of war surrounded by men who were similarly engaged; and

WHEREAS, After 60 years, on November 23, 1977, President Jimmy Carter signed The GI Bill Improvement Act of 1977 that allowed United States Army Signal Corps Female Telephone

Operators to apply for, and receive, veteran status and honorable discharges as members of the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress has a proud tradition of recognizing other classes of veterans who served under difficult wartime conditions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion fully supports legislation to award the Congressional Gold Medal to members of the Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Unit who served in Europe from January 1918 until January 1920.

Approved As Amended

Resolution No. 4: Adopt A Cemetery Program

Origin: South Dakota

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

(As Amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a veterans organization that extols its members to "Let service to community, state, and nation be ever our main objective"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is the world's largest veterans organization with posts in towns, large and small, all across America; and

WHEREAS, All across the country there are cemeteries, large and small, with veterans graves in them that are falling to disrepair with age and neglect; and

WHEREAS, The local posts of The American Legion are positioned to be able to find said graves and remedy their condition; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That we support a program which could be named "Adopt a Cemetery" to promote the care and maintenance of veterans grave sites in local communities and that the program encourages posts to find local cemeteries with veterans grave sites and to work with the community in which they reside to restore, preserve, and develop a mandatory program for the upkeep of grave markers and grounds.

Resolution No. 26: Award Congressional Gold Medal To The Crew Of The USS Indianapolis

Origin: Texas

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

(As Amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is the oldest veterans organization whose cause it to help veterans and insure that veterans receive the best treatment possible; and,

WHEREAS, House Bill HR4107 and Senate Bill S2101 are in need of a national veterans organization endorsement to award the crew of the USS Indianapolis the Congressional Gold Medal; and,

WHEREAS, During WWII, the USS Indianapolis served as the flag ship for the 5th Fleet commander, Admiral Raymond Spruance, survived a kamikaze attack, earned 20 battle stars for her 3 years of WWII service; and,

WHEREAS, The USS Indianapolis completed an intense and incredibly risky mission by delivering atomic bomb components to Tinian Island that was critical to ending World War II; and,

WHEREAS, On July 30, 1945 the USS Indianapolis – CA 35 was sunk by Japanese submarine torpedoes, with a loss of 880 sailors and Marines lives and 317 crew members rescued; and,

WHEREAS, There are only 18 living survivors left of the crew from the USS Indianapolis; now, therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion support the Congressional Gold Medal for the crew of the USS Indianapolis for their brave service in World War II.

Referred to Standing Internal Affairs Commission**Resolution No. 21 (TX): Spouses of The American Legion****Resolution No. 25 (TX): Male Spouse and Widower Eligibility in the Sons of The American Legion****Resolution No. 28 (TX): Add Video Categories to the National History Contest****Resolution No. 88 (IA): Summary Reporting of the Consolidated Post Reports****Referred to Standing Convention Commission****Resolution No. 89 (MO): City of St. Louis Offers to Host the 2025 National Convention****Resolution No. 90 (MO): City of Kansas City Offers to Host the 2025 National Convention****Referred to Standing Marketing Commission****Resolution No. 91 (MA): Advertising During the Army Navy Collegiate Football Game****Received and Recorded****Resolution No. 14 (CO): Endorsement of Deborah Davis for National Historian****Resolution No. 22 (TX): Protection of Memorials and Monuments****Resolution No. 31 (PA): Endorsement of Paul M. Kennedy for National Vice Commander****Resolution No. 40 (VA): Endorsement of Frank H. Carr for National Chaplain****Resolution No. 95 (AL): Endorsement of Blair Miles for National Vice Commander of the Sons of The American Legion****Rejected****Resolution No. 24 (TX): Include Fathers of Veterans and Non-Veteran Spouses in The American Legion Family****Resolution No. 44 (AK): National Governance of The American Legion Riders****Addendum A****Resolutions to Remain Part of the Legislative Program**

Pursuant to Resolution No. 25 approved in October 2016 by the National Executive Committee the following resolutions previously approved by a National Convention or the National Executive Committee are to remain as part of the legislative program of The American Legion through the 116th Congress.

No.	Year	Meeting	Title
11	2016	Fall	Support and Defend Veteran and Military Memorials
9	2016	Fall	Transfer Custodianship of Pershing Hall Building and Artifacts to the American Battle Monuments Commission
16	2017	Spring	National Global War on Terrorism Memorial
88	2017	Convention	National Veterans Memorial and Museum
11	2017	Fall	National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass for Honorable Discharged Veterans
9	2017	Fall	Award Congressional Gold Medal to the Chinese American Veterans of World War II

Commander, thank you for allowing me the time to make this report. And as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Indiana, I move for the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: It's been moved and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor of approving this report, indicate by saying aye. Opposed, same sign. Carried. The report of Internal Affairs is adopted.

America is blessed to have so many amazing and dedicated police officers and firefighters. Their split-second decisions can mean life or death and often invite intense scrutiny. These are men and women who are willing to sacrifice their lives to keep us safe. War veterans can certainly understand that kind of pressure.

Our 2018 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year has been a member of the Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina Police Department since 2008. He is a Marine Corps veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and a member of American Legion Post 116. He is a volunteer in many youth programs, including the North Carolina Special Olympics. As a police sergeant, he has responded to a call in 2016 which tragically ended with an estranged husband murdering his wife and then taking his own. Our award recipient's training and experience was credited with safely protecting his fellow officers during that dangerous call. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm round of applause to our Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, Lieutenant Brett Walsh. (*Applause*)

ANNOUNCER: This is to certify that The American Legion has bestowed the title of National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year upon Brett Walsh for outstanding selfless service over and above normal duties through heroic acts, community service and professional achievement thereby exemplifying the meaning of the phrase: America's Finest. You reflect great duty upon yourself, your police department and law enforcement officers everywhere. (Applause)

**2018 National Law Enforcement Officer of Year
Lieutenant Brett Walsh
Fuquay-Varina Police Department, Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina**

How is everybody? First, I'd like to say I'm amazed. This is quite a production. I wasn't expecting all of this today. I'm thankful for Mr. Gessner for being such a gracious host. I'm humbled and honored to be selected as Law Enforcement Officer of the Year for The American Legion on this special 100th convention. There are thousands of first responders working every minute of every day, including right now, and they all deserve recognition for their hard work and sacrifice. So thank you. (*Applause*)

I would like to thank my family, my wife, Erin, who is here, and my two children who are watching from home, Parker and McKenna. My parents, who are here. My mom is the hardest working person that I know. My dad, a Navy veteran, and retired police chief, they've always been great role models for me.

I'd like to thank the town of Fuquay-Varina for supporting our police department and Chief Fahnestock. A special thank you to Captain Bob Adams, who was always there to tell me what I needed to hear, good, bad or indifferent. He's my boss, my friend, my mentor. I don't remember a single swearing in of a new officer where our mayor was not there to give the oath of office. Our town, from our elected officials, town manager, all the way down, really support us as first responders. Even the firemen. (*Laughter*)

Thank you to Post 116 in Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina. I think they're sitting over there. Mr. Grimes, the Post Commander, and I think the new elected district commander. Thank you to the Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee and the National Security Commission, and thank you to Ms. National Commander for hosting us.

Being a Marine, it's too easy to make jokes about other branches. However, I think any person willing to raise their hand and join the greatest fighting force on earth deserves respect and thanks. (*Applause*)

Besides, I don't have to tell any other branch: The Marine Corps is the best, because they already know. In 1829, Sir Robert Peele, considered to be the father of modern policing, published his "Nine Principles of Policing." These principles highlighted the community and highlighted the community involvement with the police department. Number seven said: "Police are the public and the public are the police." Policing today is not an easy business. As Sir Robert Peele highlighted in 1829: "We as officers need you as the community for all of us to succeed."

I helped create the first department citizen police academy this past year. We covered lots of topics, community policing, 21st century policing, constitutional law, traffic law, use of force and many other topics. At the end, we had a graduation for the class. We asked the class to share their experiences and if they gained anything from the class. Many said they learned a little about everything that we do. One person raised her hand and said she did not realize how many of the officers that taught the class were like normal people. I'm here to tell you that we as officers have a public image problem, but we really are just normal people, with lives, with families and a purpose. *(Applause)*

Sir Robert Peele knew in 1829 that community service is the key to success in my line of work. We need your help as the community to be successful. We need great organizations like The American Legion. And we as police need to continue to invest in our communities and build partnerships to make everyone successful because we are all part of the community. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Few acts require greater bravery than entering a blazing inferno. Our next guest started his career as a volunteer firefighter with the Estacada, Oregon, Rural Fire District Number 69 in 2016. He established a "Veterans to Firefighters" program at his district to assist those transitioning from military life to careers in firefighting. He made the transition himself, and had saved an elderly woman and a child from a burning building in Baghdad, where he served with the U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Division. He is a member of American Legion Post 134 in Estacada. Please welcome our 2018 National Firefighter of the Year, Damon Faust. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: This is to certify that The American Legion has bestowed the title of National Firefighter of the Year upon Damon Faust for outstanding selfless service over and above normal duties through community service and professional achievement thereby exemplifying the meaning of the phrase: America's Bravest. You reflect great credit upon yourself, your fire department, firefighters everywhere. (Applause)

**2018 National Firefighter of Year
Damon Faust, Estacada Rural Fire District No. 69, Estacada, Oregon**

Thank you. Let's get these donut crumbs off of here. *(Laughter)* I'm sure you're not going to be Candy Crushing. I have my notes here. I'd like to begin by thanking Carl Douglas Post 74 out of Estacada. And Post 34 Portland is another post that I've been with as well. Estacada Rural Fire District Chief Morrisey, Chief Anderson and Chief Crowe.

I'd like to thank, especially Post 74, for taking the time to recognize what I've done. And put me out here in this world. This isn't my bag. Thank you aren't great. I thank Estacada Fire for allowing me the space to create a program like Veterans to Firefighters.

I'd like to thank Vince Moffat and Terry Riviera. These are two old-school smoke eaters who gave me the passion for firefighting. Huge thank you and appreciation to all the other firefighters on the line right now. All those firefighters that are doing it for them.

My friends, family, Shauna, who is here; she's been a rock. Levi, who represents all the friends that I've made in this career and in this profession, friends that really truly become family. My brother, Kevin, who as a kid growing up without a dad was shown the path to what it meant to be a man, what it meant to be a father. My two young children: Fay and Henrietta. Anyone who knows me knows that's why I do what I do. Everything I do and I strive for is because of them.

With that, I would say find what drives you. Once you find that thing that drives you, it could be as small as your children, your kiddos, or something as major as changing policies and laws to help veterans, find what drives you and stick with it.

Extremely honored for this award, but we all know there's folks out there on the line doing as much, if not more, going unrecognized. And lastly, The American Legion Department of Oregon, the national commander, Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee and National Security Commission. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair recognizes Paul E. Dillard, of Texas, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation, for the purpose of making a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Legislation
Paul E. Dillard, Texas, Chairman**

The National Convention Committee on Legislation met on Sunday, August 26, 2018 at the Minneapolis Convention Center, Room 102. There were 47 delegates to the Committee present and 15 guests in attendance.

Following the preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the Chairman and Secretary were duly elected. I, Paul Dillard, a delegate from the Department of Texas, was elected Chairman following a motion from Russ Hanseter, a delegate from the Department of Wisconsin. Joe Gliuzzza, a delegate from New Jersey, was elected Secretary following a motion from Jim Willis, a delegate from the Department of Oregon.

There was no new business to discuss. The Legislation Convention Committee received no resolutions for consideration.

A motion by Roger Hagan, a delegate from the Department of Montana, was initiated to allow the Chairman and Secretary to make technical corrections to the Committee Report, as necessary and appropriate, and to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Legislation. This motion was unanimously approved and adopted by the Legislative Convention Committee.

National Commander Rohan, as a duly authorized Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Texas, I move for the adoption of this report.*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: It's been moved and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor, so indicate by saying aye. All opposed, say nay. The report of Legislation is adopted. Thank you, sir.

I call on Past National Commander Charles Schmidt to present the Plaque of Appreciation to the president of the National Convention Corporation of Nevada, Jeanette R. Evans, for the outstanding job that the Nevada American Legion Family did in hosting the 2017 Convention in Reno.

**Presentation: Plaque of Appreciation to the City of Reno
Host City of the 2017 National Convention**

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you, Commander Rohan. Good morning, delegates, to the 100th National Convention of The American Legion. I don't know about you, but I'm having a great time. *(Applause)*

I hope this convention will inspire you, as it is inspiring me, to remind us to carry The American Legion legacy forward, a legacy that our forefathers handed off to us. Last year at our National Convention, our 99th National Convention, it was a historical convention as well. As you know, the Department of Nevada brought us to the Biggest Little City, known as Reno, Nevada, and through their efforts over the past five years, Nevada gave us a great convention, I believe a successful convention. The hospitality was great. The facilities were wonderful. I didn't hear of

any glitches, at least if there were any. We appreciate what Nevada has done for us, and, Jeanette, we thank you and the Department of Nevada for your efforts. Thank you. (*Applause*)

PRESIDENT EVANS: Well, first, thank you to The American Legion for allowing Nevada the great honor and opportunity to host the 99th National Convention. We will always be known as the location where the very first woman national commander of The American Legion was elected. (*Applause*)

I would like to thank my fellow board members -- Lionel Motta, Dave Evans, and John Warden. For their hard work, we could not have pulled this off. A special thank you also to the Reno-Tahoe Convention Authority, or whatever their name is today, and specifically Robin Nichols, who are the true heroes for making this convention a success.

I'd also like to thank our committee chairs -- Mitch Roach, Jim Stewart, Marco Manor, and Yvette Weigold, the past department commander, and Past Department Commander Bob Terhune -- for all their volunteers whose countless hours of volunteering to make sure you all had a great convention could not be measured. They gave us a wonderful time, in my opinion. Reno, who loves a convention and loves everybody to come to town, also, their hospitality cannot be measured. So thank you again, Commander Schmidt, Commander Rohan. Thank you, and maybe we'll come back in another 20 years or so. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair now recognizes D. Michael Schlee of Maryland, chair of the National Convention Committee on National Security, for the purpose of making a report

**Report: Convention Committee on National Security
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman**

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 26, 2018, 280 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security initially met in the Minneapolis Convention Center, Room 101 Sections A-C. Mr. G. Michael Schlee (Maryland) was elected Chairman and Mr. E.C. Toppin (North Carolina) was appointed Secretary.

After the initial meeting, the following convention committees met, held elections and dealt with the resolutions assigned to them:

Aerospace	Rick Oertel (VA), Chairman Anthony Heath (MA), Secretary
Conventional Armed Forces	Charles E. Kruger (MN), Chairman Jake Cabuag (WA), Secretary
Foreign Relations	Daniel Seehafer (WI), Chairman David Evans (NV), Secretary
Law and Order & Homeland Security	George Wehrli (FL), Chairman Richard Keiser (NY), Secretary
Military Benefits & Quality of Life	Robbie Walker (IL), Chairman Beverly Glover (PA), Secretary
National Guard and Reserve Forces	William Goede (MN), Chairman Roy Weber (IL), Secretary
Unconventional Forces and Intelligence	Doug Haggan (FR), Chairman Sherman Baxa (WV), Secretary

At 10:15 am, Sunday, August 26, 2018, the delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security reconvened in the Minneapolis Convention Center, Room 101 Sections A-C. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 25 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security or prepared by the Committee to meet issues which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. The Convention Committee authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report of the Convention Committee on National Security on behalf of its delegates and make technical and administrative corrections to the resolutions reported out of the Committee.

**Conventional Armed Forces
Charles Kruger, Minnesota, Chairman**

Approved Resolutions

Resolution No. 34: Support For Department Of Defense Stabilization Activities

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States has a vital national security interest in promoting stability in certain fragile and conflict affected states to guard against threats that emanate from state weakness, political subversion, or collapse; and

WHEREAS, Stabilization activities are necessary to consolidate military gains into lasting strategic success, and may include efforts to establish civil security, provide access to dispute resolution mechanisms, deliver targeted basic services, and establish a foundation for the voluntary return of displaced people; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DoD) has only limited authority to provide non-reimbursable logistic support, supplies, services, and training to interagency counterparts for stabilization activities in these complex settings, and

WHEREAS, Once implemented, these initiatives will improve DoD's ability to prioritize, plan, and execute stabilization activities (logistic support, supplies, services and training) on a reimbursable or non-reimbursable basis with interagency partners (Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, or other federal agencies) to support stabilization in foreign areas; and

WHEREAS, DoD's new stabilization policy provides a conceptual framework for DoD's supporting role and core responsibilities during U.S. stabilization efforts; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion supports legislation, "Department of Defense support for stabilization actives in National Security Interest of the United States," allowing the secretary of defense, with the concurrence of the secretary of state and in consultation with the administrator of the United States Agency for International Development and the director of Office of Management and Budget, provide support for the stabilization activities of other federal agencies.

Resolution No. 35: National Defense Budget

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion views a strong national defense as paramount to national security; and

WHEREAS, The president has submitted a proposed \$717 billion total defense budget for 2019; authorizing \$639.1 billion in base funding, \$69 billion in the Overseas Contingency Operations fund to cover contingency operations, and \$8.9 billion for mandatory defense spending; and

WHEREAS, The proposed budget reverses sequestration and increases defense spending caps; and

WHEREAS, The proposed legislation increases the force end strength, it also increases servicemembers pay and benefits, which prevents the loss of highly trained men and women; and
 WHEREAS, The proposed budget includes the purchase of aircraft and ships to replace our aging fleets, improving our military's overall readiness against current and emerging threats; and

WHEREAS, This legislation supports *rebuilding military infrastructure* by increasing funding for facilities sustainment allowing for military construction, including family housing; and
 WHEREAS, The United State of America's major adversaries, Russia and China, along with rogue nations are ramping up their military stocks and capabilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion urge Congress to support budget increase in military spending to reverse the effects of sequestration; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress never allows our military forces to reach a weakened state in these uncertain and perilous times.

**Resolution No. 41: State Funeral For The Last World War II Medal Of Honor Recipient
 Origin: Virginia**

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The time has come to prepare for a final salute to our World War II servicemembers for which 472 Medals of Honor were awarded an only four of those recipients survive today; and

WHEREAS, The opportunity is slipping away for "A funeral not for one man, but to join the hearts and minds of 330 million Americans"; and

WHEREAS, Only three classes of citizens are entitled to a state funeral: a president-elect who dies before being sworn into office, a sitting president or former president of the United States, and any other person designated by the president; and

WHEREAS, In view of the foregoing, we the membership of The American Legion, respectfully petition the president of the United States to designate that the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient lie in state on behalf of the 16 million World War II veterans as a final tribute to their service and sacrifice to achieve world peace in troubled times; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion support a petition to the president of the United States, on behalf of more than 16 million veterans of World War II, to designate a state funeral for the last living Medal of Honor recipient – not for one man, but to join together the hearts of millions of Americans in a unifying event honoring the legacy of all World War II veterans.

Resolution No. 99: Commission The USS American Legion

Origin: Ohio

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
 (Consolidated with Resolution No. 3 (SD))**

WHEREAS, The American Legion seeks to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars and is synonymous with National Defense and National Security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is on the cusp of its centennial anniversary in 2019; and

WHEREAS, There was a prior U.S. Navy ship named the USS American Legion launched 11 October 1919; and

WHEREAS, The ending of World War I resulted in the ship seeing commercial service until laid up until 1939 with the name "American Legion"; and

WHEREAS, The ship was formally transferred to the War Department in December 1939 as USAT American Legion until transfer to the U.S. Navy commissioned USS American Legion (AP-35) and later reclassified as attack transport (AP-17); and

WHEREAS, As the conditions worsened in Europe the U.S. president directed the American Legion to proceed to Petsamo, Finland and embark Crown Princess Martha of Norway and her

party and also embark a host of American nationals and refugees from Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands for a total of 897 passengers including young Danish comedian/musician, Victor Borge; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion also took on board a twin mount 40-millimeter Bofors anti-aircraft gun which was adopted by the U.S. Navy and proved significant in upgrading anti-aircraft capability on U.S. Navy ships; and

WHEREAS, The ship completed its Atlantic Theater operations and was transferred to the Pacific Theater in 1942 where it participated in the invasion of Guadalcanal and Bougainville for which the USS American Legion was awarded two battle stars for its World War II services; and

WHEREAS, The ship became an amphibious warfare training ship in 1944 until 28 March 1946 when its name the "American Legion" was struck from the Naval Vessel Register; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Navy has a long standing tradition of continuing the reuse of historic names of its ships, another "American Legion" named vessel would honor and commemorate both organizations on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the founding of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, The United States Navy proposed FY2019 budget requests funding for 10 new ships, one of which is an Expeditionary Sea Base ship (ESB), which is a highly flexible platform that may be used across a broad range of military operations; and

WHEREAS, Many members of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion, and American Legion Riders feel that in observance of the American Legion's 100th year of organization, it is time that another United States Navy ship bear the name of The American Legion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion urge the Department of the Navy to name the newest Expeditionary Sea Base ship the U.S.S. American Legion to recognize and honor the legacy of The American Legion's centennial of service to the nation, and to perpetuate its commitment to the future strength of our national defense and national security for generations of Americans to come.

Resolutions Referred to Standing Commission

Resolution No. 57 (IL): Oppose Proposed Military Parade

Resolution No. 80 (NY): Cold War Service Ribbon

Resolutions Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 8 (MT): Set Minimum National Defense Budget at Five Percent of Gross National Product

Resolution No. 67 (IL): Extend Selective Service Program to Include Registration of Women Ages 18-25

Rejected Resolution

Resolution No. 54 (IL): Recognize Korean War as an Ongoing Conflict

Foreign Relations

Daniel Seehafer, Wisconsin, Chairman

Approved Resolutions

Resolution No. 37: Taiwan Defense Arms Sales

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, also known as Taiwan, is a long-time friend having fought with the United States against Japanese imperialism during World War II and against communism during the post-war period; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is a major trading partner and democratic ally of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Asia-Pacific region; and

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8), the United States is committed to provide defense equipment and defense services, in such quantities that the government of the Republic of China may maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion supports the sales of the latest American weapon systems, including naval vessels, submarines, military aircraft, high-tech electronics, communications equipment and air-defense missile systems to Republic of China of such quality and in such quantities so as to enable the government of the Republic of China to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports the continued sales of sophisticated U.S. weapon systems, including, but not limited to, F-16 fighter aircraft, anti-submarine equipment and torpedoes, anti-aircraft/anti-missile systems, and electronics and communications equipment to Republic of China; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the government of the Republic of China be given preferential pricing for these items but not equal to that given to the U.S. government, to enable the Republic of China to purchase sufficient quantities of these items for their defense needs.

Resolution No. 38: Taiwan Straights Dialogue

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Republic of China (Taiwan) is a long-time friend, ally, and major trading partner of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, closely cooperated with the United States against Japanese imperialism during World War II and in the fight against communism during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Pacific Rim; and

WHEREAS, It is in the best interests of all parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to resolve political differences peacefully; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to encourage the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) to promote peaceful dialogue and avoid any negative actions by either side to change the status quo, which might lead to military conflict.

Resolution No. 117: Japan Arms Sales

Origin: Convention Committee on National Security

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Since the U.S.-Japan Security and the San Francisco Treaties were signed in 1951, Japan has been a friend; and

WHEREAS, Japan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Asia-Pacific region; and

WHEREAS, Japan is a major trading partner of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The presence of U.S. forces in Japan is vital to the United States' commitment to the defense of Japan and the security of the region; and

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of the Reciprocal Defense Procurement the United States is providing missile defense platforms in quantities to allow sufficient self-defense capability; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion supports the sales of the latest American missile defense platforms to Japan of such quantities so as to enable Japan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.

Resolution No. 118: Sustaining United States Commitments In The Indo-Pacific

Origin: Convention Committee on National Security

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States' national security grand strategy has long been premised on global leadership, which entails great and multiple responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, The Indo-Pacific region is home to a rising proportion of global gross domestic product and a center of the world economy; and

WHEREAS, The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with the 2008 financial crisis, left many Americans disillusioned with global involvement and receptive to arguments that the alliances and institutions they supported for many decades no longer serve their interests; and

WHEREAS, Participation in essential collective security alliances, provided our allies contribute their fair share, should remain an objective of U.S. foreign policy; and

WHEREAS, The presence of U.S. forces in Asia is vital to the United States' commitment to the prosperity, defense and security of the region; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion support legislative or executive efforts to create a renewed long-term policy framework that demonstrates U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region and the rules-based international order.

Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 2: Return Of Church Bells From F. E. Warren AFB To The Philippines

Origin: Philippines

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(As Amended)

WHEREAS, The year 2017 marked the 75th anniversary of the defense of the Bataan Peninsula and the shared sacrifice of 77,000 Americans and Filipinos who fought side-by-side, delaying the advance of the Japanese Imperial Army, resulting with over 1,000 Americans and 9,000 Filipinos perishing in the infamous Bataan Death March; and

WHEREAS, For over 100 years the Philippines has been America's strongest friend in Asia and a staunch ally in World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the War on Terror; and

WHEREAS, Over the past several decades, there are many precedencies of religious bells and artifacts removed from Japan, Germany and Russia, during periods of conflict, being returned to the churches and temples from which they were taken, including bells long held by the United States Naval Academy, Virginia Military Institute, Harvard University and many American cities, because it was the right and honorable thing to do; and

WHEREAS, In 2016 the United States Military Academy at West Point returned an 800 pound church bell taken from the Philippines in 1901 that had been held on display for over 100 years to the church of Saints Peter and Paul in Bauang, La Union, because it was the right and honorable thing to do; and

WHEREAS, General Order 100, also known as the Lieber Code and Lincoln's Code, was placed in effect by General Arthur MacArthur during the Philippine American War (1899-1902) specifically prohibiting the taking of personal and religious property; and

WHEREAS, The Iwo Jima Association of America encourages the return to Japanese families of personal property and artifacts brought to the U.S. during World War II as a gesture of reconciliation and friendship; and

WHEREAS, The monuments men of the monuments, fine arts and archives section of thirteen allied nations persevered to protect and preserve looted private property taken by German forces during World War II, because it was the right and honorable thing to do; and

WHEREAS, In 1904 the U.S. Army 11th Infantry Regiment brought to Fort D.A. Russell (Today Francis E. Warren Air Force Base) in Cheyenne, Wyoming from a quarter master salvage yard on the Philippine Island of Leyte, two 600-pound bells which had originally hung in the belfry of the church of San Lorenzo de Martir in the small town of Balangiga on the island of Samar; and

WHEREAS, The 11th Infantry abandoned the bells in place in 1913 and later the U.S. Army again abandoned the bells in 1947 when the base was turned over to the U.S. Air Force because they held no special significance to either the legacy or history of the 11th Infantry or the U.S. Army; and

WHEREAS, An existing monument and memorial to those soldiers of company C who died as a result of the encounter exists at Sackets Harbor, New York, home of the 9th U.S. Infantry at that time; and

WHEREAS, For several years it was incorrectly believed that the bells of San Lorenzo de Martir, taken from the church in the town of Balangiga, had been rung during the Philippine American War as a signal of surprise attack on American soldiers of Company C, 9th U.S. Infantry that was garrisoned in that town; and

WHEREAS, These two 600 pound bells ultimately became known through pejorative writing and distorted history as the "Bells of Balangiga" and a source of misunderstanding and rancor between friends and allies; and

WHEREAS, The Philippines is predominately a Catholic nation where church bells play a very important role in the lives of Filipinos as well as reflective of their national patrimony representing the very fabric of their cultural heritage and history and because the bells were bought and paid for the parishioners of San Lorenzo de Martir to return the bells would be the honorable and right thing to do and result in national jubilation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That in recognition of the 75th anniversary of the Bataan Death March and the historic military ties and camaraderie between Americans and Filipinos and given that new and accurate information on the history of the two bells now exists, that the secretary of defense in collaboration with veteran organizations, take action to return the two Catholic church bells now on display at F.E. Warren Air Force Base (formerly Fort D.A. Russell) in Cheyenne, Wyoming to the parishioners of the church of San Lorenzo de Martir in the town of Balangiga, province of Eastern Samar, republic of the Philippines; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Resolution No. 56 of the 2016 National Convention of The American Legion held in Cincinnati, Ohio titled, Protection, Preservation and Retention of Federal and Military Monuments in the United States, is hereby rescinded.

Resolution Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 15 (AK): Taiwan Straits Dialogue

Rejected Resolution

Resolution No. 16 (WY): Protection, Preservation and Retention of Federal and Military Monuments in the United States

**Law and Order & Homeland Security
George Wehrli, Florida, Chairman**

Approved Resolutions**Resolution No. 29: Commend U.S. Border Patrol****Origin: Texas****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, Curtailing illegal immigration remains one of The American Legion's major objectives in achieving the fulfillment of the first three purposes for which Legionaries associate ourselves together, "to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America, to maintain law and order, to foster and perpetuate a 100% Americanism"; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 23 was approved by The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, resolving that The American Legion supports the Department of Homeland Security and urges the administration and Congress to make security of the United States the top national priority; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Border Patrol is an operational component of the Department of Homeland Security whose primary mission is to detect and prevent the illegal entry of aliens into the United States; and

WHEREAS, A priority of the U.S. Border Patrol's mission is preventing terrorist and terrorist weapons, including weapons of mass destruction, from entering the United States; and

WHEREAS, By executing its mission since its inception in 1942, the U.S. Border Patrol has historically played a vital role in the preservation of our national security; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Border Patrol agents are well known for their compassion, for their respect for the dignity of all others no matter what the circumstance, and for the untold lives they have saved by virtue of their humanitarian assistance provided to immigrants in distress, and

WHEREAS, A large fraction of U.S. Border Patrol agents are military veterans, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That the American Legion recognizes the U.S. Border Patrol's mission to be an essential contribution to our national security; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion greatly appreciates the practice of the U.S. Border Patrol to employ military veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion highly commends the U.S. Border Patrol for its noble and heroic efforts, frequently in the face of danger and adversity, to preserve our national security; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion commits its steadfast support to the U.S. Border Patrol.

Resolution Referred to Standing Commission**Resolution No. 17 (KS): Maximize Alien Prison Transfers**

**Military Benefits and Quality of Life
Jerry Jordan, Indiana, Chairman**

Approved Resolutions**Resolution No. 5: Publicize And Promote The Armed Services Retirement Homes****Origin: District of Columbia****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, The American Legion Post 70, the Department of the District of Columbia, at its membership meeting, January 10, 2018, and the Department of the District of Columbia, The American Legion, in Convention assembled June 1, 2018, proposed and approved the following resolution as an appropriate part of The American Legion 100th anniversary March 15, 2019, and of its many actions to aid U.S. military veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Armed Forces Retirement Home, formerly known as and limited to the Army and Air Forces Retirement Home, but now available to and includes former members of all branches of the U.S. military services, notwithstanding their total years of service; and

WHEREAS, The complete living facilities and services are located on the property within the city limits of Washington in the District of Columbia, which was originally purchased by the General of the Army Winfield Scott, with the approval of the U.S. Congress, but without initial use of federal funds, and for private maintenance; and

WHEREAS, Since 1851 has operated as a sanctuary and hospice for former male and female U.S. military personnel, and has the original national cemetery created especially for deceased military persons, and is presently operated with oversight by the U.S. Department of Defense; and

WHEREAS, A second site, the Armed Forces Retirement Home at Gulfport, MS, has a significant background in providing similar facilities and services to retired U.S. naval personnel and now to those from all branches of service, and is now under the same oversight of the U.S. Department of Defense; and

WHEREAS, These facilities are capable of accepting additional veteran eligible residents and are presently considering opening accommodations for military members recently leaving the services of our nation and to their spouses, regardless of length of service, branch of service, transition to civilian life or retirement, no matter what part of the nation they deem home; and

WHEREAS, The existence and purpose of these facilities has had little publicity, and their availability is little known, even among the U.S. military services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That the U.S. Department of Defense and the several federal agencies (such as each branch of the military services, the U.S. Department of Labor, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Veterans Affairs, etc.) involved in helping U.S. military personnel to prepare for transition from military to civilian stature (e.g., Transition Assistance Programs, Retirement), include in both written information and in the oral and classroom transition presentations sufficient information about both the Armed Forces Retirement Homes, their services, availability, eligibility and requirements for former service personnel and their spouses, so that those separating from service fully understand the option and opportunity available to them, and thus increase utilization of existing facilities.

Resolution No. 6: Retain And Maintain The Armed Services Retirement Homes

Origin: District of Columbia

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion Post 70, the Department of the District of Columbia, at its membership meeting, January 10, 2018, proposed, and that the Department of the District of Columbia, The American Legion, in convention assembled on June 1, 2018, approved the following resolution to support one of the Pillars of The American Legion, services to veterans, and reinforce the role of the two Armed Forces Retirement Homes (AFRHs), one in the District of Columbia (AFRH-W) and one in Gulfport, MS (AFRH-G) to serve American military veterans from the entire United States when seeking suitable and appropriate housing, either while transitioning to civilian life or entering retirement; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, the Department of the District of Columbia, and the Department of the District of Columbia Post 70 desire to focus special attention during the 2019 anniversary celebration of 100 years of service to veterans rendered by The American Legion, and to assure continuation of that success in helping veterans to have adequate housing upon leaving military service or upon retirement; and

WHEREAS, There are two sites presently providing similar services and facilities to help achieve these common goals at widely separated locations and under the same oversight by the U.S. Department of Defense, the Armed Forces Retirement Home in the District of Columbia, and the Armed Forces Retirement Home Gulfport, MS, formerly referred to as Navy Retirees Home, (these two sites are entirely separate from those veteran residential facilities provided, maintained or supported by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs); and

WHEREAS, The Armed Forces Retirement Home, formerly known as The Old Soldiers Home, then the Army and Air Force Retirement Home, limited to military personnel retired from those services, is now available to and includes members from all branches of the U.S. military, notwithstanding their total years of service; and

WHEREAS, The AFRH-W was founded by the General of the Army Winfield Scott, with authorization from the U.S. Congress in 1851, to establish a sanctuary and hospice for members leaving the military, so long as it was purchased and initially maintained without federal funds; and

WHEREAS, The 272-acre historic estate within the city limits of the District of Columbia has, for 168 years, fulfilled that vision of General Scott for military veterans; and

WHEREAS, The first national cemetery for military veterans was established and has been maintained on the grounds of AFRH-W (long before Arlington Cemetery was initiated); and

WHEREAS, The AFRH-W site includes the horse mounted statue commemorating General Scott, and the esteemed "Cottage" where President Abraham Lincoln spent much of his time away from the White House; and

WHEREAS, The AFRH-W grounds has additional buildings and capacity to sustain and increase utilization for U.S. veterans for years to come, as was initially envisioned by General Scott, and the AFRH-G has adequate facilities to continue and expand such services; and

WHEREAS, The AFRH-W facility has always been open to both male and female veterans of the Army and Air Force, and more recently included veterans of the Navy, Marine Corp and Coast Guard, and the AFRH-G has a significant background providing facilities and services to retired U.S. naval personnel and is currently open to all U.S. military veterans, both male and female; and

WHEREAS, Both sites were recently notified of a drastic increase in individual housing fees to be effective October 1, 2018, (from the present 40% rate of all incomes, including retirements, disability allowances, etc. to 60% of all incomes), to help meet increasing operating costs, along with the potential that the federal government could consider parts of both sites for commercial development to minimize maintenance expenses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion use the 100th anniversary celebration to promote the existence, available services, capabilities possible and encourage increased use by veterans, and recognize the historic significance of the present Armed Forces Retirement Homes as achievements among its services by veterans, for veterans, and for their communities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Department of Defense and its affiliated agencies to continue to retain, sustain, maintain, preserve and promote both these entire and total historic places, and the worthy vision for the future established by the General of the Army Winfield Scott, without the drastic increase in individual housing fees, as fully functioning services for any U.S. veterans to select as an option for their transition from military to civilian life and for possible retirement.

Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 98: Continuation Of Military Death Benefits During Government Shutdown

Origin: Ohio

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(As Amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans who have dedicated themselves to the purpose of advocating for veteran 's rights and benefits; and

WHEREAS, The federal government has shut down operations eighteen times since 1976 due to Congress' inability to pass a timely budget; and

WHEREAS, The United States military operations do not stop during a federal government shutdown; and

WHEREAS, The federal government has no law allowing for the death and gratuity payment or government funded travel for the remains of military personnel back to Dover, Delaware, or any other location, during a federal government shutdown; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion urge Congress to create legislation that during a government shutdown American active duty military who lose their life shall be awarded the death and gratuity benefit as if the government was operating normally.

Referred to Standing Commission

Resolution No. 36 (MD): Survivor Benefit Plan

Resolution No. 43 (MN): Exclude Tricare Election From the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program

Note: Resolution No. 43 was inadvertently left out of consideration during the convention committee meeting. The oversight was discussed with the department adjutant and the national judge advocate and it was decided that the committee did not need to reconvene. It was agreed that the resolution will be referred to the National Security Commission for consideration at the 2018 Fall Meetings of the National Executive Committee.

**National Guard and Reserve Forces
William Goede, Minnesota, Chairman**

Referred to Standing Commission

Resolution No. 30 (TX): Issue DD-214 to Retiring Reservists

Mrs. Commander, National Officers, and Fellow Delegates. I am particularly pleased to announce the winners of the National Blood Donor Awards for this past year.

Category I - Departments with 100,000 or more members

Post & Individual Participation: No submission

Category II - 70,000 to 99,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: No submission

Category III - 40,000 to 69,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: Maryland

Category IV - 25,000 to 39,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: No submission

Category V - 10,000 to 24,999 members

Post & Individual Participation: Montana

Category VI - less than 10,000 members

Post & Individual Participation: No submission

Many of our Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. Close to 4,500 medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2017-2018 are the Departments of Connecticut and Maryland. This speaks well for these Departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

**Addendum A
Resolutions to Remain Part of the Legislative Program**

Pursuant to Resolution No. 25 approved in October 2016 by the National Executive Committee the following resolutions previously approved by a National Convention or the National Executive Committee are to remain as part of the legislative program of the American Legion through the 116th Congress.

No.	Year	Meeting	Title
16	2016	Convention	Second Amendment
17	2016	Convention	Position On The Operational Reserve
20	2016	Convention	Fully Enforce Immigration Laws
22	2016	Convention	Guard And Reserve Space-A Travel
23	2016	Convention	Support For The Department Of Homeland Security And Coast Guard
24	2016	Convention	Illegal Immigration Policy
25	2016	Convention	Support For The Non-Federal Roles Of The National Guard
28	2016	Convention	Reserves And National Guard Retirement Benefit Fairness
29	2016	Convention	Commercial Shipbuilding For Defense
32	2016	Convention	Support Domestic Energy Production
33	2016	Convention	Rare Earth Elements
45	2016	Convention	Policy On The Arctic Region
85	2016	Convention	Support For Military Quality Of Life Standards
90	2016	Convention	South China Sea Island Building
91	2016	Convention	Cybersecurity And Identity Theft
93	2016	Convention	Codify Burial Eligibility For Arlington National Cemetery
94	2016	Convention	Earned Military Benefits
96	2016	Convention	Support Full Funding And Resourcing For The U.S. Navy And Marine Corps
98	2016	Convention	Support For The Global War On Terrorism
100	2016	Convention	Military Commissaries
102	2016	Convention	Oppose Tricare Fee Increases
105	2016	Convention	Reference Veterans Service Organizations At Discharge
107	2016	Convention	Support Armed Services Retirement Homes
109	2016	Convention	Support For Pain Management Research, Treatments And Therapies At DOD, VA And NIH
173	2016	Convention	Secure National Borders Against Illegal Drugs
174	2016	Convention	Security Of Overseas Embassies
176	2016	Convention	Authorize And Fund Tricare For Reserve Components And Dependents
200	2016	Convention	Extended Care Health Option (ECHO)
201	2016	Convention	Enhanced Funding For USAID
202	2016	Convention	Military Retiree Mail At Overseas Embassies
204	2016	Convention	Policy On Latin And Central America
205	2016	Convention	Foreign Policy Objectives
206	2016	Convention	Middle East/Gulf States Foreign Policies
207	2016	Convention	Policy On The United Nations
208	2016	Convention	Prohibit Foreign Investments In U.S. Defense Industry
209	2016	Convention	Space-A Travel For Unemployed And Disabled Veterans And Dependents
210	2016	Convention	Support For The American Battle Monuments Commission
211	2016	Convention	Securing Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal
213	2016	Convention	Support For Foreign Exchange Education Programs

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214	2016	Convention	Global Trade Policies
216	2016	Convention	Support For The United States Air Force
218	2016	Convention	Support For The Selective Service Registration Program
219	2016	Convention	Support Full Funding For The Department Of The Army Budget
222	2016	Convention	Policy On Africa
223	2016	Convention	Policy On Cuba
224	2016	Convention	Support For Concurrent Receipt Of Military Retirement Pay And VA Disability Compensation
225	2016	Convention	Fully Fund NASA
17	2017	Convention	Counter Transnational Organized Crime
19	2017	Convention	Homeland Security And The Opioid Epidemic
20	2017	Convention	National Cybersecurity Strategy
22	2017	Convention	Pow/Mia Policies
9	2018	Spring	Military Commissaries
10	2018	Spring	Expedited Citizenship Applications For Deported Veterans

Commander, as a delegate to this Convention from the Department of Maryland, I move for the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: It has been moved and seconded to accept this report. Are there any questions. There is a question at microphone 2.

DELEGATE ZIMMERMAN (VA): This is Monty Zimmerman, delegate from Virginia. I would like just an explanation to why that Resolution No. 30 to not allow a DD-214 for retirement from the military from Army Reserve or Air Guard Reserve and Guard forces to be explained. This is a huge problem. The military will not provide DD-214s for people who serve less than 90 days on active duty as they complete their Guard or reserve service, which then creates cascading problems with getting that documentation to the VA.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: We are going to refer that question to the chairman, Bill Goede.

CHAIRMAN GOEDE: The reason we rejected it is DD-214s are already issued if you're Title 10s. Otherwise, the reservists get an NGB-20 for their separations from service.

DELEGATE ZIMMERMAN: Sir, that's not correct if you're reserve. That's correct if you're National Guard. But the reserve forces who retire -- my commanding general, two-star general received two Distinguished Service Medals and retired after 34 years of service. His last active duty was during the Iraq war. So none of his follow-on service at the Pentagon was recorded in a DD-214. But this is a common problem throughout the entire reserve system. So the Guard has that NGB-22, and the Guard form is valid for the Guard, but the reserve -- Army Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Navy Reserve, Coast Guard Reserve -- they do not have such a document unless they serve 90 days or more at the end of their service. I would request a motion to reconsider this on the floor, please.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: So right now we already have a motion on the floor to accept the report. We will move forward on the motion to accept the report. All those in favor, say aye. Opposed, say nay. I would say nays win.

DELEGATE ZIMMERMAN: Ma'am, at this point, could I make a motion?

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Yes.

DELEGATE ZIMMERMAN: Monty Zimmerman, delegate from Virginia. I move that we reconsider the motion for reserve forces, if we wish to separate it from Guard and reserve, for reserve forces to be issued a DD-214 upon retirement from military service for all reservists from all branches so that they have a close-out document that the VA can recognize and use. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: It has been moved and seconded to reconsider Resolution No. 30, the issue of a DD Form 214 to retiring reservists. More discussion going on up here by our judge advocate.

DELEGATE ZIMMERMAN: Ma'am, if I could, I could give a clarification. I was at the secretary of the Army's office as I retired. I was a traditional reservist who served on a 10-month tour that was extended to 39 months, causing me to retire nine months beyond my MRD with a DD-214, which made my transition to the VA very easy. This is a discussion that we had at the secretary of the Army's office with the deputy assessment secretary for military policy, and they said they didn't want to be burdened by an administrative cost to support reservists that have been serving in the military.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Would the gentleman at Microphone 2 please come to the stage. Okay. We are going to go back to the gentleman from Virginia, Monty Zimmerman, at microphone 2.

DELEGATE ZIMMERMAN: Thank you, ma'am. I would like to rescind and rephrase my motion. I would like to accept the report as presented with the exception of Resolution No. 30, which I would like to refer to the committee for further study and rewriting, and I will assist with that. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: On the motion to approve the report of the National Security Committee with the removal of Resolution No. 30 for further study back to the committee, are there any questions? We have a second. All those in favor, signify by saying aye. Opposed, same sign. The report of National Security is adopted.

Chairman Schlee, before you leave, I would like to present you with a diamond lapel pin for your over 50 years of service to The American Legion. (*Applause*)

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN SCHLEE: Thank you very much, commander. I will truly treasure this. Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: For more than 20 years, our next guest has worked to improve the lives of Riverside County, California, residents as an elected official and a teacher at Rialto High School. He attended Harvard College and received a bachelor's degree in government in 1983. He serves as the vice ranking member on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and has worked on important pieces of legislation, such as the Harry W. Colmery G.I. Bill, named after our past national commander, and the VA Mission Act, signed into law two months ago. He is also a member of the Education and Workforce Committee and the Science, Space, and Technology Committee. Please welcome U.S. Representative Mark Takano.

Address: Honorable Mark Takano
United States House of Representatives, Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Good morning, everybody. Thank you, Commander Rohan, for the kind introduction. It is truly a great honor to be here in Minneapolis with all of you, celebrating an incredible milestone for The American Legion, its 100th National Convention. (*Applause*)

One hundred national conventions, this is something worth celebrating and an accomplishment to be proud of. For 100 years, each and every one of you, and the Legionnaires who came before you, have led and grown an organization that embodies the best of what the American people can create, not just for ourselves, but for each other, for veterans and their families, and for the future of our country and of our democracy.

Today, I want us to reflect on the traditions and values that are the foundation of this organization. I want us to reflect on the change you have created through your advocacy and the accomplishments that have moved the Legion one step closer to fulfilling its mission. I want us to reflect on a shared vision we all hold, the not-so-radical belief that we can build an America that keeps its promises and leaves no one behind. (*Applause*)

First, I would like to take a moment to thank a few distinguished guests in the audience and on the stage: National Commander of The American Legion Denise Rohan, who has made history by becoming the first female national commander of the American Legion! Adjutant Dan Wheeler.

And your executive director, Louis Celli. I also want to thank the past national commanders in the audience today who have led The American Legion with honor and integrity. Thank you all for your leadership. Thank you for your unyielding dedication to our country's veterans. (*Applause*)

Ninety-nine years ago in Paris, Americans formed the Legion so that they could keep fighting for the ideals that had brought our nation into World War I. They knew that the fight to spread justice, opportunity, fairness and mutual helpfulness had not ended just because the battlefields of Europe no longer echoed with gunfire.

They left the war behind but kept ever before themselves the goal of making America, the country they loved, a more just nation. To promote and protect these ideals for future generations, The American Legion founded Boys State in 1935 as a way to engage young people with our democracy. Since its inception, Boys State has served the purpose of promoting the importance of civic participation at every level of government, to uphold the promise of our democracy. Standing before you is a Boys State participant for the La Sierra High School Class of 1979. I'm proud to say that I have actually been inducted into the California Boys State Hall of Fame. I hope there's some Californians in the house today.

What a wonderful program Boys State is, and I know that nearly every chapter of The American Legion is involved in helping to raise the funds to send boys and girls, also the Auxiliary, to Boys State, Girls State, Boys Nation, Girls Nation. It is no accident that you, the Legion, created Boys State at a time when the ideals of freedom, equality, and democracy were under assault. The Legion's work helped unify our country at a time of great crisis, a time of great apprehension and fear.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, our nation unified behind the purpose of defeating the forces of fascism, authoritarianism, and totalitarianism. But there was an imperfection in that clarity and unity, and that imperfection was the error of our political leadership at the time to allow fear to make an exception of democratic values for a vulnerable group of American citizens.

Japanese American men of draft age were excluded from military service. They were considered enemy aliens, unfit to serve, unfit to fight for their own country. Even during those difficult times, a highly-motivated group of Japanese Americans, eager to prove their allegiance, eager to prove their patriotism, petitioned the U.S. government for their right to serve. I want you to imagine what it must have been like to see your family -- your parents, your little brothers and sisters, your grandparents -- be incarcerated without due process, but yet still believe in the promise of America. President Roosevelt relented, allowing these men to form the 442nd Regimental Combat Team of the United States Army. (*Applause*)

A legendary, segregated Japanese-American fighting unit that was sent to the front lines of World War II, even as their families were interned back home. The 442nd became one of the most decorated units for its size and length of service in United States military history. It was known as the Purple Heart Battalion, amassing 21 Medals of Honor and more than 9,000 Purple Hearts. The motto of the 442nd was "Go for broke," because these men were betting on America. They bet that America could be a more perfect union. And in the case of my Great-Uncle Mon, he bet his life.

Through their persistent efforts to confront bigotry, the 442nd prevailed. I tell the story of my great-uncles and the 442nd with great pride and a strong belief that if it wasn't for them, I would not be a member of Congress and I would not be addressing you at your 100th National Convention. (*Applause*)

Since our country's founding, immigrants and minorities have answered the call to serve under our flag and join the ranks of our armed services, just as my great-uncles did. In return for their service, our country made immigrant recruits a promise, American citizenship. They were to become Americans, Americans by choice, recognized for their actions, protected from deportation from the country they love and call home. But many Americans would be shocked to learn that there are veterans who have been deported from our country even after serving honorably.

Last year, I led a congressional delegation to the Deported Veterans Support House, commonly known as "The Bunker," in Tijuana, Mexico. That's where I met Hector Barajas. In 1984, Hector Barajas was brought to the United States by his parents when he was just seven years old. He grew up in California and went on to receive his green card, granting him legal status in the United States and the ability to join the military. In 1995, Hector went on to proudly serve in

the 82nd Airborne Division. In 2001, Hector was honorably discharged after serving for six years. Upon his discharge, he faced invisible wounds and struggled to transition back into civilian life. He committed a crime, pleaded no contest to a charge, and served two years in prison.

After Hector paid his dues to society, he faced the unexpected. He was deported from the country he had honorably served. Hector believed that enlisting in the Army would lead to automatic citizenship. He was, however, unaware of the naturalization process and had little to no information on how to apply for citizenship during his service. Once you're deported, it is difficult, nearly impossible, for veterans to access the benefits they earned and to get the care they need. Sadly, there are many stories like Hector's.

After his deportation to Mexico, Hector did not give up. He founded The Bunker and helped other deported veterans. He raised awareness about this injustice and worked to correct it. Now, in Congress, many representatives, including myself, have taken up the mantle for Hector and other deported veterans. Because I believe that if anyone deserves a second chance in our country, it's our veterans. (*Applause*)

The good news is that Hector was pardoned for his crime by California Governor Jerry Brown, and the courts ruled that he could return to the U.S. and apply for citizenship. I was happy to stand next to Hector as he became a naturalized U.S. citizen earlier this year. (*Applause*)

It's because of people like Hector that it is still possible to believe in an America that fulfills her promises. Hector's story is a story that embodies the ideal of mutual helpfulness enshrined in The American Legion's mission, the mission that has driven the Legion for nearly 100 years.

With millions of active members, The American Legion stands strong and committed to the greater good. We face a world today where democratic institutions are being tested. That is why civics education efforts, like Boys State, are still important and relevant today.

As a student, I experienced firsthand the value of Boys State and emerged with a better understanding of how our democracy functions. As a former teacher, I later witnessed the positive change in students who participated in the program. So long as programs like Boys State are available to help train the next generation of American leaders, I remain optimistic for the future.

The power of your grassroots advocacy is reflected in the legislative successes you have achieved. The 1944 G.I. Bill is an example of your commitment to ensuring that our country fulfills the promises we made to our veterans in return for their service. Your recent advocacy efforts for the Forever G.I. Bill demonstrate that your pursuit of fair treatment for our veterans is unrelenting.

In our hyper-partisan political environment, you have managed to bring together representatives from both parties together. And let me tell you, having served in Congress for almost six years, that is not an easy thing to do. So congratulations to you. (*Applause*)

The Legion's successes are indicative of the value of engagement, advocacy, and commitment to our democracy. They reflect a democracy that, even as it is threatened by politics that seek to undermine it, can prevail and continue to work as intended. America only lives up to its promise when its people demand better, when we demand justice, when we hold our government accountable and ensure that it's working for all of us.

As we prepare for the next Congress, I want you to look back at the Legion's accomplishments with pride, and I want you to be inspired by what your advocacy has done for the men and women who served in uniform. But I especially want you to look ahead and think about what more you can accomplish, what we can accomplish together.

As vice ranking member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, it fills me with great pride to know that our committee has been one of the most productive this congress. We have passed significant pieces of legislation to protect VA whistleblowers, student veterans, and earned benefits. As a teacher, one of the committee's legislative accomplishments that brings me the greatest joy is the passage of the Forever G.I. Bill. With the support of the Legion and many other veterans service organizations, the House passed the Forever G.I. Bill with 405 votes in favor and 0 opposed. (*Applause*)

I'm proud to have played a significant role in the negotiation of the Forever G.I. Bill. I fought hard to ensure that the bill included provisions to protect student veterans who were deceived by predatory for-profit institutions, like ITT Tech and Corinthian Colleges, who targeted them, stole

their GI benefits, and buried them under insurmountable debt. I'm proud to say that the provisions I added to this bill allow veterans to get their money back! *(Applause)*

These bipartisan reforms are a step in the right direction as we continue to demand that America keeps its promises to our veterans. Today, I want to share a vision for what the Committee on Veterans' Affairs can accomplish in the 116th Congress, a shared vision of an America that lives up to the promises it made to our veterans and meets their needs. An America that dares to be better than it was yesterday and focuses on being better tomorrow. But as I like to say, a vision without a plan is just a dream, and I plan on working with you to make this vision a reality.

The VA is one of our nation's largest institutions, and it has one of the most important missions, but efforts to undermine it have stagnated its progress. A lack of qualified, experienced management and improper oversight have threatened the quality of health care veterans receive and have limited access to their earned benefits.

To reverse course and put the VA back on track, Congress should not only be prioritizing the proper implementation of the reforms we have already passed, but it also must be looking ahead and building a future VA that can truly meet the needs of all of our veterans. Members of Congress should be asking: Is the VA doing its job today? And we must also be asking: What can the VA be for veterans 10 years from now?

A forward-thinking approach would lay out a plan for high-priority issues that must be addressed in the next decade. With a new focus on management, quality and delivery of care, proper staffing, and cost efficiency, the VA can thrive in the present and flourish in the future. It should be a priority for the Committee on Veterans' Affairs to protect the integrity of America's commitments to immigrant servicemembers. We must ensure that every immigrant who has fought for our freedoms is able to obtain their U.S. citizenship. Congress can help our country uphold its promise and give rightful honor to every man and woman who has served, whether born in America or not. *(Applause)*

Having Commander Denise Rohan serve as the Legion's first female national commander is a long-overdue achievement, one which underscores the significant contributions of women in the military and stresses the need for women leaders in the veterans' advocacy space. Women, and the experiences they bring with them, should always be a part of the conversation when deciding how the VA can move forward and effectively support and meet the needs of women who have served. That is why we must make it a priority for women to have a seat at the table. Including at the head of the table. *(Applause)*

As we focus on creating a future where every veteran can succeed, improving transition programs and economic opportunities must be at the top of the list. The passage of the Forever G.I. Bill emphasizes the importance of safeguarding educational benefits. Whether it's community college, a four-year university, or an apprenticeship program, the Veterans' Affairs Committee, working closely with the Committee on Education and the Workforce, must hold every institution accountable for delivering on the promise they make to student veterans.

For-profit institutions that continue their predatory practices by cheating veterans out of their educational benefits, driving them into debt, and forcing taxpayers to foot the bill must be held accountable. The success of student veterans, their economic opportunities, and their future depend on it. As I stand here before you, I commit to working with congressional Republicans, with Secretary Wilkie, with The American Legion and other veterans service organizations and with this White House to get things done for our veterans. *(Applause)*

Next Congress, I am going to work with you to fill the more than 30,000 employee vacancies across the VA that prevent veterans from accessing the benefits they have earned. *(Applause)*

I am going work with you to hold predatory for-profit colleges accountable for cheating veterans and failing to deliver on their promises. *(Applause)*

While there will always be some form of care in the community to support the mission of the VA to serve veterans, I have great concerns about potential efforts to profiteer off of veterans. This would undermine veterans health care. And as long as I'm in Congress, I will never let VA health care be privatized! *(Applause)*

In closing, I would like to echo a message the late Senator John McCain left in his farewell letter to the nation. "Do not despair of our present difficulties, but believe always in the promise and greatness of America."

I say to you: It is the promise of America that my Great-Uncle Mon, who was killed in action five months before the end of World War II, it is that promise he bet on. This promise is why the battle cry of the men of the 442nd, "Go for broke," is still so relevant today. When I tell people his story, I ask them if they think that my great-uncle won his bet with America. And I present myself as evidence that he did. I'm proof that his sacrifice, that his bet was worth it, because I am able to stand before you as a congressman, the greatest honor of my life. (*Applause*)

Today, let's all pledge to continue believing that this country is still the best bet for the promises of freedom, equality, and opportunity for all. Thank you for having me here. Thank you for all The American Legion does for our country. Thank you all for your service. God bless all of you, and God bless the United States of America. (*Applause*)

Collection of Donations to Operation Comfort Warriors

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: I will now accept donations for Operation Comfort Warriors.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER KINSEY (AR): To Commander Denise Rohan, fellow Legionnaires, my name is R.D. Kinsey, and I am the commander of The American Legion Department of Arkansas. We are honored to be here today on behalf of the officers and members of the Saxton-Willis American Legion Post 64 of Heber Springs. I'm honored to be flanked by our post commander, Louis Gray, and our post adjutant, Wally Rosier, who proudly, commander, on behalf of Operation Comfort Warriors, donate \$500.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN COSTELLO (NE): For the great state of Nebraska, Go Big Red. I'm Jim Costello, past department commander and currently the delegation chairman. With me today is Bill Crosier, our NECman. We are proud to present a check to OCW today from one of our Legion Rider chapters in Millard, Nebraska, Millard Post 374. They gave me a last-minute call. They had a run this past weekend, wanted to have the check here presented at convention. So we rendezvoused and picked it up, and I'm proud to announce that Millard Post 374 Legion Riders donate \$4,500.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Commander Rohan, Garden State, Department of New Jersey, donates \$1,000. With me today I have my vice commander, Larry Bishop.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Also from the great Department of New Jersey, I'd just like to say John Wesley Taylor American Legion post in Barnegat, we also had a run this weekend. They haven't fulfilled their monetary donation yet, but our American Legion Family from our little post would like to present \$500.

DELEGATE BEISCHEL (AZ): I'm Judi Beischel, and I'm proud to present a check for \$500 from Fountain Hills, Arizona, Post 58, the home of your new national Military Class Honor Guard Champions.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER WHITE (MA): From the Department of Massachusetts, I'm commander Fred White. I'd like to introduce Past Department Commander Michael Davis, and Department Senior Vice Commander Jodie Pajak, and National Executive Committeeman Lou Bault. Anyways, a check for \$3,250 brings our total to \$5,750 for the year.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the great state of Missouri, home of Harry S. Truman, we'd like to donate \$625.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NESSLER (NY): Commander Rohan, from the great Department of New York, the home of Past National Commander Fang A. Wong, I'm Rena Nessler, department chairwoman; our adjutant, James Casey; our commander, Gary Schacher; and our ALR director, Bob Wallace. We present you with a check for Operation Comfort Warriors in the amount of \$9,589.

DELEGATE WALLACE (NY): Commander, Bob Wallace from the Department of New York and delegate to this convention, and also American Legion Riders would like to add on \$3,120 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SCHAFFER (MN): Mike Schaffer, delegation chairman of Minnesota, host of this 100th National Convention. With me today is our National Executive Committeeman, Marland Ronning. I'm pleased and proud to present a check to Operation Comfort Warriors in the amount of \$1,500.

DELEGATE IVERSON (CT): Paul Iverson, assistant state director for Connecticut American Legion Baseball, and I am pleased to be here in my home state of Minnesota for this convention and to represent our baseball program. Connecticut is the third smallest state in terms of land size, but we boast the sixth highest number of American Legion teams playing baseball. Four years ago, we started a program to give back to our veterans for those that stood tall for us, and we selected Operation Comfort Warriors. Our first three years, we have raised and donated \$16,000 to help those veterans. I am honored to be here today representing our state baseball committee, our baseball programs, Legion posts, families and friends to present this check for \$10,000.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much, commander. With me on stage is Department Commander Rodney Strong, and our National Executive Committeeman, Jerry Jordon. I'm going to read you the list of Operation Comfort Warriors donations. American Legion Post 34 SAL from the Comfort Jam, \$3,055. White River Yacht Club, \$200. Sergeant Raymond G. Oaf from Rolla, Missouri, \$1,000. Vance and Scott Johnson from Elberfeld Post 351, \$30. Larry Lowry, \$100. Department of Indiana American Legion Auxiliary, the juniors, they went out and collected money all around the neighborhoods, \$815. Speedway Post 500, in honor of John Hannon, their post commander who passed away, \$1,450. American Legion Auxiliary 64, \$50. American Legion Post 64 Euchre fund, \$224.16. Hoosier Boys State, Warner County, \$322.20. Don Hogan Post 34, \$10. Patrick and Nancy Schaffer, Post 34, \$30. Butch Masik, \$20. Clifton Morgan, \$20. Kevin Hinton, \$20. Al Paledo and Paul Smith, fined for answering their phone while they were in a meeting, \$20. Richard and Henry Witke, \$100. Larry Lowry, another \$100. Jeanette Rae Evans, \$20. Jennifer Molden, \$25. Streetsboro, Ohio, American Legion, \$200. These people here wanted to be here, but they wouldn't let them out: Plainfield Correctional Facility, \$1,000. Ron and Brenda Barley \$100. Dave Sharber, \$100, from Mt. Vernon Post 5. For a total of \$8,911.36. Thank you all very much. (*Applause*)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, home of Past National Commanders Dominic DiFrancesco and Robert F. Conley, and newly elected Commander James Vollrath, we would like to present a check of \$11,561.37.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Our national adjutant is such a fast mathematician. The OCW collected today \$44,315.36. Thank you all. (*Applause*)

Our next speaker is the alternate NECman from the Department of Nebraska. He is a past department commander and a Vietnam War veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps. He is speaking today on behalf of the organization State Funeral for World War II Veterans. Please welcome Frederick C. Craigie. (*Applause*)

**Address: Frederick C. Craigie
State Funeral for WWII Veterans**

Good morning. My name is Fred Craigie. I'm from Lincoln, Nebraska. I'm a past department commander and serving currently as the alternate NEC. Today I serve you, serve Nebraska as the state chairman of a new veterans' commemorative organization, State Funeral for World War II Veterans. Our leading candidate for national commander, Brett Reistad, proudly serves on the national board of directors too. Many of our state chairs are Legionnaires, like Randy Edwards in Utah and Richard LaBrash in Missouri.

James Bradley, author the famous World War II book and movie "Flags of our Fathers" wrote the following: "In the 1,364 days from Pearl Harbor to the Japanese surrender, with millions of Americans fighting on global battlefields, only 473 Americans were awarded medals of honor, the nation's highest award for valor. Today only four remain."

Our mission is as follows: To convince the President of the United States to designate a state funeral for the last medal of honor winner from World War II as a final salute to the 16 million women and men of the Greatest Generation who served in our armed forces from 1941 to 1945.

It has been 14 long years since our nation has held the last state funeral. That was from President Ronald Reagan. Our nation has held many state funerals for generals, but there's never been one for an enlisted man. Each of the four Congressional Medal of Honor recipients still living from the Second World War were enlisted men. No enlisted man has ever laid state in the Capitol rotunda in Washington. We are going to make history with your help.

We do not require any legislation or money, but we do need you to write the president or sign one of our petitions online at www.worldwar2salute.org. The president of the United States has the sole authority to designate a state funeral. General Douglas MacArthur and General Dwight Eisenhower were duly honored by the nation with state funerals in Washington, D.C. The men and women who served under them should be entitled to this special recognition with a state funeral, one of their own.

Our organization was founded by a 10-year-old girl in Texas, Rabel McNutt, and her father, Bill McNutt, our chairman. She is the goddaughter of Medal of Honor recipient from D Day and the Battle of Normandy, Walter Ehlers. We believe the president should provide a final salute to the Greatest Generation by granting a state funeral for the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient from World War II.

Our nation stands divided in numerous ways today and yearns for a unifying national event. A state funeral would be a wonderful way to accomplish this while thanking the Greatest Generation. A state funeral is not just honoring one man, but providing recognition for all 16 million men and women that have served our country and defeated Nazism, fascism, and imperialism during World War II.

How can you help? There are three ways. First, you can go to our website, www.worldwar2salute.org, or go to the change.org website and click through and sign our petition to the president. Second, we are only organized in half the states, and need volunteers from patriots like you to get organized in all 50. Please write down the following simple e-mail address to one of our national board members, Morris Kahn, MorrisKahn@aol.com, and let us know if you are willing to help to be a state chairman or a state board member, or nominate a friend.

Third, send us your parent's or grandparent's story that wore the uniform in World War II. We want to post their stories on our website. You can read my father's story. He served in the European theater with the 12th Armored Division. Again, my name is Fred Craigie. Our website is www.worldwar2salute.org. Together, we can give the Greatest Generation the final salute they deserve. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair now recognizes Ralph Bozella of Colorado, the chairman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado, Chairman

On August 26, 2018, 120 members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. in the Minneapolis Convention Center, Room 101, Sections D & E, Level One, Minneapolis, Minnesota. This report is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Chanin Nuntavong (CA), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Greg Nembhard (VA), Assistant Director, DoD Boards, VA&R Division, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. Ralph P. Bozella (CO), Chairman of the Standing National VA&R Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committee.

Exercising the authority granted to him, the Chairman accepted nominations for secretary to the Convention Committee. Phil Youngblood (GA) was voted as Committee Secretary. During their breakout sessions the subcommittees elected William J. Smith (PA) as Chairman of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee, and Patrick Rourk (NY) as Secretary; Phil Youngblood (GA) as Chairman of the Health Administration Committee, and James Stanko (CO) as Secretary;

Richard Neville (NC) as Chairman of the National Cemetery Committee, and P. Earle Gleason (NY) as Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Chanin Nuntavong (CA) the Director, VA&R Division; David Spivey (VA) the Deputy Director for Claims to Benefits Administration; Roscoe Butler (MD) the Deputy Director for Health Policy to Health Administration; and Greg Nembhard (VA) the Assistant Director for DoD Boards to National Cemetery.

A screening committee comprised of Department Service Officers in a pre-convention meeting screened and grouped the VA&R resolutions. A report of their action, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committee for consideration.

The screening committee conserved the time of the Convention Committee substantially. It was chaired by Ralph P. Bozella, the Chairman of the VA&R Commission, and was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

- REGION 1 – K. Robert Lewis (CT)
- REGION 2 – Tracy L. Vawter (MO)
- REGION 3 – Paul Sullivan (AL)
- REGION 4 – Jeremy A. Wolfsteller (MN)
- REGION 5 – Lorn Dean Casey (CO)

The 40 Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention were referred by the Resolutions Assignment Committee. The following action on the resolutions was taken by the Convention Committee:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment	19
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	0
Referred to the Standing Commission	4
Received and Recorded	11
Rejected	6

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committee's behalf.

A report of action taken on the four (4) resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

Approved Resolutions

Resolution No. 11: Agent Orange And Kidney Disease

Origin: Colorado

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was the most common herbicide used in Southeast Asia by the United States Armed Forces during the Vietnam War from 1962-1971; and

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was contaminated by the carcinogen dioxin (2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzo-para-dioxin (TCDD)); and

WHEREAS, Over two million veterans served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War and are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, Scientific evidence has linked human exposure to dioxin and certain diseases; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of Vietnam veterans have developed various cancers, neurological disorders, liver dysfunction and other severe diseases; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-103 provides a presumption of exposure to herbicides for veterans who served in Vietnam during wartime; and

WHEREAS, The essential function of the kidneys is to filter wastes and excess water out of blood, which results in the production of urine, and to maintain the body's chemical balance, help control blood pressure, make hormones; and

WHEREAS, Problems that arise with kidney function, may leave the kidneys unable to filter blood and thus unable to remove wastes, resulting in renal failure, or chronic kidney disease; and

WHEREAS, Studies have shown exposure to Agent Orange and the carcinogen dioxin has caused medical problems to bodily organs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to conduct a scientific study on the effects of exposure to Agent Orange to determine if kidney disease caused by Agent Orange can be declared a presumptive condition for any veteran who was exposed to dioxin in any area where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed or stored; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That if a VA study, or other like studies, prove to conclude that Agent Orange has the effect of causing kidney disease, that The American Legion seek legislation to amend Title 38, of the United States Code, section 1116 to provide entitlement to those presumptions for those veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange in any area where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed or stored.

Resolution No. 18: Amend Set Dates Of Agent Orange Illness

Origin: Connecticut

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
(As Amended)**

WHEREAS: The American Legion is a national organization of wartime veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state, and nation; and

WHEREAS: The Department of Veterans Affairs annually adds to or amends illness-related diseases on Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS: The list of 15 Agent Orange illnesses are listed affecting 2.2 million veterans who served "boots on the ground" in Vietnam from 1961-1971 and thousands more veterans in Korea from April 1, 1968 to August 31, 1971; and

WHEREAS: Chloracne, acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy, and porphyria cutanea tarda, all on the list of 15 Agent Orange illnesses, currently have a cutoff date of only one year following exposure to Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS: Certain limitations were place on the aforementioned diseases, establishing unreasonable and punitive onset dates resulting in the loss of earned disability compensation, and in some cases treatment; and

WHEREAS: Many of these veterans now have health problems commonly associated with herbicide exposure and have endured lengthy legal struggles to prove that these problems are service-related; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion hereby address the Congress of the United States, the National Institute of Health, and president of the United States, to amend those three above-listed illnesses (Chloracne, acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy, and porphyria cutanea tarda) on set dates, to award earned benefits and treatment through the Department of Veteran Affairs.

Resolution No. 42: Support Use Of President Lincoln Second Inaugural Quote By The Department Of Veterans Affairs

Origin: Virginia

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Since 1919, The American Legion remains the nation's leading advocate for the appropriate health care, medical treatment and earned benefits for America's veterans and their families provided by the federal, state and local governments; and

WHEREAS, Membership in The American Legion remains open to all eligible veterans of the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion share, equally, all membership benefits regardless of rank, branch of service, or length of service; and

WHEREAS, In 1959, then head of the Veterans Administration, Sumner G. Whitter, established the agency's motto as: "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan"; and

WHEREAS, That famous quotation came from then President Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural address given on March 4, 1865; and

WHEREAS, That sage mandate reminds We, the people of the nation's obligations to those citizens who took the oath of enlistment and have served or currently serving honorably in the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, In October 2017, the leadership of a small veterans' association, not federally chartered, wrote a letter to the secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs requesting the removal of the "outdated motto from the Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office Building and replace it with an inclusive message and mission that acknowledges women veterans and honors all veterans"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has fought previous efforts of those individuals and groups seeking to revise historical events and actions in the name of political correctness; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion fully supports the Department of Veterans Affairs current motto: "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan"; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion will oppose the removal of any plaques, signs, or other public postings of the famous presidential quotation that reminds everyone of this nation's obligation to America's veterans and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion will remain being a steadfast advocate of all honorably discharged veterans entitled to all services and benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion will continue its efforts to assure that quality gender-specific health care is provided within the Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Health Administration; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion will adamantly oppose any and all acts of discrimination towards honorably discharged veterans by an federal, state, territorial or local government entity.

Resolution No. 48: Dependency And Indemnity Compensation For Surviving Spouses

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

(As Amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is paid to the widows and widowers of service-connected disabled veterans who die as a result of their service-related condition or who at the time of death were rated 100% service-connected disabled for at least ten years, or in the case of former prisoners-of-war one year; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans don't reach the 100% level until they are much older because their condition has worsened with time; and

WHEREAS, They often pass away due to other then their service-related condition well before they have been receiving the 100% rate for the required length of time; and

WHEREAS, The spouse has usually been the primary care giver and companion for these disabled veterans throughout the veterans lifetime and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation has been a primary means of support; and

WHEREAS, The surviving spouse in many instances can no longer count on VA benefits for assistance due to a 100% rating of less than ten years; and

WHEREAS, This causes a dramatic change in the quality of life of the surviving spouse; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018 That The American Legion shall support legislation to reduce the number of years a veteran must be rated 100% from 10 years to 5 years for eligibility to Dependency and Indemnity Compensation payments.

Resolution No. 49: Exempt Certain Income From VA Pension Rate Determination

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

(As Amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Serving on jury duty is a civic obligation, which all citizens, when called, should take very seriously; and

WHEREAS, At many polling places, there is a shortage of needed supervisory personnel and serving as an election judge helps insure a fair and impartial election process; and

WHEREAS, Veterans and surviving spouses in receipt of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pension benefits under Public Law (PL) 95-588 must report all income received from outside sources, since this directly affects the amount of VA pension to which they are entitled; and

WHEREAS, The amount of financial remuneration received from these types of civic activities is relatively small, but it can result in the reduction in monthly benefits, dollar for dollar, or the complete loss of entitlement to pension; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion shall support legislation to exempt income received from jury duty and income from service as an election judge in determining the Department of Veterans Affairs pension rate under PL 95-588.

Resolution No. 53: Means Test For Married Veterans

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The United States Code, Title 38 § 1722 subsection (b) authorizes income thresholds for veterans eligibility for VA health-care benefits if they don't qualify for any other category, e.g. former POW, Purple Heart, service-connected disabled, etc.; and

WHEREAS, Currently a single veteran's financial means test threshold is based on a geographic-based means test using a chart which breaks down each state by county; and

WHEREAS, This chart can be found at <http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/resources/gmt> and every state and county is listed; and

WHEREAS, If the veteran has a dependent the means test threshold is increased; and

WHEREAS, A veteran married to a veteran, where both are eligible to enroll in VA health care, are penalized by the means test threshold by not having both of their honorable service periods recognized; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion support legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, Sections 1722, subsection (b) to increase the income threshold of a veteran married to another veteran by two times the financial means test of a single veteran (as found on the chart at <http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/resources/gmt>) for the financial test applied for enrollment into the Department of Veterans Affairs health-care system.

Resolution No. 58: Compensation For Veterans Requiring Hearing Aids For Service Connected Hearing Loss

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, After veterans are released from service they are able to apply for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation for their injuries and illnesses related to their active duty service; and

WHEREAS, The VA uses a standard schedule of ratings to determine the percent of disability compensation to assign; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans have suffered hearing loss from service due to loud noise exposure; and

WHEREAS, Many of these veterans are granted a 0% service-connected rating and this authorizes the VA hospital to furnish these veterans hearing aids as needed; and

WHEREAS, These hearing aids must be kept clean, properly stored when not in use, adjusted periodically and have batteries replaced when needed; and

WHEREAS, Although minor, these chores and maintenance do impact on a veteran's quality of life and loss of income on a daily basis and therefore should warrant a minimum compensable rating; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion support legislation to grant a minimum 10% rating for all veterans, who, due to their service-connected hearing loss, are furnished hearing aids.

Resolution No. 59: Automatic Waiver For Over-Payment Of \$300 Or Less

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

(As Amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Veterans sometimes incur overpayments with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) due to the complexity of VA laws and regulations; and

WHEREAS, The majority of these overpayments are not due to any misrepresentation or fraud on the veteran's part; and

WHEREAS, VA processing of waiver requests through the Committees on Waivers and Compromises, possible appeals, and collection of these debts requires significant employee resources and time, printing, mailing, filing, et cetera.; and

WHEREAS, Under current regulations, many small overpayment waiver requests are granted; and

WHEREAS, Elimination of processing of small overpayment amounts would allow VA personnel to concentrate on other duties, such as attacking the large claims and appeals backlog, thus improving the timeliness of delivery of benefits to our deserving veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion shall support legislation to allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to grant an automatic waiver for those overpayments of \$300 or less if the claimant requests one and there is no obvious indication of fraud or misrepresentation.

Resolution No. 64: Department Of Veterans Affairs Dental Care For Ratings Of 50% Or More

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

(As Amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation and is constantly striving to improve Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefit programs; and

WHEREAS, One of the more important veteran's benefits is eligibility for VA hospital care and the Department of Veterans Affairs has established a system of priority groups in which the highest priority is assigned to service-connected disabled veterans, former POW's, those who received a Purple Heart, returning combat veterans, etc.; and

WHEREAS, Under this current system any veteran with a combined VA service-connected rating of 50% or more is exempt from copayments for any inpatient or outpatient visits and is also exempt from any copayments for any prescriptions; and

WHEREAS, These same veterans with a rating of 50% to 90% are not eligible for any dental services they may need unless they are rated 100% service-connected disabled or former POWs or certain other categories; and

WHEREAS, It seems inequitable not to give these veterans dental services when everything else is available to them; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That The American Legion National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion shall support legislation to change the eligibility to include dental care for any veteran with a combined Department of Veterans Affairs service-connected rating of 50% or more.

Resolution No. 68: All Blood Work By The Veterans Health Administration Include Hepatitis C Test

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

(As Amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is always concerned for the health and well-being of its nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Health Administration operates the world's finest health system in the United States and millions of our nation's veterans use their services yearly both as inpatients and outpatients; and

WHEREAS, At the last Washington D.C. conference held this year (2018) Legionnaires were advised of the health crisis regarding the Hepatitis C virus and that over 700,000 of our nation's veterans could have that virus and not know it; and

WHEREAS, Through a recently discovered drug the cure rate is now over 95%; and

WHEREAS, A simple blood test would alert a veteran patient that they have the virus and if requested by the veteran the Department of Veterans Affairs could then give that patient the needed medication; and

WHEREAS, Hundreds of thousands of blood tests are ordered yearly by Department of Veterans Affairs doctors to check A1C levels for diabetes, lipid panels to check levels of cholesterol, etc.; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That The American Legion National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That the American Legion shall urge the Veterans Health Administration to have all blood work ordered either at a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital or clinic include a check for the Hepatitis C virus.

Resolution No. 73: Allow Beneficiaries To Retain \$90 Of Their Benefits While In Medicaid-Covered Nursing Homes

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

(As Amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, When a veteran without dependents is in receipt of non-service connected pension benefits and is in a nursing home and Medicaid is paying some or all of the monthly cost, the veteran's (Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)) pension is reduced to \$90 for what is known as a "personal needs allowance"; and

WHEREAS, When a veteran without dependents who is receiving service-related compensation benefits and is similarly covered by Medicaid, only \$60 (this rate varies from state to state) a month is allowed for their "personal needs allowance"; and

WHEREAS, When a surviving spouse who is in receipt of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and is similarly covered by Medicaid, only \$60 (this rate varies from state to state) a month is allowed for their "personal needs allowance"; and

WHEREAS, When a helpless child who is in receipt of pension or Dependency and Indemnity Compensation and is similarly covered by Medicaid, only \$60 (this rate varies from state to state) a month is allowed for their "personal needs allowance"; and

WHEREAS, When a surviving parent who is in receipt of parents' DIC and is similarly covered by Medicaid, only \$60 (this rate varies from state to state) is allowed for their "personal needs allowance"; and

WHEREAS, Under current VA and Medicaid statutes, the service-connected disabled veteran, surviving spouses, helpless children and surviving parents who receive DIC benefits are financially disadvantaged when compared to single veterans receiving non-service connected pension benefits; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion shall support legislation to authorize veterans in receipt of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation, and surviving spouses, helpless children and surviving parents in receipt of VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, to keep up to \$90 of their monthly VA benefits for their "personal needs allowance" while in a Medicaid-covered nursing home.

Resolution No. 74: Amend The Eligibility Requirements And Extend The Eligibility Time Period For Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

(As Amended)

WHEREAS, The Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was founded by Congress in 1951 to provide life insurance coverage for veterans suffering only from disabilities rated by VA as being connected to their military service to the nation; and

WHEREAS, Service-connected disabled veterans are required by statute to not only be in good health except for their service-connected disability, but must apply for SDVI coverage within two years from the date of their last VA rating for a new, original disability, with increases in prior VA disability ratings not being includible for this purpose; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans in good health except for their service-connected disabilities, and who are granted rating increases because of worsening severity in such disabilities, continue to be denied SDVI coverage at a time when it has become most needful to them, due to the requirement that SDVI eligibility periods begin only with a VA rating for a new disability and last for only two years; and

WHEREAS, Other service-disabled veterans also continue to be denied insurance, due to the strict two year time limit (from the date of their last original rating) to make application; and

WHEREAS, It continues to be the experience of veterans service organizations such as The American Legion that many service-disabled veterans remain unaware of the SDVI program despite automated VA notifications, and that the insurance benefit remains inadequate and in need of enhancement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion shall support legislation to amend Sec. 1922(a) of title 38, United States Code, to permit that increases in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) service-connected ratings also provide a service-connected veteran with an eligibility period to apply for VA Service Disabled Life Insurance in the same manner that ratings for new, original disabilities presently do, and that the time period of such eligibility be increased from the current two years to a period of at least five

years from the date of rating determination and notification, and that such amendment also apply to any new similar issue of VA Service-Disabled Insurance that may be enacted into law.

Resolution No. 75: Increase Maximum Coverage Under The Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

(As Amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (also known as S-DVI or RH insurance) was established in 1951 to meet the insurance needs of certain veterans with service-related disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The maximum coverage was set at \$10,000 back in 1951; and

WHEREAS, What cost \$10,000 back in 1951 would cost over \$80,000 in 2016 due to inflation; and

WHEREAS, This lower coverage puts a greater burden on the surviving family members to meet the burial and final expenses of a deceased service-connected disabled veteran; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion shall support legislation to increase to \$75,000 the maximum coverage a service-connected disabled veteran can purchase under the Service-Disabled Veterans insurance program on new policies.

Resolution No. 79: Improve Special Monthly Compensation (K) Award

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC), section 1114, provides for the payment of disability compensation for a service-connected disability, which is rated from ten percent to one hundred percent under the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Schedule for Rating Disabilities for the particular disability; and

WHEREAS, An additional \$103.23 in Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) is payable, under title 38, USC, section 1114(k), where a veteran, as the result of a service-connected disability, has suffered the anatomical loss or loss of use of one or more creative organs, or one foot, or one hand, both buttocks, or blindness in one eye and having only light perception in the other eye, or rendered unable to speak, or deafness in both ears, or in the case of a female veteran, suffered the anatomical loss of one or both breasts, including by mastectomy; and

WHEREAS, The SMC (k) award, which is paid over and above the amount of compensation authorized under title 38, USC, section 1114, for these loss or loss of use disabilities, is intended to recognize the lifelong physical limitations and psychological trauma associated with such loss or loss of use of the veterans' limbs or other body parts; and

WHEREAS, In contrast to regular increases in the rates of disability compensation through the years, the SMC (k) award, which was initially authorized in 1939, has been increased infrequently; and

WHEREAS, In 1939, the SMC (k) award was originally \$18.75 when the rate of compensation for being totally or one-hundred percent disabled was \$75; and

WHEREAS, In 2012, the SMC (k) award is currently \$105.61 and the rate of compensation for being totally or one-hundred percent disabled is \$2,973.86; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are again being placed in harm's way, and many of the seriously wounded veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan have suffered loss or loss of use injuries; and

WHEREAS, The token payment of \$105.61 is a disgrace to those men and women who have put their bodies on the line in the service of their country and paid a heavy price, as a result; and

WHEREAS, To restore the original twenty-five percent (25%) differential that existed in 1939 between the amount of the (k) award and the compensation rate for being totally or one-hundred percent disabled, the SMC (k) award should be increased to \$743.47; and

WHEREAS, This substantial increase would provide a more appropriate level of additional compensation to those veterans who have suffered these types of grievous wounds; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion support an increase in the SMC (k) award, under title 38, USC, section 1114(k), from \$105.61 to \$743.47.

Resolution No. 85: Designate Prisoner Of War, Purple Heart And Medal Of Honor Recipients As Priority Group 1 Veterans

Origin: New York

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of wartime veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of community, state, and nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion fully appreciated the dedicated service of those former prisoners of war and veterans awarded the Purple Heart and Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, The recipients have earned this award by displaying heroism and bravery while risking their lives during service to this great nation; and

WHEREAS, By a law known as 38 United States Code 1722A, the secretary of veterans affairs was authorized and directed to charge co-payments for prescription drugs; and

WHEREAS, The law known as 38 United States Code 1710, makes Department of Veterans Affairs medical services available to former prisoners of war and recipients of the Purple Heart only to the extent of congressional appropriation and does not so provide for recipients of the Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides hospital and out-patient care to veterans as defined in 38 CFR, Chapter 1, Part 17, section 17.38 Medical Benefits Package; and

WHEREAS The VA secretary determines the categories of veterans eligible to be enrolled in VA health care based on an order of priority, and

WHEREAS, Former Prisoners of War, Purple Heart and Medal of Honor recipients are currently assigned to Priority Group 3, and are required to make co-payments for prescriptions and medical care not associated with service connected disabilities, now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That the American Legion support legislation to amend 38 United States Code 1710, 22A so as to require Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Chapter 1, Part 17, section 17.38, Medical Benefits Package to specify that former Prisoner of War, Purple Heart and Medal of Honor recipients receive the same Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital and medical entitlements as granted to all Priority Group 1 veterans.

Resolution No. 87: Establishing And Enforcing Requirements For Contract Examiners Conducting Medical Examinations For VA Compensation Purposes

Origin: New York

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has established contracts with non-VA entities to assist with conducting compensation & pension examinations as an answer to the backlog of claims within the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA); and

WHEREAS, Many of these contracted compensation & pension examinations have resulted in inadequate or inappropriate examinations; and

WHEREAS, These examiners, in some cases, have not been properly qualified or trained to conduct the requested examinations; and

WHEREAS, The results of these examinations have caused delays and requests for new examinations and increased the potential for notices of disagreement; and

WHEREAS, The overall cost to the Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits Administration continues to climb; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That the secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs establish appropriate requirements for examiners and enforce the use of those requirements and review the effectiveness of the requirements for examiners and how that effectiveness impacts the appropriate ratings for compensation claims.

Resolution No. 93: Agent Orange

Origin: Wisconsin

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was the most common herbicide used in Southeast Asia by the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War, and Agent Orange was contaminated by the carcinogen dioxin (2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-para-dioxin (TCDD)); and

WHEREAS, Over two million veterans served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War and are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange and scientific evidence has linked human exposure to dioxin and certain diseases with a significant number of Vietnam veterans developing various cancers, neurological disorders, liver dysfunction and other severe diseases; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, since its inception, has promoted an active involvement of its members, posts, and departments in the pursuit of better care for our veterans and treatment for wounds, injuries, and illness they may have incurred in defense of our great nation; and

WHEREAS, Numerous resolutions through the years have put The American Legion on record encouraging adequate and competent medical care for all our nation's veterans;

WHEREAS, All U.S. forces in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam were in proximity of the Agent Orange applications and where its movement due to wind and other weather aspects placed troops at risk in theater both during and after the dispersal; and

WHEREAS, According to information from the National Archives, DCAS, Vietnam Conflict Extract File, 58,220 U.S. servicemen and women have died during and after the end of hostilities associated with the Vietnam War from combat and non-combat related injuries; and

WHEREAS, According to Department of Defense report, Project CHECO Southeast Asia Report: Base Defense in Thailand 1968-1972, pages 54-55, U.S. military personnel stationed at small bases throughout the theater of operations were exposed to Agent Orange in the conduct of routine level security patrols, but are not recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs unless assigned a military police or military police-related career field: now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That the American Legion seek legislation to amend Title 38, of the United States Code, section 1116 to provide entitlement to those presumptions for those veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange in any area where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed or stored; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion reiterates its long-standing support of adequate and competent medical care for all United States veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the American Legion calls on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to actively treat veterans that served in the theater of the Vietnam War to include all countries and territories previously denied.

Resolution No. 115: Outdoor And Adaptive Sports Programs For Veterans

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), the veteran suicide rate has increased steadily every year since 2001 and is especially high among 18-24 year old OEF/OIF/OND combat veterans; and

WHEREAS, The current approach to mental health care is limited by focusing on pharmacotherapy and symptomatic treatment, resulting in countless veterans reporting frustration with overmedication, addiction, overdoses, side-effects and ineffectiveness of medications; and

WHEREAS, A high percentage of veterans underutilize traditional mental health interventions by not accessing care, dropping out of care, or not receiving adequate treatment due to significant treatment barrier presented by veterans' perceived stigma and emotional avoidance; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports complementary and alternative treatments that are not considered to be standard in the current practice of western medicine; and

WHEREAS, Outdoor adventure programs are a potential alternative around the stigma regarding traditional mental health care by providing opportunity to engage in activities that involve physical challenge, camaraderie, and objective achievement which resonate with military servicemembers and veterans; and

WHEREAS, Team based and physical activities appeal to veterans who have been steeped in military culture and norms which discourage them from seeking traditional mental health care; and

WHEREAS, High adrenaline outdoor adventure provides veterans sense of accomplishment, bolsters self-efficacy and is a healthy stress release; and

WHEREAS, The VA provides adaptive sports and recreation to physically and psychologically injured veterans in an effort to assist their rehabilitation process; and

WHEREAS, Non-profit organizations nationwide provide veterans with outdoor activities such as fly fishing, horseback riding, sailing, backpacking, skiing, and other outdoor activities; and

WHEREAS, Numerous studies conducted on adaptive sports and recreation programs for combat veterans have indicated therapeutic potential and participants have shown dramatic improvements in mood disturbance, anger, depression, anxiety and insomnia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veteran Affairs to provide education to veterans on the benefits of outdoor and adaptive sports and referral for those struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder and/or other disabilities to prevent suicide and improve overall health and wellbeing; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veteran Affairs to increase collaboration with and refer veterans to reputable non-profit organizations that provide veterans with outdoor and adaptive sports programs; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to increase the budgets for the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to improve outdoor and adaptive sports programs.

Resolution No. 116: Post-Traumatic Growth

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), the veteran suicide rate has increased steadily every year since 2001 and is especially high among 18-24 year old OEF/OIF/OND combat veterans; and

WHEREAS, The current approach to mental health care is limited and flawed by focusing on pharmacotherapy and symptomatic treatment, resulting in countless veterans reporting frustration with overmedication, addiction, overdoses, side-effects and ineffectiveness of medications; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports complementary and alternative treatments that are not considered to be standard in the current practice of western medicine; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans have had their personal or professional lives directly or indirectly impacted by the misconceptions and perceived issues of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and

WHEREAS, This problem is clearly linked to stigma as it is a compounded assumption that every combat veteran with PTSD is a 'damaged hero'; and

WHEREAS, Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) is a theory that explains the phenomenon of positive personal change that emerges in the aftermath of a traumatic experience; and

WHEREAS, PTG can be reflected by positive adjustment, closer relationships, greater appreciation of life and improved self-efficacy; and

WHEREAS, Non-profit organizations across the country have designed non-clinical programs designed to cultivate and facilitate post-traumatic growth amongst veterans struggling with PTSD and/or combat stress; and

WHEREAS, Studies conducted on participants of these program have shown dramatic improvements in PTSD, depression, anxiety and insomnia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion seek to promote and instill 'post-traumatic growth' rather than the narrative which is heavily embedded in American society that veterans return from war as 'broken heroes'; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to collaborate with non-profit mental health organizations that implement programs designed to cultivate and facilitate post-traumatic growth amongst those struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder and/or combat stress to prevent suicide among veterans.

Referred to Standing Commission

Resolution No. 9 (MT): Establish a Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Committee

Resolution No. 55 (IL): Veterans Health Administration provide assistance with continuous positive airway pressure machine maintenance

Resolution No. 63 (IL): Permanent Building for the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

Resolution No. 97 (WA): Encouraging VA to Conduct Research on the Effects of Anti-Malarial Drug Mefloquine for a Suspected Link to Mental Health Disabilities

Resolutions Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 46 (IL): Urn Makers Provided by the National Cemetery Administration

Resolution No. 47 (IL): Grant a 10% Rating for Veterans Who Must Take Daily Medication for Hypertension

Resolution No. 51 (IL): United States Census to Include Veteran Information

Resolution No. 60 (IL): Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans

Resolution No. 61 (IL): Research Into Hearing Loss Due to Loud or Constant Noise Exposure in the Military

Resolution No. 65 (IL): Request Study by the Department of Veterans Affairs on the Medical Effect of Exposure to Depleted Uranium

Resolution No. 70 (IL): Support Legislation to Pay Interest on Claims Granted by the Board of Veterans Appeals

Resolution No. 71 (IL): Eliminate the Benefit Payment Loophole for Certain Incarcerated Veterans

Resolution No. 72 (IL): Add Agent Orange Component to Code of Federal Regulation 4.16

Resolution No. 76 (IL): Department of Veterans Affairs Provide Service Dog Allowance

Resolution No. 78 (IL): Include WWII in Priority Group 6 for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care

Rejected Resolutions

Resolution No. 7 (NE): Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017

Resolution No. 23 (TX): Remove "Era" Identifier From Vietnam Veterans

Resolution No. 45 (IL): Two Levels of Compensation for Tinnitus

Resolution No. 56 (IL): Department of Veterans Affairs Choice Program and Routine Office Visits

Resolution No. 62 (IL): Exempt Purple Heart and Medal of Honor Recipients from VA Prescription Co-Payment

Resolution No. 92 (GA): Expand Korean War Era Dates for Benefits Purposes**Addendum A
Resolutions to Remain Part of the Legislative Program**

Pursuant to Resolution No. 25 approved in October 2016 by the National Executive Committee the following resolutions previously approved by a National Convention or the National Executive Committee are to remain as part of the legislative program of The American Legion through the 116th Congress.

No.	Year	Meeting	Title
22	2016	FALL (2016N276)	Surviving Families Benefits
23	2016	FALL (2016N256)	Add Agent Orange Component To Code Of Federal Regulations 4.16
24	2016	FALL (2016N184) (2016N257) (2016N260)	Improve Special Monthly Compensation (K) Award
1	2016	CONVENTION (AK)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Quadrennial Plan For Budget
2	2016	CONVENTION (AK)	Reinstate Enrollment Of Priority Group 8g Veterans Into The Department Of Veterans Affairs' Patient Enrollment System
3	2016	CONVENTION (AK)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Accountability
6	2016	CONVENTION (AK)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Construction Programs
8	2016	CONVENTION (SD)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Preservation Of National Historic Properties
11	2016	CONVENTION (LA)	Medical Marijuana Research
35	2016	CONVENTION (MI)	Agent Orange
37	2016	CONVENTION (MI)	Improvements To Department Of Veterans Affairs Women Veterans Programs
38	2016	CONVENTION (MI)	Exempt VA Benefits And Services From Pay-Go Provision
39	2016	CONVENTION (MI)	Research To Develop A Blood Test To Detect Colorectal Cancer
41	2016	CONVENTION (MI)	State Veterans Home Funding For Construction Grants
42	2016	CONVENTION (MI)	Oppose Any Reductions To The Department Of Veterans Affairs' Budget Due To Sequestration
43	2016	CONVENTION (KY)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Child Care Program
44	2016	CONVENTION (KY)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Rural Healthcare Program
51	2016	CONVENTION (CO)	WWII Veterans Hospital And Medical Entitlements
52	2016	CONVENTION (CO)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Means Test

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53	2016	CONVENTION (CO)	Veterans Discounts On Federally Funded Public Transportation
54	2016	CONVENTION (CO)	Designate Waldenstrom's Macroglobulinemia As A Presumptive Condition For Veterans Who Served In Combat Theaters
55	2016	CONVENTION (CO)	Radiation Exposure
57	2016	CONVENTION (UT)	Prevent Exploitation Of Veterans And Family Members Applying For Benefits, To Include Aid And Attendance
59	2016	CONVENTION (UT)	Stopping Non-Attorney Representatives From Charging Fees To Provide Appellate Service To Veterans
62	2016	CONVENTION (NV)	Veterans Transportation System And Benefits Travel
63	2016	CONVENTION (NV)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Choice Program
64	2016	CONVENTION (NV)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Beneficiary Travel Program
83	2016	CONVENTION (DE)	Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record
112	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	All Veterans Receive "Wartime" Benefits For Active Military Service Between February 28, 1961 And August 5, 1964
114	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Provider Agreements With Non-VA Providers
115	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Recruitment And Retention
117	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Disability And Death Pension Program
118	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Environmental Exposures
119	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Exempt Purple Heart And Medal Of Honor Recipients From VA Prescription Co-Payment
120	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Extend Department Of Veterans Affairs Mortgage Protection Life Insurance To Service-Connected Veterans Who Are Permanently And Totally Disabled
121	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Extend The Presumptive Period For Service Connection For Gulf War Veterans With Undiagnosed Illnesses
122	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Gulf War Illnesses
123	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Increase The Transparency Of The Veterans Benefits Administration's Claims Processing
125	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Opening The Federal Supply Schedule For Pharmaceuticals To Medicare And Medicaid
126	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Oppose Any Reduction Of Eligibility Criteria For Department Of Veterans Affairs Per Diem Payments To State Veterans Homes
127	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Prostate Cancer Research And Treatment

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128	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Protection Of Religious Rights And Ceremonies At National Cemetery Administration National And State Cemeteries
129	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Provide The Department Of Veterans Affairs The Ability To Purchase Medications Located Outside The United States
130	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Radiation Exposure
131	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Recognize Operations In Lebanon (1958), Grenada (1983), And Panama (1989-1990) As Periods Of War For Department Of Veterans Affairs Pension Purposes
132	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Request Congress Provide The Department Of Veterans Affairs Adequate Funding For Medical And Prosthetic Research
134	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Service Dogs For Injured Service Personnel And Veterans With Mental Health Conditions
136	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Strategic Capital Investment Planning Program
137	2016	CONVENTION (AK)	Support Legislation To Place Mariner Medal Recipients In Priority Group 3 For The Department Of Veterans Affairs Health Care
138	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Support Medicare Reimbursement For The Department Of Veterans Affairs
139	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Support Presumption Of Service Connection For Hepatitis C
141	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Enhanced-Use Leasing
142	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services
143	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Nursing Home Capacity
145	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Veteran Treatment Courts
146	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Veterans Receive Same Level Of Benefits
148	2016	CONVENTION (MD)	Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives To Develop Claims Directly On Behalf Of The Department Of Veterans Affairs
160	2016	CONVENTION (PA)	Complementary And Alternative Medicine
161	2016	CONVENTION (PA)	Agent Orange Presumption For Service In Southeast Asia Since 1975
162	2016	CONVENTION (PA)	In Vitro Fertilization
163	2016	CONVENTION (PA)	Legislation To Provide Reporting, Tracking, And Actions Dealing With Sexual Assaults At Department Of Veterans Affairs Facilities
165	2016	CONVENTION (PA)	Traumatic Brain Injury And Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Programs
166	2016	CONVENTION (PA)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Involvement In The Department Of Homeland Security

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178	2016	CONVENTION (GA)	Assured Funding For VA Medical Care
179	2016	CONVENTION (GA)	Extend The Filing Period Of An Appeal Notice To The Court Of Appeals For Veterans Claims
180	2016	CONVENTION (GA)	Designate Hypertension As A Presumptive Condition For Veterans Exposed To Agent Orange
181	2016	CONVENTION (GA)	National Cemetery Administration
182	2016	CONVENTION (GA)	Non-Department Of Veterans Affairs Emergency Care
183	2016	CONVENTION (GA)	Presumptive Conditions For Former Prisoners Of War
185	2016	CONVENTION (GA)	State Veteran Home Per Diem Reimbursement
186	2016	CONVENTION (GA)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Dental Care
187	2016	CONVENTION (GA)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation
188	2016	CONVENTION (GA)	Department Of Veterans Affairs' Role In National Emergency Preparedness
194	2016	CONVENTION (WA)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Veteran Integrated Service Networks
230	2016	CONVENTION (NY)	Policy For Those Serving November 4, 1979 Through January 20, 1981 To Be Considered Wartime Veterans
236	2016	CONVENTION (NY)	Department Of Veterans Affairs To Provide Interim Benefits For Pending Claims Over 90 Days
238	2016	CONVENTION (NY)	Suicide Prevention For American Veterans Act
243	2016	CONVENTION (IL)	Compensation For Veterans Requiring Hearing Aids For Service Connected Hearing Loss
244	2016	CONVENTION (IL)	Exempt Purple Heart And Medal Of Honor Recipients From VA Prescription Co-Payment
245	2016	CONVENTION (IL)	Extend Eligibility For National Cemetery Administration Medallion
246	2016	CONVENTION (IL)	Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans
251	2016	CONVENTION (IL)	Grant A 10% Rating For Veterans Who Must Take Daily Medications For Hypertension
252	2016	CONVENTION (IL)	Support Legislation To Pay Interest On Claims Granted By The Board Of Veterans' Affairs
253	2016	CONVENTION (IL)	Eliminate The Benefit Payment Loophole For Certain Incarcerated Veterans
255	2016	CONVENTION (IL)	Reducing Eligibility For Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) Payments For 100% Disabled Veterans From 10 Years To 5 Years
259	2016	CONVENTION (IL)	Extend Caregiver Benefits To Include Veterans Before September 11, 2001
262	2016	CONVENTION (IL)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Provide Service Dog Allowance
268	2016	CONVENTION (IL)	Urn Markers Provided By The National Cemetery Administration

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271	2016	CONVENTION (IL)	Request Study By The Department Of Veterans Affairs On The Medical Effects Of Exposure To Depleted Uranium
360	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Advance Appropriations For All Of The Department Of Veterans Affairs' Discretionary Accounts
361	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Congress To Provide Back Pay To Veterans And Dependents
362	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Congressional Budget Office Scoring On Department Of Veterans Affairs Leasing
363	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Consolidation Of Department Of Veterans Affairs Care In The Community Program
364	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Department Of Veterans Affairs To Develop Outreach And Peer To Peer Programs For Rehabilitation
365	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Fit To Serve Initiative
366	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Honoring Those Who Have Earned The Medal Of Honor
367	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Include Korean War Veterans In Priority Group 6 For Department Of Veterans Affairs Health Care
368	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Increase The Transparency Of Asbestos Claims
370	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselors And Marriage Family Therapists
372	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Oppose Closing Or Privatization Of Department Of Veterans Affairs Health Care System
373	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Oppose Lump Sum Payments For Department Of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation
375	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Prosecution Of VA Employees Engaged In Fraudulent Practices In The Department Of Veterans Affairs
377	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Support For Veteran Quality Of Life
378	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	United States Census To Include Veterans Information
379	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Veteran Caretaker Stipend
380	2016	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Exempt Funds Related To Interment Services At Cemeteries From Any Future Sequestration
23	2017	SPRING (VA&R)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Provide Mental Health Services For Veterans With Other Than Honorable And General Discharges
25	2017	SPRING (VA&R)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Maintained Medical And Dental School
27	2017	SPRING (VA&R)	Amend Title 38, United States Code, To Clarify The Treatment Of A Veteran As Adjudicated Mentally Incompetent For Certain Purposes
29	2017	SPRING (VA&R)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Establish An Opioid Treatment Program To Include An Opioid Detox Unit At Every VA Medical Center
3	2017	CONVENTION (KY)	WWII Veterans Hospital And Medical Eligibility

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8	2017	CONVENTION (ME)	Expand The Presumptive Period For Veterans Who Served In South Korea
13	2017	CONVENTION (MN)	Improve VA Communication With Service Officers
14	2017	CONVENTION (MN)	Extend Allotted Time For Claims Review By Service Officers
16	2017	CONVENTION (PA)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Automobile Allowance Program
41	2017	CONVENTION (WA)	Radiation-Exposed Veterans
47	2017	CONVENTION (IL)	Research Into Hearing Loss Due To Loud Or Constant Noise Exposure In The Military
74	2017	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Air Carrier Access
75	2017	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Rural Health Care Program
76	2017	CONVENTION (VA&R)	Veterans Emergency Room Or Urgent Care Facility Relief
12	2017	FALL (2017N072) (CA)	Department Of Veterans Affairs Drug Pricing Policy
16	2018	SPRING (VA&R)	Beneficiary Travel Philippines
18	2018	SPRING (VA&R)	Furnish Hospital Care And Medical Services To Veterans And Family Members Who Were Stationed At Military Installations At Which The Veterans And Dependents Were Exposed To Per- And Polyfluoroalkyl Substances
19	2018	SPRING (VA&R)	Helping Veterans Exposed To Burn Pits

Commander, I, Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado, a duly elected and registered delegate to this convention, move for the adoption of this report respectfully submitted. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: It has been moved and seconded to accept this report. Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor, indicate by saying aye. Opposed, nay. The report of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation is adopted.

Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: With the adoption of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation report, it is time to announce the winner of the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy. William F. Lenker was the chairman of The American Legion National VA&R Commission from 1967 until 1988. He was a true champion for America's veterans. This trophy is awarded annually to the department that best supports and implements programs to benefit veterans, their families and their survivors. For the 2017-2018 program year the trophy is awarded to the Department of Montana. (*Applause*)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Montana accepts this for all the departments. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The senior senator from Minnesota is a graduate of Yale University and the Chicago Law School. In 2001, "Minnesota Lawyer" named her Attorney of the Year. She was elected to the Senate in 2006 and earned more than 65 percent of the votes

cast during her re-election in 2012. She serves on the Senate Judicial Committee. Please welcome Senator Amy Klobuchar.

**Welcome: Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate**

Well, thank you so much for that kind introduction. Thank you, everyone. I know you've been having a great time in Minnesota. Isn't our weather great? We welcome all of you here, and I want to thank the department commander from Minnesota, Mike Schaffer, your former national commander, Dan Ludwig, and then also all of you that are here today. My big news is that I introduced a resolution about the 100th anniversary of the establishment of The American Legion. We worked really hard on it. And guess what? Yesterday we passed it unanimously! (*Cheers and applause*)

Okay. We can hardly pass a volleyball resolution. So that was pretty good. I wanted to, first of all, thank the Legion for your incredible strength in how you addressed the tragedy of John McCain's death this last week. John was a close friend of mine. And, in fact, about a month and a half ago my husband and I got to go to Sedona, to the ranch, to see him and Cindy, one last time. It was something I will never forget, because he taught me, and so many other senators, not only how to work with leaders on the world stage, but also how to work with each other when we came home.

When I was there, he was more frail than I thought he was going to be. We talked for a while, and then he pointed to a sentence in one of his books, because I brought his books along because I wanted to talk about his new book, "The Restless Wave," and he pointed to one sentence, and he said, "This is all that matters." And the sentence was about what matters most in the world, and what matters most and is the most liberating thing in the world, is fighting for a cause larger than yourself. That was John McCain, and that is the work that The American Legion does every single day.

So I got to travel with Senator McCain all over the world, and everywhere we went we would meet with American troops. Oftentimes it would be me and him and his best friend, Lindsey Graham, who gave some really touching remarks about him on the Senate floor yesterday. I was there. One of my favorite recent trips, in fact, the last trip I went with him on, was to Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and the country of Georgia. And we were there at a very critical time because Senator McCain, as he always did, felt it was really important to show democracies that America is with them. He saw our country at its best when we were strong and when we reached out to other countries and when we had their backs. And so that's what we did on that trip.

On New Year's Eve, we were in Ukraine with the president of Ukraine, President Poroshenko, on the front line, and we were there with a number of widows and others who had lost their loved ones in sniper attacks by Russian soldiers or separatist soldiers. Poroshenko had us there on New Year's Eve on live Ukrainian TV to show his country that America stood with Ukrainians.

As we were standing there in this blizzard, we went in this dark helicopter in the middle of the night, and they're showing all this new military hardware they had. But in the end, we're standing with this blizzard in front of the sea, and it is so cold. And you know John McCain's from Arizona, right? They're very proud of their armaments in Ukraine, and they brought him a Ukrainian machine gun. They present this to him. And they present Lindsey with a pistol. And Senator McCain is looking at me and he says, "What are they going to give you? It looks like it's a flat box." I open it up, and it's two daggers. True story. (*Laughter*)

So he decides that is not good enough for you. He tells me, "I'm going to make sure you get a pistol, too, just like Lindsey." So later in the night they give me a pistol. Then in the end, of course, the Navy confiscated every single weapon. A year later John McCain was still saying to me, "Where is my machine gun? What happened to it?" It was that humor, the joy he had for his work. He took the work seriously, but he didn't always take himself seriously. That's what I learned from him time and time again.

One thing, as I said, that he loved was our veterans. I think you know that. Every single place we went we would always reach out to see our veterans. That's why the fact that you are gathered

here in my town today gives me comfort and it also reminds me of that importance of history. John McCain was a student of history. Everywhere we went, he would read books on every flight, most of them about World War II, and then take those lessons of history and pass them on to me and others.

That's what The American Legion has done for a hundred years. It was Hubert Humphrey, the former vice president of the United States, former Minnesota senator, former mayor of Minneapolis, who once said, and I paraphrase: If you don't take the care and time to write your own history, others will write it for you.

Well, The American Legion now, for 100 years, has made sure that the history of our brave veterans is passed on from generation to generation. You look back to 1919, your first convention ever, right in this town. You look at how The American Legion started, because of World War I. And I recalled this, up in Park Rapids, Minnesota, a few weeks ago, when I had the honor to give a Purple Heart to the daughter of Private Albert Hanson.

This was a soldier who served on the front line in World War I. He was in France in the closing, waning days of the war. And he was in a mustard gas attack. He had to be brought to a hospital. Then somehow, just a few days later, was back on the front line again. He came back to Minnesota, like so many veterans, never told a lot of his stories, never complained. Kept working. Raised a family. His records, of course, were lost. We went back in with his family and found them and was able to belatedly give his family that Purple Heart. Reminded me again of the quality of our veterans and our soldiers. So what have I learned from those kinds of stories and from people like John McCain, what are those lessons of history?

Well, the first lesson learned is that we must treat our veterans with respect when they come home. You know, when they signed up to serve, there was no waiting line. When you come back to the United States of America and you need health care or an education or a job, there should never be a waiting line in the United States of America. (*Applause*)

That is why, as you know with the Legion's help, we have built on the work that's been going on for the last 10 years. And this last year we passed the VA Mission Act. Something we worked on hard to try to fix some of the problems that we're seeing, some of the wait lines at the VA hospitals, some of the other issues. But despite all that, I will tell you, as someone that represents a state where we're really proud of our VA health-care system. We know it's not perfect. We know there must always be changes and improvements. But we must stand by our VA health-care system. We make it stronger, right? But we don't take it away. So that's where I am on that. (*Applause*)

Secondly, we've got to make sure there's jobs here. One of the most heart-wrenching things during the economic downturn was the fact that our veterans coming back from war actually had higher unemployment rates than the civilians who had stayed behind. We have worked very hard with our businesses, especially in my state, the state of Minnesota, to bring down that unemployment rate. We have started to successfully do that. We want to continue that. That is, of course, why we passed the Post-9/11 GI Bill to make sure that our veterans, when they returned home, got the benefits they deserve.

The third lesson of history is one of making sure that we respond to things that happen out in the field. It's not just about making sure that we have the best protections for veterans when they fight for us, but it's also when they come home, we have seen a number of cases where people have gotten sick from things in theater.

Of course, the most striking example of that is Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, the U.S. sprayed 80 million liters of Agent Orange contaminating water and exposing more than two million members of the military. It took the government decades and decades and decades to recognize that there was a link between Agent Orange and the devastating health effects on our soldiers. We cannot let that happen again with burn pits. (*Applause*)

So many of our soldiers that served in Afghanistan and in Iraq were stationed next to burn pits. Many of them have come home, and there's a registry now set up. So we're getting all the information on this. But many of them came home and got sick. One example, in Minnesota, Amie Muller, served in Minnesota's National Guard. She did two tours in Iraq and was stationed right next to one of the most notorious burn pits. It operated 24/7 and consumed up to 200 tons of waste a day.

What's happening is that we're burning things we never used to burn, right? Computers, chemicals, things that are getting in the air. She tragically passed away last year, nine months after being diagnosed with Stage III pancreatic cancer. She left behind her husband, Brian, and three little kids. Since Amie's death, I've gotten to know her husband, Brian. I've gotten to work with him. Together we worked with Senator Thom Tillis, Republican from North Carolina, and we introduced a bill to make sure that our VA better understands and begins to address the health needs of these veterans that were stationed next to burn pits. We will not let the burn pits become this generation's Agent Orange. *(Applause)*

So the last lesson of history that I will leave you with that I have come to learn over my years in the Senate now is a lesson of words. And the lesson of culture. I learned this very quickly when I went to one of our Serving our Troops event in St. Paul, where we have a group of restaurateurs from the metro area here who have decided to do steak dinners. It's an incredible thing. They've done it now for over a decade, where they actually go to theater. They go to Kuwait. They've gone all over the world. They serve our troops a steak dinner, paid for by themselves, and at the same time they serve their families back here and then they hook up a Skype system so that they can talk to them from the dinners.

I saw a guy working and volunteering. It's all volunteers, I saw a guy serving up mashed potatoes and he had a Vietnam vet cap on. And I said, "Hey, thanks for your service and volunteering." And he said, "You know what, I don't want to let what happened to me ever happen to anyone else again. When I came home, people greeted me with tomatoes. They threw things at me. They called me names. So I want to take that lesson and make sure it never happens again. And that's why I'm here today."

One thing we have learned from the last 20 years is that we can have disagreements on how you handle foreign policy and how you handle war policy, but we should never take them out on the warriors on the front line. *(Applause)*

That is something that John McCain reminded us of every single day. I got to go with him to Vietnam with Lindsey Graham and stand in front of that cell where he had been kept and tortured for five years. That little cell where he made the decision to allow other POWs to be released before him. He made that decision because he knew, because of who his dad was, that they were going to try to look like they were giving him special treatment to embarrass our military and to hurt the dignity of our country. So he made the individual decision that he would allow others to be released before him. When you stand with someone like that and feel that moment of patriotism, it's not just his patriotism, it's the patriotism of all soldiers who served with him. *(Applause)*

So I will end with his words: "Nothing in life is more liberating than to fight for a cause larger than yourself." Thank you, American Legion, for taking on the causes larger than yourself, not only for your service, but for the service that you've given to other veterans by carrying on that torch, of fighting for their rights and better veterans benefits and respect and dignity for those who serve our country. Thank you so much and thank you for coming back to Minnesota. Happy 100th birthday. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Our next speaker is the sixth president of the Uniformed Service University of Health Sciences. He holds a doctorate in dental surgery, as well as a medical degree from West Virginia University and is board certified in head and neck surgery. He is also a retired major general with more than 26 years of service in the United States Army. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Dr. Richard W. Thomas.

**Address: Dr. Richard W. Thomas, President
Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences**

Good morning. I'm going to break protocol just for a second, because I asked the boss if I could. How about another round of applause for National Commander Rohan? *(Applause)*

Because only you could get Three Dog Night here last night. I'm not going to have a chance to probably catch you alone at any other time. So let me give you one of my coins, if I could, to

say thank you for your service and everything you've done for The American Legion and to the nation. Thank you so much. (*Applause*)

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you. Thank you for allowing me to take a few minutes on behalf of the men and women, both uniformed and our civilians, that work in the military health system. This is the Department of Defense Military Health System. I'm honored to represent them here today as The American Legion celebrates its centennial event. I think this centennial is important for a lot of reasons. It's important certainly for all of those of us who have served. But for me it has some special meaning.

I'm an Army brat. I was born with an ID card and I'll die with an ID card. My father was a soldier, retired sergeant major, spent most of his career in special forces. His father was a World War I vet. One of my earliest memories was going with my dad down to the Wayne E. Marchand American Legion post at Okinawa, and spending some time there with him and his buddies. Drank my first Shirley Temples there. I have certainly been privileged since then to be in a few American Legion posts around the world and share some adult beverages, solving a lot of problems and having some great conversations with great Americans like you. So thank you. Third generation American Legion member.

As I mentioned, it's an honor to be here today. Today I'm here on behalf of Mr. Tom McCaffery, representing the military health system, which is responsible for providing health care to not only our servicemembers and their families but also to millions of retirees and their families. I'm happy to report to you that we are upholding our responsibility to those men, women children and retirees and to the U.S. taxpayers.

Now, I want to spend just a couple of moments here and describe some initiatives which are really essential to sustaining the health benefit. Also, I want to acknowledge The American Legion's true assistance and help in our efforts and then offer some insights on maybe how you can help us in the future.

Before I do that, I think more than anything else, I just want to say thank you. Thank you, of course, for your service and everyone here and the nearly 2 million American Legion members, congratulations. Thank you for 100 years of accomplishments and embracing the cause of advocacy on behalf of America's veterans. Give yourself a round of applause. (*Applause*)

Thank you also for your continued advocacy on behalf of military medicine. Your assistance is important and helps us provide the best service that we can possibly provide to millions of our beneficiaries who depend on us for their health care. In fact, The American Legion plays an essential role in military medicine. You help us connect to your members. You provide valuable information to our beneficiaries. You help us stay connected to those beneficiaries with really their concerns. Your voice is powerful. And it's incredibly helpful as we work to constantly improve not only the access to health care but the quality of health care that we provide to the best patients in the world.

Your voice is especially important today. This is a time of great change in military medicine. We've been working with Congress very closely. We've embarked upon a series of transformative changes I want to describe for you here briefly this morning. A total revamp of the TRICARE health benefit to a major change in how we manage the 300-plus hospitals and clinics around the world, and also the availability of a new dental and vision coverage and a new electronic health record.

Any one of these changes by themselves would be huge. I think when you put them together, let's see, I've got more than three decades of service both in uniform and now as a DoD civilian. Any one of these things by themselves would be huge. But this is certainly the most comprehensive series of changes I've seen in my time. So the days ahead will be without doubt challenging. But our goal remains the same: To enhance the quality of care and certainly the access to health care for all of our beneficiaries. I need your assistance with that. Your assistance in communicating to our military retirees and your continued advocacy on behalf of your members helps to bring us closer to making this which is already a great health-care system even better.

I currently serve as the president of the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences. Now, you won't see our university on any college football scoreboards this fall. We don't have a football team. You may never even have heard of us. But that's okay because we're working to

change that too. We are the health-care academy for the Department of Defense. So think of us as the medical equivalent of a service academy at Annapolis or Colorado Springs or West Point.

We provide a critical core group of military physicians and other healthcare professionals to the DoD and also a few to the public health service. Now, before assuming my job as president, I spent about 30 years as an Army physician and surgeon, including time spent as the U.S. Forces surgeon general in Afghanistan, the Army assistant surgeon general, along with combat deployments to Iraq, Panama and some other places.

My last assignment, however, on active duty was as a chief medical officer and the director of healthcare operations for the Defense Health Agency. That included running TRICARE. So, I've seen military medicine from the battlefield to the halls of the Pentagon and pretty much any place in between. I think we've always been proud of the work we do, but I'm confident that military medicine is poised today to achieve even greater standards of excellence in safety, in quality, in access and in efficiencies.

One of the most significant changes will be how we manage our military treatment facilities, our military hospitals. As I mentioned, we've got more than 300 of them around the world. It's pretty much independently run by the Army, Navy and Air Force. But effective this 1st of October, and phased in over the next three years, the Defense Health Agency will assume the responsibility for managing the health-care delivery and the business operations of all those health-care clinics and hospitals. I think by placing the management and the administration of the direct care that we provide in these military hospitals and the purchased care that we provide in the TRICARE network under one organization, the Defense Health Agency, will help us have a much better integrated military health-care system.

But for those of you that seek and receive your care in a military hospital today, after the 1st of October, you probably won't notice much difference. It will still be excellent care. It should be seamless for you. A second major transformative effort is the deployment of the new electronic health record, the MHS GENESIS. Now, this technology is built on a platform which is already readily available commercially to thousands of hospitals around the world. It will allow patients to participate more fully in their health care. It also will allow your health-care providers to have more tools at their disposal to make sure they're taking better care of you, all of our beneficiaries. The new electronic health record will ensure that you have just one record for medical and dental care that follows you around, whether it's the battlefield or back at your community clinics, your military bases at home.

As you heard this morning from Secretary Wilkie, the recent decision by the Department of Veteran Affairs to adopt this same solution, electronic health record, offers the promise to what everyone that's been involved in the military and veterans health care has always wanted: That is true interoperability. The ability for a servicemember and his or her family to shift from the DOD to the VA and take their health-care data with them is something that veterans want, they need, and, quite frankly, they deserve. Now, of all the changes we're making perhaps none will have a greater impact on our military families and retirees than the ongoing enhancements to the TRICARE benefit itself.

Over just the last year we've kicked off the new TRICARE contracts, and we've also rolled out the new TRICARE select benefit. We've implemented a series of enhancements to that benefit including improved access to preventive care and to urgent care. We've also required that our managed care contractors broaden the access for primary care and specialty care in their networks.

And this fall TRICARE will hold its very first open season enrollment period. Just as with other health plans on the federal side and with many civilian health-care programs, this open season will allow you to annually make changes to your plan for the following year. Now, we're also rolling out the new dental and vision coverage options beginning in 2019, offering access to the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program for the first time. For military retirees, we're changing and replacing the TRICARE retiree dental plan with same access to the same dental plan that's available to federal workers and provides many more options for you. At the same time, our beneficiaries will have access to the same vision care coverage that's available to our federal employees, making vision coverage available to our beneficiaries for the very first time. *(Applause)*

Yeah, absolutely. And as I noticed, I need glasses myself, so I'll be taking advantage of that very soon. Ultimately all these changes, whether it's the military hospital transition, the MHS GENESIS electronic health record, the TRICARE enhancements and some other things that because of time I don't have really a lot of time to get into here this morning, all of these changes are aimed at building the best military health-care system available.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'll tell you that the one thing that will not change, and that's our commitment to the men and women who serve in our armed forces. We have a sacred responsibility to provide them the best care, the best care to all of those who defend us and for their families. We owe them the very best.

This is a hallmark of U.S. military health care. As we sit here today, think about it. We've got more than 200,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines forward deployed outside of the Continental United States in more than 100 countries around the globe. Combat operations, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief missions. No other nation can project lethality and combat power around the globe like the United States. A major reason that we can do this is because we focus on a medically ready force and a ready medical force because wherever in the world we send a servicemember, he or she will be confident that we have a trained medical professional serving shoulder to shoulder with them to make sure they have the best care possible. That's exactly how it should be because as America's young men and women raise their hand to serve our country, and possibly sacrifice their health, even their lives in service to this country, it's certainly not too much to expect that we would dedicate our professional lives to them. *(Applause)*

Now as I close this morning, let me leave you with just one ask, one more way The American Legion can help military medicine. To keep moving forward we need to continue to recruit and retain the highest quality people. Young men and women who volunteer to serve in our armed forces are as talented and dedicated as ever. This is especially true of the students who come through the doors of our university. But there's also many more options available to young Americans today. All of you in this room and all the other members of The American Legion are uniquely influential in the lives of millions of America's young people.

Think about it. I would guess just about every one of you can think of at least one promising young person who is thinking about health care as a future. I hope you'll think about encouraging them to consider a career in military medicine. I can't think of a more challenging, a more rewarding, or more exciting time to serve. All of you have given our nation a lifetime of service. It's in your DNA. How fitting for a young man or woman that you've helped to guide into military medicine. Perhaps they can be the next battlefield surgeon, the next life-saving nurse, Corpsman, medic or maybe a ground-breaking researcher.

That would be another tremendous addition of the decades of support that the members of The American Legion have provided to military medicine. So thank you. Thank you again for your service to our nation and for your continued support to military medicine. Congratulations and best wishes for the next century of American Legion history. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Department Membership Awards

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: It is now time for the membership awards. The departments and individuals who will be joining me on stage are being recognized today for their outstanding membership efforts in 2018.

We need to be entrenched in executing The American Legion's Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth. It is imperative for us to continue to build on the five priorities within the plan to reverse our current trend of declining membership, to build on our legacy and promote and encourage a culture of growth throughout The American Legion.

The fifth priority in the strategic plan focuses on recruiting and retention. Long-term growth comes with signing up new members and retaining the members that we have. If we educate, train and encourage our members, we can grow our organization. The American Legion's legacy needs to continue to flourish with every new member that joins. We want The American Legion to continue to be recognized for the good work and dedication to our veterans and their families for

the next one hundred years. We can accomplish this with the resources provided under our Four Pillars.

I placed a greater emphasis on reconnecting with our military this year. We have to expand our outreach with the active-duty military, reserves and the National Guard. We need to continue building relationships at all levels. American Legion posts are community-based organizations and we must reach out to these components through the military leadership, the Family Readiness Groups program, and other organizations that help support our servicemembers while they are deployed or in a reserve status.

Through our Reconnect efforts and programs such as Access Granted, Operation Comfort Warriors, the Family Support Network, Temporary Financial Assistance, The American Legion Riders, and many others, we have expanded the opportunity for The American Legion to fulfill the promises of our Four Pillars.

Priority number four places an emphasis on starting new posts and revitalizing existing posts. We need to charter new posts wherever veterans live, work or go to school. The American Legion should have a presence in as many communities as possible. For the 2017-18 membership year, over 2,500 posts received support through revitalizations.

This has enabled thousands of veterans to receive access to veterans service officers provided by The American Legion and belonging to local posts in their communities. Through our posts' hard work, we have continued our commitment of service to veterans, their families, and our communities. With everything we do, you can clearly see The American Legion's growth potential is unlimited.

Today we want to recognize a few departments and individuals for their outstanding efforts in membership this year. I now call on National Vice Commander Larry Marcouillier so he can assume duties at the podium and that the national vice commanders assigned to each department join the chairman and I as we congratulate the departments from their areas.

... *National Vice Commander Marcouillier assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MARCOUILLIER: Our first award is the National Commander's Department Incentive Award on Retention. This award is for the departments for employing tactics outlined in The American Legion's strategic plan for sustained membership growth by retaining existing membership. The departments with the highest retention percentage of 2017 members that renewed for 2018 are being recognized today: In Category I: The Department of Pennsylvania. Category II: The Department of Minnesota. Category III: The Department of Wisconsin with a percentage of 90.91. Category IV: The Department of Nebraska, with a percentage of 90.47. Category V: The Department of North Dakota, with a percentage of 90.56. Category VI: The Department of Mexico, with a percentage of 90.07. (*Applause*)

These departments have already received their monetary awards prior to convention. Next we would like to recognize the winner of the National Commander's Department Incentive National Vice Commander Eagle Recognition Award. The national vice commander with the highest total renewal percentage within their region is receiving this prestigious award. The winner is: National Vice Commander Byron Callies, Midwest Region, with an 89.55% renewal rate. (*Applause*)

The next series of awards are being presented to the eight departments for their hard work and dedication to establishing a culture of growth in their departments. By implementing and working on the five points of the priorities within the strategic plan, these departments saw their membership grow over the last year. Shadowboxes are being awarded to: Department of Alabama, Commander Donna Stacey. Department of the District of Columbia, Commander Preston Herald. The Department of France, Commander James R. Dennis. The Department of Idaho, Commander G.A. Woodman. The Department of Mexico, Commander Milo Vuckovich. The Department of Montana, Commander Larry Dobb. The Department of Oklahoma, Commander John L. Bloxom. The Department of South Carolina, Commander Michael D. Strauss. (*Applause*)

Next I would like to present the General Henri Gouraud Trophy Award to three departments for being the first to exceed the national membership goal in their respective categories. Category 3, the Department of Wisconsin. In Category 5, the Department of West Virginia. In Category 6, the Department of France. (*Applause*)

Our next presentation will be to our 100% departments. Last year we had three departments meet or exceed their membership goal utilizing traditional methods. This is an outstanding accomplishment and a testament to the motivation of their members and their ability to implement their strategic plan. This year we have nine departments. *(Applause)*

A shadowbox is being presented to the following department commanders: Preston Herald, Department of District of Columbia. James Dennis, Department of France. Milo Vuckovich, Department of Mexico. Larry Dobb, the Department of Montana. G.A. Woodman, the Department of Idaho. John Bloxom, Department of Oklahoma. Michael Strauss, Department of South Carolina. Frank Cooley, Department of West Virginia. Julie Muhle, Department of Wisconsin. *(Applause)*

It should be noted that Mexico has now exceeded their goal five years in a row, and Idaho has accomplished it two years running. *(Applause)*

Congratulations to all the commanders. Your members should take pride in knowing the hard work that they have done has paid off. Our next award is the most prestigious award a district commander can earn. The American Legion Race to the Top Award is given to district commander who attains at least 100 percent of their district's assigned membership objective by March 31, and these four district commanders' leadership helped their districts exceed their membership goal this year.

These district commanders are receiving a new cap, polo shirt and a shadowbox plaque for their efforts. And the winners are: Gregory A. Spight, Michigan - Category 1, District 1. Ron Bradstreet, Alabama - Category 2, District 21. Jimmy Mitchell, Texas - Category 3, District 22. Holly Lewis, Ohio - Category 5, District 10. *(Applause)*

Commanders, thank you for your leadership and dedication in motivating your districts to achieve this goal. Let's give them all a good round of applause. They worked hard for it. *(Applause)*

Presentation: National Recruiter of the Year

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MARCOUILLIER: Finally, ladies and gentlemen, we are going to present the National Recruiter of the Year Award. This award is given to the individual certified with the highest number of new members recruited from among all of the departments. For the first time in three years, we have a new Recruiter of the Year. From the Department of Texas, recruiting 578 members, please join me in recognizing the 2018 Recruiter of the Year from Post 490, David L. Witucki. *(Applause)*

He is receiving a new cap, jacket, shadowbox and a \$1,500 check. Congratulations on a great job.

DAVID WITUCKI: Well, I'm not used to talking to a crowd this big, maybe 200, and they're all military most of the time. They don't know what I'm talking about, so it's easy. You might want to know why I'm dressed like this. They told me, you know, wear a suit, write a speech. Then they said they gave me a shirt while I was here, I could wear the shirt.

Well, this morning I started thinking this is the uniform I wore through the whole recruiting year. Now, I have six of these shirts, so one for every day. Another thing is my wife's sitting right out there. It's really hard on her because I'm gone all the time. She says: You don't thank me enough. Well, here's a chance I can thank her. There's a lot of people out there. *(Applause)* Her name is Bridget. So on the count of three, if we can all say, "Thank you Bridget," that would get me out of a lot of high water. So one, two, three...

FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you, Bridget! *(Applause)*

DAVID WITUCKI: If you don't know who she is, it's the lady over there that's shaking. I'm really embarrassing her, so that's going to take care of my next year's recruiting. *(Laughter)*

You know, people say it's too hard to recruit, I don't know how. Well, I tell them: Buy one of these shirts. They sell them over there at Emblem Sales down the hall. Then get you a hat and put a bunch of jewelry on it. Well, when people see you, they know you're someone special. So when you find someone that's wearing a ball cap with one of the military emblems or a shirt, that guy's ready to join. Otherwise, he wouldn't be wearing that. So just go up to him and ask him to become a member. You'd be surprised how many are waiting for something like that to happen. If we're

going to survive another hundred years, we're going to need every member we can get our hands on, because they're harder and harder to come by.

So your military out there, you know, nobody's ever asked them. I hear that all the time. So when you see someone in uniform at a gas station, in a mall maybe, I got a lot of mine at Lowe's and Home Depot. Ask them. You'd be surprised. They'll join.

That's about it. So I hope you all get out there. Everybody needs to recruit one member at least. Most cases it's pretty easy. So why don't you just go get five of them? I've recruited so many members, I can't tell them apart, especially in uniform. So I'm training them. When they see me, they go like this. That means I've already recruited them. See? So nowadays, everybody's going like this. So you get out there and train your members the same way. And make sure it's thumbs, no other digits. *(Laughter)*

Okay. Thank you, and God bless you all. *(Applause)*

...National Commander Rohan resumed the Chair.

Presentation: Consolidated Post Reporting 2017-2018

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Consolidated Post Report is a summary of what American Legion posts have accomplished in their communities. It is an opportunity to tell the story of your post on an easy-to-fill-out form either on hard copy or online. When I testified before Congress a few months ago, I used the data from this annual report as part of my testimony.

For the 2017-2018 reporting year, August 1 through July 31, 8,409 posts reported out of 12,803. This is a response rate of 66 percent. In July I had Internal Affairs send out a letter to all Legion leadership to continue to send in their Consolidated Post Reports even after July 31. With that extra few weeks, we received many additional CPRs, and I want to thank you.

By your efforts, Congress now knows more about what the American Legion Family is doing in their communities, and that is so important. It is so important when it comes to influencing Congress to support us in our work for our veterans and our community. But there is so much more we can be doing to get our posts to report.

Over 30 percent of our American Legion posts aren't reporting what they are doing. I want to call upon all our department commanders, department adjutants, district and county commanders and adjutants to do all they can this next reporting year to get these posts to report their activities, because all posts are doing something in their community. This report needs to be ingrained with our leadership, from national all the way down to our posts. During leadership visits to posts, the questions must be: How are you doing in filling out your CPR? Do you need any help? Are you filling it out on mylegion.org? If not, why not?

Imagine the impact and influence on Congress if we had 100 percent reports from all of our posts. As it stands now, this annual report is not truly showing Congress or your city councils or your school boards or your local chamber of commerce what we are doing in your communities. We are proud of what our posts are doing, and our posts are so critical. We need for them to report what they are doing each and every day in our communities across this nation. I implore you to do all you can next year to increase our posts reporting.

At this time I wish to recognize those departments who worked on submitting these reports. A certificate was mailed to the ten departments who met the challenge of a 75 percent response rate by July 1 this year. Those departments are: West Virginia, Alaska, Colorado, Vermont, Connecticut, Kentucky, Idaho, Wyoming, Ohio, and Maryland.

Eight additional departments returned a remarkable response rate of more than 95 percent by July 1, 2018. We have already awarded each of these departments a special recognition plaque. They are the Departments of Massachusetts, Virginia, New Mexico, Tennessee, New Hampshire, Georgia, Florida, and Missouri. All these departments deserve a round of applause. *(Applause)*

Finally, we had five departments accomplish a remarkable response rate of 100 percent by July 1, 2018. At this time, I ask that the commanders of the Departments of Montana, Oklahoma, Alabama, Delaware, and Nebraska join me onstage as I present their departments with 100 percent CPR plaques. Will National Vice Commander Bill Flanagan assume duties at the podium for the reading of the winners.

... *National Vice Commander Flanagan assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER FLANAGAN: Donna Stacey, immediate past department commander, Department of Alabama. MaryAnna Moderhak, immediate past department commander, Department of Delaware. Larry Dobb, immediate past department commander, Department of Montana. Jim Costello, immediate past department commander, Department of Nebraska. John Bloxom, immediate past department commander, Department of Oklahoma. *(Applause)*

...*National Commander Rohan resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: I want to thank each and every post that submitted a report. Every report is important, but we still have a way to go before we can accurately and fully represent before Congress all the great work our posts are doing in our communities.

Donations to the National Emergency Fund

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Our National Emergency Fund is one of the most visible ways to demonstrate our devotion to mutual helpfulness. During my visits to Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Isles, I have seen the enormous impact that our National Emergency Fund makes on the lives of American Legion Family members that have had their homes struck by powerful natural disasters.

We need to have disaster assistance teams in our departments that will respond after the crisis hits and search out our Legion Family members who have been displaced from their homes and assist them in getting back on their feet. I want to encourage departments to assign or seek volunteers to be department NEF coordinators who can travel and assist fellow Legion members in the processing and submission of NEF applications. In this way, we can continue to ensure that our Legionnaires and Sons members are assisted during a most troubling and challenging time.

Since the fund's establishment in 1989, we have given out over \$9 million to Legionnaires and Sons in need. Individuals can receive up to \$3,000 for immediate emergency shelter and food, and posts can receive up to \$10,000 to keep programs going immediately after disasters strike.

Our Legion posts and members are usually well placed and able to assist members in need, like we have all done in the past. I am most thankful to know that when there is a need, Legionnaires don't hesitate to respond. In addition to the tragic series of hurricanes last year, tornados in the Midwest and wildfires in California, they all hit our Legion family.

We opened our hearts and pockets to embrace our members and communities with the care and assistance they needed to get back on their feet. And the need continues, just as hurricanes and other disasters continue to strike. As we saw this last week's hurricanes in Hawaii, the wildfires out west, and flooding at home in Wisconsin, we are a big family, and a family helps each other when it's the time for need is there.

Remember that each and every dollar donated to the National Emergency Fund is used for this purpose. We take care of our own when they need help. I think we all deserve a round of applause for the generosity shown by so many of you, your posts, your departments, your American Legion Auxiliary units, your Sons detachments, your Rider chapters, and your individual donations. *(Applause)*

... *National Vice Commander Stephenson assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER STEPHENSON: Thank you, commander. At this time I ask the departments that would like to present checks to the NEF, please come forward and present them to the national commander now.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the Legion family from the Department of Pennsylvania, commander, I would like to give you a check for \$10,712, which brings the Legion Family from the Department of Pennsylvania to a grand total this year of \$187,712.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the Department of Missouri, \$10,733.

PAST NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAGGAN: Doug Haggan, FODPAL secretary. With me is the aide to the FODPAL president, Hans Stockenberger, and newly elected assistant secretary, Claire Sullivan. Foreign and Outlying Departments of The American Legion are proud to present a check for \$500.

DELEGATE KILE (WV): From the southern block, the best division in The American Legion, \$10,000.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the Department of North Dakota, \$6,542.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From The American Legion Post 347, Lady Lake, Florida, \$3,500.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: For the State of Florida, \$1,500.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Department of New Hampshire, \$1,000.

DELEGATE BRAULT (MA): Good afternoon. Lou Brault, NEC for Department of Massachusetts; Past Department Commander Michael Davis; Current Commander Fred White. The Department of Massachusetts proudly presents a check for \$1,675, bringing our total for the year up to \$6,225.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From The American Legion National College Alumni Association, \$1,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PLEASANT (OH): Stanley Pleasant, delegation chairman from the Department of Ohio, and Past National Vice Commander Jim Morris, Ohio. Ohio donates \$10,000 to the National Emergency Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the Garden State, New Jersey, Department of New Jersey, \$1,500; through the Department of New Jersey on behalf of the Baracas Family, who are administrators of the Seracky Memorial Fund, \$10,000; reaching our total of \$11,500. With me I have my vice commander, Rich DeBono.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: John Wesley Taylor American Legion Post 232, \$500.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: With our newly elected Department Commander Richard Dansereau, Department of Wyoming would like to present an additional \$125 on behalf of Ora Call Post No. 10.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the Department of South Carolina, the birthplace of the National Emergency Fund, we've raised \$12,400 this year.

DELEGATE CLINTON (CO): Terri L. Clinton, immediate past department commander for the state of Colorado, also known as the Centennial State and home of Past National Commander Tom Bock and the most senior adjutant in all of the land, Mr. Charles Patrick "Pat" Smith, and with me today is our current commander, Robb D. Smith, and the department chair of our National Emergency Fund Committee, Jim Hartshorn. On behalf of our membership, we proudly present a check in the amount of \$3,121.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HOLT (MI): Brett Holt, immediate past commander for Department of Michigan and the chairman of the delegation, I have with me National Executive Committeemen Raymond Moore, and Alternate National Executive Committeeman John Knox. The Department of Michigan presents \$2,000.

DELEGATE DOBB (MT): Larry Dobb, immediate past commander of the Department of Montana, present a check for \$1,993.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the Department of Idaho, it is my privilege to present a check for \$500.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HEINISCH (CA): I'm Bob Heinisch, junior past commander and delegation chairman for the Department of California. I have with me our NEC, Janet Wilson, and our commander of Palisades Post 283. We have a presentation of \$10,000 to make up for the second half of the commitment made by Post 283.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the Department of Minnesota, the land of "Ya sure, you betcha" and where lutefisk is still king, for some, anyway, we present a check for \$1,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NESSLER (NY): From the great Department of New York, home of Past National Commander Wong, I'm Rena Nessler, the first female commander in 99 years for our great department of New York and delegation chairwoman, here with our department commander Gary Schacher and our department adjutant for New York. In addition to the generous donations that we have made during the year, we donate an additional \$66,435.25.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of Saxton-Willis Post 64, Heber Springs, Department of Arkansas, we proudly donate \$500 to the National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATE WESTERGREN (AR): Michael Westergren, immediate past department commander. That brings our total contribution to \$1,500 this year.

DELEGATE BEISCHEL (AZ): From the great state of Arizona, home of a great hero and a great senator and an American Legion member, John McCain, we would like to present from Post 42 in Grand Canyon a check for \$1,000 from Scott Miller. We also have our delegation chairman, Domingo Bonilla; our current commander, Steve Aguirre; and I'm Judi Beischel. We have a total of \$1,000 from Post 42; \$500 from Fountain Hills Post 58, and an additional \$3,000 from Arizona for the NEF. Thank you.

...National Commander Rohan resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The total from onstage, \$139,651.25. Thank you. (*Applause*)

It gives me great pleasure to introduce our next speaker. A retired command sergeant major in the National Guard, he represents Minnesota's 1st congressional district and is the ranking member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. A member of American Legion Post 11 in Mankato, Minnesota, he was the creator and sponsor of The American Legion Coin Bill and was a valuable ally in the passage of numerous other veteran-centric legislation. Please give a warm American Legion Family welcome to Representative Tim Walz. (*Applause*)

**Address: Honorable Tim Walz, Ranking Member
United States House of Representatives, Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

Well, thank you to my commander. I am appreciative of that introduction. To Commander Ludwig and the fellow Minnesotans, I salute you. Thank you for your service. To each of you, thank you for being here. I'm a schoolteacher by trade, so I know this to be a fact: The least productive time of the day is the one hour after lunch. So I hope that is not why you invited a member of Congress to speak to you right now. (*Laughter*)

I hope it's being a Minnesotan. So welcome to the 100th gathering of The American Legion, our American Legion. I thank you, my brothers and sisters in the Legion, for the work you do. Just so you know also: The weather you're experiencing is exactly the same in February. It's pretty much year round just like this. So don't let the people in Wisconsin tell you differently.

Before I start, I'd like to thank each of you and this organization for the kind words and the condolences to Senator McCain's wife, Cindy, and the family. I think for many of us in this room, it's been a bittersweet week remembering a life that embodies the American spirit, a life of true patriotism, true Americanism, and understanding that that voice has been silenced. I would make the case that that voice will never be silent as The American Legion stands tall. That voice will never be silent as patriots across this nation honor that service. I, as a member of Congress, had the privilege of not just serving with John McCain, but calling him my friend, but also having his mentorship to show me how this could be done right. So it's in that spirit that I thank you for having me here, and I hope that each of us take a bit of a lesson from Senator McCain on how we conduct ourselves.

I represent southern Minnesota's 1st district. It's about an hour and a half south of here. It stretches from the plains of South Dakota across all of northern Iowa, and it ends at the Mississippi River and the rolling hills with Wisconsin. It is one of the Earth's most productive agricultural lands. Chances are the turkey you eat at Thanksgiving came from my district. It's also home to the Mayo Clinic, and we also manufacture every single fuel pump for F-35 fighters, as well as home to the Hormel Company. So every single can of Spam in the world comes from my district in southern Minnesota. (*Applause*)

We're a proud people. We are fiercely loyal. We are patriotic. We try and live our faith, and we care deeply about this nation. Just like the places that you come from. Each and every one of you could have chosen someplace else to be today. You could use your money to do something else. You could use your time and talent to do something else. But you chose to be in Minneapolis for the Legion convention for a very simple, eloquent, and beautiful reason: You love this nation, and you know we need your voice. So thank you for that. (*Applause*)

Just like so many of you, my father was a Korean War-era veteran. The day after I turned 17, he drove me to a farm field outside of Springview, Nebraska, where we met up with the recruiter for the Army, and took a young lieutenant off his tractor, and I swore the oath of enlistment on that sunny spring day. A few weeks later, I found myself in Fort Benning, where I spent a lifetime that summer training to be a U.S. Army infantryman. And what I know is and what my father knew was is that sense of service and what you get out of serving this nation is far more than they'll ever get out of you, and the idea that each and every one of us are in this together is what brings us here.

When I see The American Legion gathering and when I see these seats with you in it, what I know: You are far more than just Legionnaires, you are far more than veterans; you are the conscience of this nation. And that voice must always be heard. So thank you for taking the time that you've done to be here. Thank you for committing to what we do. (*Applause*)

Trust me, I'm in a business. I'm a schoolteacher. I never planned my life to be in the United States Congress, but I think my life prepared me well for it. But I run into people every day and say, you know: I'm just not that in to politics. Who can blame them? Who can blame them when they watch things? Who can blame them when Congress falls somewhere between head lice and North Korea in popularity? Who can blame them when they turn on TV and it's constant bickering? But what I know and what I say to them is, when they tell me they're just not that into politics, I say: Too damn bad; politics is into you. That's why you come here today. We can either accept our fate and fear a future, or we can stand together and create the future of this nation and this world that we want to see. That's the mission of The American Legion. That's the mission of why you're here. (*Applause*)

Winston Churchill told us once, as he was always so quick-witted and always was quick to point out America's faults, but it usually had to get to the heart of who we were as a people, he told us that democracy, this democracy, was the worst form of government ever, except for every other one. Then he said, "You can always count on America to get it right, after they try everything else first."

It speaks to a bit of our tenaciousness. It speaks to a bit of understanding; that if democracy were easy, every other country would have done it. If democracy were easy, it wouldn't have to be fought over every generation. If democracy were easy, the tyrants would be easy to overthrow instead of seeing them in every generation, and every generation of Americans from Valley Forge to today has had to stand in the face of that tyranny and had to put themselves on the line. This nation now knows, with one percent of our population protecting 100 percent of us, with 10 percent wearing the title of veteran, are sitting in a room like this, the responsibility falls heavy on you. It falls heavy on us as veterans.

When I go back to that disdain of government, I never forget every single day that I'm in the United States Congress. The privilege to self-govern was paid for in the blood of patriots. The privilege of being able to debate our neighbor on issues, and it can be done and should be done, but it must be done in the vein of what was given to allow us to do that. Not a single one of us served in our branch of services alongside a Democrat or Republican. We didn't serve alongside a Jew, a Muslim, or a Christian. We served alongside an American warrior, and that's who we're here to defend. (*Applause*)

So the work this organization has done, and you are not here simply to advocate for veterans benefits, although God help us, we have to do that. I don't think it is out of malice. It is done out of ignorance; that people don't understand. When we talk about creating the Colmery GI Bill, Forever GI Bill, or we talk about appeals reform, or we talk about expanding research into the VA, or we talk about reducing veteran suicides, that is about strengthening this nation, that is about keeping the moral responsibility of this nation true by paying the debts to those who are willing to serve. When you get a veterans benefit, you did not win the lottery. It is the thank you and the price that liberty and freedom cost, and this nation must not be allowed to forget that. That's the job of the Legion. (*Applause*)

So when we move forward on the tough issues, I understand that national security comes in many means. I am a schoolteacher and thrifty by nature. National debt and spending can imperil this nation's fiscal security. If we do not invest in our people, we are not as competitive as we can be. So it is always about striking balances of our priorities to move the nation forward while

continuing to make sure that we understand clearly: We can't get national security wrong. There is no room for error. There is no room for skimping. Part of that is showing the faith to future generations that, if you're willing to serve, we will take care of you. So everyone in this room understands everybody needs to pay their fair share.

But as a member of the House Veterans Affairs' Committee and a position I've taken, not just because I'm a retired command sergeant major, because I believe it's critically important to send a message to fellow Americans that I am not okay with us balancing the budget on veterans issues by asking our veterans to increase co-pays for pharmaceuticals or by taking benefits from one group of veterans to another. Because let's be honest. You paid your co-pay at Chosin Reservoir. You paid your co-pay in Southeast Asia. You paid your co-pay in Iraq. And you paid your co-pay in the mountains of Afghanistan. It's time for the rest of the nation to understand fulfilling those values is fulfilling the destiny and the right responsibility for security of this nation.

So to The American Legion who has stood there in that breach and demanded that we do right by our veterans, I say thank you on behalf of all of my constituents in southern Minnesota who are safer, freer, and have more opportunities because of what The American Legion stands for. Thank you. (*Applause*)

We know we've got more work to do. We know we have an entire new generation of veterans coming back from war. We know that, as long as one single veteran commits suicide, the job is not done. If one veteran sleeps on the street, the job is not done. If one veteran waits too long for health care, the job is not done.

We know there's more to do, but I can tell you this: There is nothing that unites this nation more than the care of our veterans. Last year when "The New York Times" wrote a story and they were talking about a broken congress, they said this: If you want to know how congress is supposed to work, look at the VA committee. Chairman Roe, who you're going to be hearing from in a short time, a Republican from Tennessee, and myself, a Democratic farmer/laborer from southern Minnesota, there is absolutely no daylight between us on the care of this nation's veterans. There is no daylight on how we conduct ourselves in the service of America's veterans. Because of that, the last several Congresses have been the most productive we've seen in decades in delivering for veterans because we have partnered together and partnered with The American Legion in the best interests of America, and that's how it's supposed to work. (*Applause*)

So as we get ready to move forward, I want to thank you as a Minnesotan. I don't know how many "you betcha" jokes you've heard, but I'm sure they're out there. Ole and Lena jokes, for those who haven't heard those yet, we have a plethora of those, but we are proud that the first American Legion convention was held where you're at now, and now the 100th. We're about ready to do something that I can tell you of my time in Congress gives me immense pride. We're going to commemorate that with an American Legion coin, with an opportunity for everyone to own a piece of that history, with an opportunity for Americans to invest back and use those funds to not just support veterans.

I tell you this as a schoolteacher. The number of sporting and activity programs in our communities, American Legion Boys State and Girls State, that introduce our young people to the possibilities of hopeful government or the idea of teaching Americanism so our students understand how unique this nation is, how special it is in the world, and how important it is, those are the things that The American Legion does. And the sales of these coins and the proceeds from that will only expand that mission.

But I also want to say, I'm not going to be here, and you're not going to be here, but let's all be very clear: From that very first meeting 100 years ago to where you sit today, we stand on the shoulders of giants. And going forward, future generations of Americans are going to stand on your shoulders.

So The American Legion has stood proud, has stood firm, and has stood in that breach of ensuring America's national security and the care of our warriors for 100 years. But let's be clear. You need to be here another hundred years, and another hundred beyond that. Because as long as The American Legion stands proud, America will stand proud.

So thank you all for taking the time to come out here. May God bless each and every one of you, may God bless The American Legion, and may God bless this great country. Thank you all. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Before I introduce our next guest, some of the people who will be assisting with the upcoming unveiling are Representative Walz, Past National Commander Dave Rehbein, our marketing chairman, Ken Danilson, National Vice Commander Paula Stephenson and National Vice Commander Byron Callies. I say "some of the people" because it's really all of you, the entire American Legion Family who made it all possible. The passage of The American Legion Commemorative Coin Act was truly historic. Congress only authorizes two coins of this type during every two sessions. We did so with a record number of co-sponsors and with significant competition from other fine organizations hoping for the same honor. The coin will be available before The American Legion's birthday in March of 2019. I encourage you all to visit www.legion.org/coin for updates.

Our next guest has a very impressive background. He is a former deputy chief of staff for the vice president of the United States. He was deputy treasurer of the United States and director of the U.S. Mint under President George H.W. Bush. He returned to his old position after he was nominated by President Trump in 2017 and confirmed in 2018. Please welcome Director of the U.S. Mint David J. Ryder. *(Applause)*

Unveiling of U. S. Mint Coin
David J. Ryder, Director, United States Mint

Thank you, Denise and Congressman Walz. It is truly an honor to join you here today in Minneapolis, the site of the Legion's first conference, to unveil the 2019 American Legion 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin designs.

I also want to thank you both for serving our country so honorably as U.S. military veterans. I also want to thank all of you for your service. We all owe you a debt of gratitude. Every day across the nation, the Mint connects America through coins, and next year will be our great privilege to connect America to the legacy of the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization.

I may not be a veteran myself, but my parents were both military veterans -- my dad a naval aviator, and my mom a Navy nurse. They both met during the war in a naval hospital during World War II. My mom served many parts of the world, including China, a lot of parts of Asia, on naval ship *USS Hope*, while my dad was a naval pilot. Dad retired with over 24,000 hours in the captain's seat, flying almost 45 years as an aviator. He was a good man. *(Applause)*

I'm a big, big believer in the creed duty, honor, and country. My dad, when we were kids watching the football championships and games on television on our parents' green shag carpet, would always have the boys and the girls in the family, we had five kids, stand up when they played the national anthem and salute the flag and put our hands over our heart when they said the national anthem. *(Applause)*

He was a big supporter of the military. He's an honorable man. I appreciated his education and his tutorial on how I grew up honoring our country's flag. As the largest mint in the world, the United States Mint employs more than 1,700 men and women, and I'm proud to say 36 percent of those employees are veterans. *(Applause)*

The mint produces the coinage required by the nation to conduct its trade and commerce. In addition, Congress authorizes the production and the sale of commemorative coins to pay the tribute to the people and events that have significantly impacted our lives.

Since the beginning of the modern commemorative coin program in 1992, the U.S. Mint has raised more than \$506 million in surcharges to help build or enhance new museums, preserve historical sites, and support important national programs. If we sell this program out, The American Legion Commemorative Coin, if we have a complete sellout, it should raise somewhere in the neighborhood of \$9.5 million to this organization. *(Applause)*

So it's imperative that everyone goes on the website that Denise mentioned. You can also go on www.usmint.gov and learn more about the coin program as it evolves. These coins help raise money for important causes. As part of the price of each commemorative coin is a surcharge which goes to organizations and projects that benefit the community. Surcharges from this program are authorized to be paid to The American Legion to support the Legion's program for veterans, members of the armed forces, and other purposes specified by the authorizing legislation.

Since our institution's founding in 1792, the men and women of the United States Mint have taken great pride in rendering the story of our nation in enduring examples of numismatic art. To hold a coin or a medal produced by the U.S. Mint is to connect to the founding principles of our nations and the making of our economy. The designs for these beautiful coins were created by artists in the Artist Infusion Program and brought to life by our sculptors and engravers at the United States Mint in consultation with The American Legion, the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee and the United States Commission of Fine Arts. Public Law No. 1165, passed on October 6, 2016, allows the mint to strike and issue 50,000 \$5 gold coins, 400,000 \$1 silver coins, and 750,000 half-clad coins.

I'm proud to say that together we have answered the call from Congress to create these three coin programs recognizing and celebrating the 100th anniversary of The American Legion. Now for the moment you've all been waiting for. I present to you the designs of The American Legion's 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coins.

First, the gold obverse, heads, was designed by Chris Costello, sculpted by Phebe Hemphill, and commemorates the inception of The American Legion and its mission to serve America and its war veterans. The outer geometric rim designed from The American Legion emblem, the Eiffel Tower and V for victory represents the formation of the organization in Paris in 1919 and the end of World War I. Inscriptions: "In God We Trust," "Liberty," "1919," and "2019."

The gold reverse, the tails, was designed by Paul C. Balan and sculpted by Joseph Menna. The design depicts a soaring eagle, a symbol of the United States during times of war and peace alike. The American Legion emblem is depicted above the eagle. Inscriptions are: "United States of America," "\$5," "E Pluribus Unum." (*Applause*)

The silver obverse was also designed by Paul Balan and sculpted by U.S. Mint Sculptor-Engraver Renata Gordon. This design depicts The American Legion emblem adorned by oak leaves and a lily, commemorating the founding of The American Legion in Paris, France.

The silver reverse was designed by Patricia Lucas-Morris and sculpted by Michael Gaudioso to represent the founding of The American Legion in Paris in 1919. Above the crossed American and American Legion flags are a fleur-de-lis and the inscription "100 Years of Service." Additional inscriptions are "United States of America," "1919," "2019," "\$1," and "E Pluribus Unum." (*Applause*)

The clad obverse was designed by Richard Masters and sculpted by Phebe Hemphill. This design depicts two children standing and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, the little girl proudly wearing her father's gold American Legion hat. Inscriptions are: "Liberty," "2019," "In God We Trust," and "I Pledge Allegiance to the Flag..." (*Applause*)

The clad reverse was designed by Richard Masters and sculpted by Joseph Menna. The design completes the phrase from the obverse "I Pledge Allegiance to the Flag" with "Of the United States of America." The design depicts an American flag waving atop a high flagpole as seen from the children's point of view, the ground below. The American Legion emblem is featured just above the flag. Additional inscriptions are "E Pluribus Unum" and "Half Dollar." (*Applause*)

The American Legion Commemorative Coins celebrate a century of service to our nation through its efforts to assist, preserve, and protect the interests of all veterans and servicemembers. Congratulations to The American Legion on your extraordinary legacy and all that is yet to come. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**Presentation: Certificate of Appreciation
Robert A. Vick, Florida, National Chaplain**

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The man who has served as our national chaplain this year has been an articulate spiritual leader. A Korean-era veteran of the Navy, he received his ministerial training at the Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri, and is a past department chaplain for the Department of Florida. He is a member of American Legion Paradise Post 79 in New Port Richey, Florida. He's been married to Marion Janet Vick since 1956. It is an honor for me to present a Certificate of Appreciation marking his year of service as national chaplain to Robert Allen Vick.

ANNOUNCER: Certificate of Appreciation presented to: Robert A. Vick, National Chaplain of The American Legion, 2017-2018. Given in recognition of faithful and honorable service to The American Legion. Signed: Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant; Denise H. Rohan, National Commander.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN VICK: Thank you very much. I am overwhelmed. I want to say something real quickly: If there's anybody in this American Legion who has been drawn closer to the savior or if there's anybody in The American Legion who doubted their faith or has, as a result of something I've said or done, drawn closer to the Lord, then His will for me has been fulfilled and I am completely happy. Praise God. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Next we have a video greeting from the chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. He has been a warrior for the passage of life-changing veterans legislation including the Accountability Act, Appeals Modernization and the VA Mission Act. Congressman Phil Roe.

**Video Address: Honorable Phil Roe, Chairman
United States House of Representatives, Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

Hello, I'm Phil Roe, Congressman from the First Congressional District of Tennessee and chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. Welcome to Minneapolis and the 100th anniversary of The American Legion. I know you're going to have a great week. I'm sorry I can't be there with you, but I want to be here for just a minute to thank you for all the help you've given me in my year and a half as chairman of the committee.

When President Trump was elected president, one of his major priorities was the VA. When he was giving his acceptance speech, he wasn't a minute into his speech until he said, "I want to do what's right for veterans."

I want to thank the Legion for all the help you've given me and the committee. And, by the way, our committee is the most bipartisan committee in the House of Representatives. I want to give a shout-out to ranking member Walz and other members of the committee, and also to Senators Isakson and Tester. What great partners they've been.

But very quickly let me run over what we and you have helped us accomplish in this last year and a half. The Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act. It allows the VA, for the first time, to fire poor-performing employees.

Number two, we passed an appeals reform bill which we've held three subcommittee and full committee hearings on in the last year about how we fast track these appeals that have been stacked up for years.

Thirdly, I know you Legionnaires are incredibly, incredibly proud of this one: The Harry Colmery G.I. Bill, the so-called "Forever G.I. Bill," I think that's going to be one of my major accomplishments in U.S. Congress, where now the G.I. Bill is forever, the rest of your life. Now, I know I used the G.I. Bill when I got out of the Army in 1975 when I was separated. It helped me a great deal then. And we know that the G.I. Bill, written by a Legion member, has helped change the country and the United States. We educated a whole generation of people. And I'm very, very proud of that.

We funded the Choice Bill three times. And with your help we passed the VA Mission Act. The VA Mission Act has three components about how we provide care for our veterans, a caregiver bill and an asset review bill. That is a huge, huge bill that's now being implemented. Fortunately, we have a new secretary, which was confirmed overwhelmingly, Secretary Wilkie. I'm excited about working with him about moving all these things forward.

One last thing I want to say that we have accomplished, it's one of the things I've wanted to do since I've been in the U.S. House since 2009 when I was elected and sworn in, is the Blue-Water Navy. Finally now we're working on or going over in the Senate to pass a Blue-Water Navy bill, which is presumption for our brothers and sisters that served on surface ships off the coast of Vietnam.

Also, before I close, I want to thank the Auxiliary. Look, they do an incredible job. We forget our family members that are at home while we're overseas and serving in foreign lands, as I did in Southeast Asia 45 years ago. But I want to thank them for all the support they do and the incredible work they do for our veterans.

Finally, people talk about in this country, "Oh, Dr. Roe, I know you hate to go to Washington." I say, "Look, I've got the best job in the world. I get to go to the Capitol of the United States of America, the freest, greatest country on the face of the earth, and represent the greatest people in this country, which are American veterans." God bless each and every one of you. I hope you have a great, great week. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: We have another video message, this one from the ranking member of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Prior to being elected to the U.S. Senate, he was a third-generation farmer, a schoolteacher and the president of the Montana Senate. Senator Jon Tester.

**Video Address: Honorable Jon Tester, Ranking Member
United States Senate, Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

I'm Senator Jon Tester, ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. I want to welcome you to the 100th National Convention of The American Legion. I'd like to thank Commander Denise Rohan, Adjutant Daniel Wheeler, and Executive Director Louis Celli for the great work they do every day. I'd also like to welcome all the members of the Montana American Legion and Auxiliary who are in attendance.

For 100 years, The American Legion has been on the front lines fighting for veterans and their families, mentoring youth and promoting a stronger nation. I couldn't be prouder to partner with you and my friend, Chairman Johnny Isakson. Together, we've had unprecedented legislative success. We have passed legislation to improve and reform the disability appeals process, to expand and strengthen G.I. Bill benefits, and to reform VA health care to work better for veterans from Montana to Georgia.

As you all know, these weren't easy wins. But because of your grassroots support, we got 'er done. Most importantly, we worked together to craft, pass and get our VA Missions Act signed into law. Our bipartisan bill streamlines community care programs and strengthens VA care. It puts the decision of where to seek care in the hands of a veteran and their doctor and expands VA caregiver support services to veterans and caregivers of all eras.

Now, the VA will implement our bill over the course of the next year. During that time, we need you to tell us when the VA is getting it right and when it needs to do it better. We must all work together to hold the VA accountable for implementation of our bill. Because there's a lot at stake. With you in the driver's seat, I know we're in good hands.

Since The American Legion was chartered in 1919, you have provided support and services to countless veterans. Millions of men and women around the world know that when they walk into The American Legion posts they're surrounded by friends and fellow veterans. Thank you for everything you do at home for our country and for American veterans everywhere. Here's to 100 more incredible years. (Applause)

Presentation: Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Daniel J. O'Connor was the chairman of the national Americanism Commission from 1962 to 1983. He was chairman emeritus from 1984 until his passing in 2004. The Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy is given to the department that

achieves the most outstanding results in conducting Americanism programs. These programs advance patriotism among the citizens of this nation and participation in our youth activities. Ladies and gentlemen, the winner of the Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy is the Department of Virginia. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: In recognition of the most outstanding Americanism program, presented at the 100th National Convention of The American Legion Minneapolis, Minnesota. Denise H. Rohan, National Commander, and Richard W. Anderson, Chairman of The American Legion national Americanism Commission.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Next, for the purpose of a presentation, the chair recognizes Department of Maryland Parkville Post 183 Past Commander Jack Milburn.

**Presentation: Jack Milburn, Past Post Commander
Parkville Post 183, Maryland**

Good afternoon. Thank you, Commander Rohan. Thank you for the ability to be here with you onstage at our 100th National Convention. This is truly an honor. My name is Jack Milburn. I'm a past post commander of Parkville Post 183 in Parkville, Maryland, the same post that has the privilege of being the home post of former National Judge Advocate Phil Onderdonk.

It is a great pleasure to make this presentation to a personal friend and advisor for over 25 years. Commander, there's no doubt that Phil Onderdonk has done incredible work for The American Legion. As a member of our post, even though he lived in Indianapolis, so he could indeed work for national, we find it vital to express our sincere appreciation and express our everlasting admiration for him.

This afternoon we present Judge Onderdonk with a plaque that reads: "Certificate of Appreciation. This Certificate of Appreciation is gratefully presented to fellow member Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. by Parkville American Legion Post 183, Department of Maryland, in recognition of sincere appreciation of outstanding and dedicated service from the national level down to the post level. For his assistance and guidance which contributed to the advancement of The American Legion programs and dedicated to God and country. Presented this 29th day of August 2018, signed by John Carpenter, Post Adjutant, Joseph L. Cascio, Sr., Commander." Thank you. Phil. *(Applause)*

PAST NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE ONDERDONK: Thank you very much, Jack. Thank you very much, Parkville post. Thank you, American Legion. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair recognizes Richard Anderson of Connecticut, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Americanism, for the purpose of making a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Americanism
Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut, Chairman**

At 8:30 am, Sunday, August 26, 2018, the Convention Committee on Americanism, consisting of the two subcommittees of Americanism and Children & Youth, met in the Hilton Minneapolis, Minneapolis Ballroom, Salon D, Third Floor in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for the purpose of electing a chairman and secretary for Americanism. Richard Anderson (CT) was elected chairman and Mark Avis (MA) was elected secretary for the purpose of reporting to the Convention.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the committee chairman and secretary be authorized to accept and sign the report of the Convention Committee on Americanism on behalf of its delegates.

It was moved and seconded that the chairman of the Americanism Convention Committee be authorized to accept the actions of the two subcommittees assigned to Americanism on the resolutions assigned to the respective subcommittees.

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

No further business was discussed at this point and the delegates were then released to the two subcommittees assigned to the Americanism Convention Committee – Americanism and Children & Youth - for the purpose of reviewing and acting on the assigned resolutions.

The Americanism Convention Committee was recessed at this point, subject to recall by the chairman if required.

The Convention subcommittees met and considered their assigned resolutions as follows:

Children & Youth
Herbert Petit, Louisiana, Chairman

At 9:00 am, Sunday, August 26, 2018, 48 delegates assigned to the Convention Subcommittee on Children & Youth met in the Hilton Minneapolis, Minneapolis Ballroom, Salon E, Third Floor in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Herbert Petit (LA) was elected chairman and Donald Suchy (NE) was elected secretary. The subcommittee considered a total of 12 resolutions, with disposition as follows:

Approved Resolutions

Resolution No. 112: Funding For Drug Trafficking Prevention Programs

Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The illegal trafficking of drugs into the United States is one of the greatest threats to the welfare and safety of our citizens, particularly our youth; and

WHEREAS, The enemies of our nation and way of life hope to destroy us from within by debilitating our most precious resource for the future, our youth; and

WHEREAS, The economic and social costs of drug abuse exceed \$740 billion annually; and

WHEREAS, The efforts to halt the entry of such illegal drugs may be seen as a war of will and resources – a war that at the present we are not winning; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion urge the president and the Congress of the United States to appropriate funds that meet or exceed current funding levels for state, federal and military drug trafficking prevention programs.

Resolution No. 113: Locate Missing Children And Prevent Child Victimization

Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Each day in the United States, an average of 1,272 children, 17 years and younger, are reported missing or disappear by abduction, run away or are lost to some unknown cause; and

WHEREAS, The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) was created in 1984 as a central resource and data clearinghouse for law enforcement, victims and their families, to aid in fighting for the safe recovery of missing children and the protection of all children from sexual exploitation; and

WHEREAS, Today more children come home safely than at any time in our nation's history, law enforcement is better prepared, and families are more alert and aware than ever before because of the tireless work of NCMEC and law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, NCMEC's overall recovery rate for missing children is 97 percent, demonstrating that the current system is working due to effective response of law enforcement, technological advances, and the general public paying attention to missing children photos; and

WHEREAS, Although NCMEC has made a significant impact in tackling this daunting problem, there is much that remains to be done for too many children still do not make it home, and too many are still victims of sexual predators; and

WHEREAS, Even one child disappearing is the concern of all responsible persons; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation aimed at locating missing children and preventing child victimization; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to appropriate funds that meet or exceed current funding levels for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion be authorized to collaborate with national and state missing and exploited children agencies and organizations as determined by the American Commission to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role, at all levels, in locating missing children and preventing child exploitation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the departments and posts are encouraged to actively increase the public's awareness of child victimization and its detrimental effects on the children and youth of our society and are urged to cooperate with credible organizations and agencies that seek to locate missing children in their states and communities.

Resolution No. 114: Support For The U.S. Department Of Justice's Office Of Juvenile Justice And Delinquency Prevention

Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The Americanism Commission is concerned about the crimes committed by and against juveniles in this nation each year; and

WHEREAS, The Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention is an office of the United States Department of Justice and a component of the Office of Justice Programs; and

WHEREAS, The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention envisions a nation where our children are free from crime and violence; If they come into contact with the justice system, the contact should be both just and beneficial to them; and

WHEREAS, The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization; and

WHEREAS, The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention also supports the efforts of states, tribes, and communities to develop and implement effective and equitable juvenile justice systems that enhance public safety, ensure youth are held appropriately accountable to both crime victims and communities, and empower youth to live productive, law-abiding lives; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion support the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and its programs; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the president and Congress meet or exceed current funding levels for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Americanism

Richard Anderson, Connecticut, Chairman

At 9:00 am, Sunday, August 26, 2018, 46 delegates assigned to the Convention Subcommittee on Americanism met in the Hilton Minneapolis, Minneapolis Ballroom, Salon D, Third Floor in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Richard Anderson (CT) was elected chairman and Mark Avis (MA) was elected secretary. The committee considered a total of 27 resolutions with disposition as follows:

Approved Resolutions**Resolution No. 111: English Language Be Declared As The Official United States Language
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 66 (IL))**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of wartime veterans who come from many ethnic backgrounds and who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The United States has, over its many year history, been a haven and in most cases a new home for people from all over the world; and

WHEREAS, These Americans, although keeping their ethnic backgrounds alive, were urged to take advantage of our free educational system that taught them the English language, American history, and civics; and

WHEREAS, Many permanent residents and new citizens, although clinging to their ethnic backgrounds did, with pride and determination, take advantage of learning English; and

WHEREAS, English language proficiency promotes cultural assimilation and creates social and economic opportunities that may otherwise be hampered by a language barrier; and

WHEREAS, National polls consistently confirm that eighty-four percent of Americans want the English language declared the official national language; and

WHEREAS, Thirty-two states have passed legislation designating the English language the official state language; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion shall encourage and support legislation which would establish English as the official national language; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to encourage and fund alternative bilingual education programs to serve, as was intended, as a short intermediate step to achieve proficiency in the English language.

Resolutions Referred to the Standing Commission on Americanism**Resolution No. 12 (CO): Constitution Day****Resolution No. 13 (CO): Remove Expected Family Contribution From Legacy Scholarship Application****Resolution No. 19 (CT): Girl Scouts Of America As An Official Program Of The American Legion****Resolution No. 20 (CT): Support A Relationship With The Joe Foss Institute****Resolution No. 27 (TX): Recruitment Of American Legion Baseball Players****Resolution No. 32 (MS): Proposed Change To The Oratorical Contest National Finals****Resolution No. 81 (NY): Change Date Of Oratorical National Finals To May****Resolution No. 82 (NY): Proposed Change To The Oratorical Contest National Finals****Resolution No. 83 (NY): Increase Amounts Of Scholarships Awarded Winners Of National Oratorical Contest****Resolutions Referred to the Standing Commission on Marketing****Resolution No. 33 (MS): Proposed Renaming Of The Oratorical Contest National Finals****Rejected Resolutions****Resolution No. 39 (MD): Establishment of a National Day of Remembrance, In Honor of Our Cold War Veterans and Their Families**

Resolution No. 96 (WA): Ashes To Graves Flag Disposal**Addendum A
Resolutions to Remain Part of the Legislative Program**

Pursuant to Resolution No. 25 approved in October 2016 by the National Executive Committee the following resolutions previously approved by a National Convention or the National Executive Committee are to remain as part of the legislative program of The American Legion through the 116th Congress.

No.	Year	Meeting	Title	Subcommittee
278	2016	Convention	Financially Assist Families Faced By Catastrophic Illness Of Their Children	C&Y
279	2016	Convention	Support Funding Comprehensive Health Care For Children & Youth	C&Y
281	2016	Convention	Prevention Of Child Sexual Exploitation	C&Y
282	2016	Convention	Oppose Any Attempt To Weaken Present Laws Governing Penalties For The Production, Sale And Distribution Of Pornographic Or Obscene Materials To Minors	C&Y
283	2016	Convention	Establish "National Family Week"	C&Y
285	2016	Convention	National School Lunch Program	C&Y
286	2016	Convention	Prevent Child Maltreatment	C&Y
287	2016	Convention	Programs And Organizations That Promote Child Safety	C&Y
288	2016	Convention	Reducing Or Preventing Teenage Pregnancy	C&Y
291	2016	Convention	School Prayer	AMER
292	2016	Convention	Return Patriotic Holidays To Traditional Dates	AMER
293	2016	Convention	Oppose Importation Of Foreign Manufactured American Flags	AMER
294	2016	Convention	Boy Scouts Of America And The Department Of Defense	AMER
295	2016	Convention	Oath Of Renunciation And Allegiance	AMER
296	2016	Convention	Support Fairness For Immigrant Spouses	AMER
297	2016	Convention	Conscientious Objectors Tax Diversion	AMER
299	2016	Convention	Pledge Of Allegiance	AMER
300	2016	Convention	Star Spangled Banner	AMER
301	2016	Convention	Eliminate Damages And Attorney Fees In Establishment Clause Lawsuits	AMER
302	2016	Convention	Oppose Flag Code Changes For Hoisting, Lowering Or Passing Of The Flag, The National Anthem, And The Pledge Of Allegiance	AMER

Proceedings of Wednesday, August 29, 2018

303	2016	Convention	Constitutional Amendment To Protect The Flag Of The United States	AMER
19	2016	Fall	Flag Code Amendment	AMER

As a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Connecticut, I move for the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: It's been moved and seconded to adopt this report. Are there any questions? All in favor, so indicate by saying aye. Opposed nay. The report of Americanism is adopted.

Presentation: Frank N. Belgrano, Jr., Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Having completed the adoption of the Americanism report, it is appropriate to announce the winners of two Americanism awards. Frank Belgrano, Jr., was national commander from 1934-1935. He was a founder of the Galileo Post in San Francisco and was the department commander of California during a peak year for membership and activity in the Golden State. The Frank Belgrano, Jr., Trophy is given annually to the department rendering the most outstanding service to the Boys Scouts of America program during the 12-month period beginning August 1. This year's winner is the Department of Missouri. (*Applause*)

Presentation: Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: It is only fitting that an education award be named after a national commander who graduated from Harvard Law School and interrupted his term as a county attorney in Kansas so he could serve in World War I. The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Award is given to the department within the United States documenting the greatest activity in operating The American Legion School Medal program. The winning department shows what can be accomplished by an active and involved American Legion. The winner is the Department of New Mexico. (*Applause*)

Presentation: Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: In 1952, Department Commander Dr. Garland D. Murphy, Jr., of Arkansas, came to The American Legion with an offer to provide a valuable contribution to be used solely for children. After much study and discussion, the idea of a foundation was adopted. Eventually, on October 15, 1953, the National Executive Committee approved the establishment of the foundation and entered into a trust agreement with Dr. Murphy. Legal work was completed, and on July 9, 1954, the foundation was duly incorporated under the laws of the State of Indiana. At that time, Dr. Murphy assigned to the foundation deeds to fractional mineral rights on nearly 10,000 acres of land in the oil-rich Williston Basin in Montana and North Dakota. To date, more than \$13 million has been awarded to organizations to assist the children of this country from The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc.

I now have the pleasure of presenting the Garland D. Murphy, Jr., Award to the department that raised the most money for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure for me to present this award to the Department of Florida. (*Applause*)

ANNOUNCER: The Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award is presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to The American Legion Department of Florida for the program year 2017-2018. In recognition of their designation as the number one department, in total contributions received from their volunteers, in support of our annual program designed to meet the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of our nation's children through productive and meaningful grants.

Presentation: U.S. Grant Legacy Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: It is now time for me to present the U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award. Udie was a member of the National Executive Committee for 38 years. From the Department of Kansas, he also served as a longtime director and later president of our National Child Welfare Foundation until he joined Post Everlasting in 2004. The U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award recognizes the collective efforts of the American Legion Family in a department. It goes to the department that collectively raises the most money for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. The winner of this prestigious award is the Department of Florida. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Florida for the program year 2017-2018 in recognition of Outstanding Support of The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. We thank you.

Presentation: Child Welfare Foundation Meritorious Achievement Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: For the first time, we are presenting the Child Welfare Foundation Meritorious Achievement Award for the highest increase in per capita giving to this great cause. The winner is the Department of Kansas. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Child Welfare Foundation Meritorious Achievement Award reads: "There is a wonderful mythical law of nature that the three things we crave most in life, happiness, freedom and peace of mind are always attained by giving them to someone else." Peyton Conway March. Achieving the highest increase in per capita giving for 2017-2018, The American Legion Department of Kansas. The Board of Directors gratefully recognizes your outstanding support of The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Service to the critical needs of America's children is made possible through your caring and generosity. (Applause)

Presentation: Child Welfare Foundation Excellence Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: We just recognized the department that had the largest increase in per capita giving for the Child Welfare Foundation. Now it's time for the Child Welfare Foundation Excellence Award given to the department which has the highest per capita giving to the Child Welfare Foundation. Again, the winner is the Department of Kansas. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Child Welfare Foundation Excellence Award reads: "You will find, as you look back on your life, that the moments that stand out are the moments when you have done things for others." Henry Drummond. Achieving the highest in per capita giving for 2017-2018, The American Legion Department of Kansas. The Board of Directors gratefully recognizes your outstanding support of The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Service to the critical needs of America's children is made possible through your caring and generosity.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: I now call upon the president of the Child Welfare Foundation, Dennis R. Boland of Florida, for the purposes of a presentation.

Presentation: Child Welfare Foundation Presentation to the National Commander

PRESIDENT BOLAND: Commander, on behalf of the board of directors of the Child Welfare Foundation, it's an honor for me to be able to present you with a five diamond Child Welfare lapel pin. Thank you for your dedication and your support for the year that you are national commander. *(Applause)*

Donations to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation and National Commander Rohan's Charity Fund for Temporary Financial Assistance and Service Officers

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: My Commander's fundraising project for this year goes toward providing temporary financial assistance to children in need and for the professional training of American Legion service officers. If anyone has donations to the National Commander's Fund or for the Child Welfare Foundation, I will now accept those on stage. Those presenting checks should proceed to the microphone, announce the amount, the charity and the donor.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Garden State, Department of New Jersey, \$1,500, commander, for the project.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Post 232, John Wesley Taylor Post, \$500 for the national commander's project.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From Mystic Island Post 493, great county of Ocean, New Jersey, \$1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the National American Legion College Alumni Association, \$1,000 to the Child Welfare Fund. And another thousand to TFA.

DELEGATE OREN (OH): Stan Oren, past commander of the great First District of Department of Ohio, \$100.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the Department of Iowa, \$1,000. Child Welfare Fund.

DELEGATE UHRIG (WY): Good afternoon. Doug Uhrig, Department of Wyoming. With me today is First Vice Commander Mike Cook and District 1 Commander Susan Schreiber. I'd like to donate an additional \$1,125 to the Child Welfare and to the Temporary Financial Assistance and for Service Officer training. Thank you.

DELEGATE JACOB (CA): Ralph Jacob, Department of California. American Legion Post 419 in Santa Clara, \$111. From District 13, which is Santa Clara County, in California, \$189. I promise I'd match it. So here's another \$300. Total of \$600.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the Department of New Hampshire, we'd like to donate a check, a thousand dollars, to Child Welfare Fund. Thank you.

DELEGATE PAJAK (MA): From the state of Massachusetts, Jodie Pajak, department senior vice, and immediate Past Commander Mike Davis would like to donate \$425 to the Child Welfare Foundation; and also to the TFA program, \$2,620.

ADJUTANT FINLEY-JACKSON (MO): Greetings from the Show Me State. I'm Lowry Finley-Jackson, adjutant from the Department of Missouri. We donate \$1,260 to the Child Welfare Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: For service officers, we donate \$1,855. TFA, \$1,955.

DELEGATE HOLT (MI): Immediate Past Commander Brett Holt, Department of Michigan, with Department Commander Steve Striggow and Department Adjutant Ron Runyan. Department of Michigan donates \$2,000 to the Child Welfare Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Department of Ohio donates \$10,000 to the Child Welfare Foundation.

DELEGATE GREELING (AR): I'm Jake Greeling, NEC alternate from the Department of Arkansas, with my wife, Karen. We'd like to donate a thousand dollars to the Child Welfare Foundation.

DELEGATE MILLER (AZ): Scott Miller, John Ivens Post 42, Grand Canyon, Arizona, \$500 Child Welfare Foundation.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: On behalf of the great state of Nebraska, Go Big Red. Child Welfare Foundation, \$2,252.91.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Commander Rohan, when you visited our post back in February, January, I presented you with a \$2,000 check for the Endowment Fund. From the largest post in the world, Post 347, Lady Lake, Florida, an additional \$3,500.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The total donations on stage for the Child Welfare Foundation, \$19,539.75. For the commander's charity, \$10,505. The Endowment Fund, \$1,500. Total donations since my election, to all of our charities: \$9,189,079.06. Thank you. *(Applause)*

The Chair recognizes Randall A. Fisher, Kentucky, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education, for the purpose of making a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education
Randall A. Fisher, Kentucky, Chairman**

Eighty-one (81) members of your Committees on Employment and Veterans' Preference and on Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness met at 9:00am on August 26, 2018, in the Hilton Minneapolis, Minneapolis Ballroom, Salon C, Third Floor, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committees were called to order by Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr. (DC), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Ariel De Jesus, Jr. (DC), Assistant Director for the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received: Randall Fisher (KY) was elected Chairman and James Fratolillo (MA) was elected Secretary of the Convention Committee.

James Fratolillo (MA) was elected Chairman of the Employment and Veterans' Preference Committee and Dennis Tipsword (IL) was elected Secretary. Eric Measles (CA) was elected Chairman of the Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness Committee, and Geraldine Hince (TX), as Secretary.

A Veterans Employment & Education Resolutions screening Committee met earlier to screen and group the resolutions. A report of their actions, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committees for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committees substantially. It was chaired by Randall Fisher (KY), Chairman of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission and was composed of the following persons:

James Fratolillo (MA)
W. Michael Bowen (NY)
James Pisa (AK) Absent
Ron Gott (OK) Sick

There were 9 resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention.

The following actions on the resolutions were taken by the Convention Committees:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment	6
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	0
Referred to the Standing Commission	0
Received and Recorded	3
Rejected	0

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committees' behalf.

A report of action taken on the 9 resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Employment & Education Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

**Employment and Veterans' Preference Committee
Approved Resolutions or Approved with Amendment**

Resolution No. 100: Accountability of the Department of Defense's Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, The mandatory pre-separation counseling process represents the most holistic, personal, and extended component of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP); and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program (DODTAP) for managers and counselors web application is designed as a tool to assist the military services in executing an effective transition; and

WHEREAS, DODTAP for managers and counselors is designed to ensure transition assistance counselors are able to provide support to their separating servicemembers, enabling them to depart the military "career-ready"; and

WHEREAS, DODTAP for managers and counselors is only authorized for Department of Defense (DoD) personnel and their designated federal transition assistance partners; and

WHEREAS The Career Readiness Standard (CRS) are tangible measures of a servicemember's preparedness for a civilian career; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The America Legion supports legislation and administrative measures that requires the Department of Defense to mandate and implement pre-separation counseling, in addition to the five-day Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to all transitioning servicemembers, and optional for the servicemembers support system; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation that would mandate the Department of Defense to allow transitioning servicemembers to attend TAP at different intervals of their military service to include pre-separation counseling, while mandating servicemembers take one of the three optional transitioning tracks; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation that would require the Department of Defense to create a standardized electronic tracking system of all servicemembers transitioning from the military, to include but not limited to employment outcomes and career readiness.

Resolution No. 101: Support for Continuation of Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The fourth stanza of the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution affirms For God and Country we associate ourselves together "To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation"; and

WHEREAS, In 2007, a bipartisan Congress created the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program and President George W. Bush signed the program into law to encourage individuals to enter and continue to work in full-time public service jobs after graduation; and

WHEREAS, The PSLF program is a valuable recruitment incentive for the Department of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain qualified staff, and for the service branches to recruit and retain servicemembers with outstanding student loan debt; and

WHEREAS, While policy adjustments to ensure long-term sustainability and affordable tuition will be deliberated upon, The American Legion remains bound by its founding documents to not allow a culture of honoring service to community, state and country to erode; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion support legislation and/or administrative rulemaking that protects and enforces veterans access to Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program as originally drafted; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation and/or administrative rulemaking that protects the eligibility of Department of Veterans Affairs and veterans service organizations employment for public service loan forgiveness.

Resolution No. 102: Expansion of the Department of Defense's Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to Include Ancillary Programs and Services

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, Jill Biden, wife of former Vice President Joe Biden, launched a program in June 2011, where 73 companies and organizations made a commitment to recruit, hire, promote and retain military spouses in portable careers; and

WHEREAS, The Military Spouse Employment Partnership connects military spouses with partner employers worldwide with 24/7 access to job openings and career connections; and

WHEREAS, Broadening the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) audience by addressing spouses and the broader community (e.g., employers, veterans service organizations) is key to a transitioning servicemember's success in creating a self-sufficient civilian life; and

WHEREAS, Incorporating technology that creates an "immersive" Transition Assistance Program that mirrors the experiences servicemembers and their spouses have in their military training – mobile device design, just-in-time access to tools and content, social media networking, and self-directed search; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion supports legislation that will afford spouses the same level of job training and employment skills training that would otherwise have been given only to servicemembers; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to mandate the Department of Defense to expand all their programs and services to the transitioning servicemembers' spouses and/or support system; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation that encourages the Department of Defense to introduce improvements in service delivery, business process, and technology innovations in support of the Transition Assistance Program.

Resolution No. 103: Support and Expand Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) is a Department of Defense-wide effort to promote the well-being of National Guard and reserve servicemembers, their families and communities by connecting them with resources throughout the deployment cycle; and

WHEREAS, National Guard and reserve servicemembers have less community support structures than their active-duty counterparts as they often live far from military installations and other servicemembers of their units; and

WHEREAS, Commanders and military leadership play a critical role in ensuring reservists and their families attend Yellow Ribbon events to access information on healthcare, education and training opportunities, financial and legal benefits, provided by government and non-government partners, including the Small Business Administration and Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, YRRP has impacted more than 1.5 million individuals across all service branches since its inception by helping maintain the readiness of the military and building stronger, more resilient families; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's Employment Innovation Task Force, whose mission is to look specifically at employment issues and identify, recommend, and guide innovative employment solutions for transitioning servicemembers and veterans has recognized improving YRRP as a perennial goal; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion urges Congress to mandate the Department of Defense to continue the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP); and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Department of Defense to expand its available resources to all servicemembers and their spouses by including employers in YRRP events, through initiatives such as but not limited to employer panels identifying best practices for veteran-friendly employers and using labor market and economic data to guide career goal setting for National Guard and reserve servicemembers and their spouses.

Resolution No. 105: Support and Expand Warrior Transition Advancement Course (WARTAC)

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs (VA) offer servicemembers a career skills training opportunity to help them become VA employees through the Warrior Transition Advancement Course (WARTAC); and

WHEREAS, Successful completion of this training program leads to an opportunity for servicemembers to be interviewed and hired at one of Veterans Benefits Administration's 56 regional offices around the country; and

WHEREAS, VA encourages disabled veterans and those eligible for the Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA) to apply; and

WHEREAS, WARTAC is open to wounded warriors and active-duty servicemembers in the transition process (generally within 90 to 120 days of discharge) and provides participants with an opportunity to learn the skillset of a VA Veteran Service Representative; and

WHEREAS, VRA is an exempted authority that allows agencies, to appoint eligible veterans without competition if the veteran/servicemember is: in receipt of a campaign badge for service during a war, or in a campaign or expedition, or a disabled veteran, or in receipt of an Armed Forces Service Medal for participation in a military operation, or a recently separated veteran (within the past three years), and separated under honorable conditions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion urges Congress to mandate both the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to support and expand its Warrior Transition Advancement Course (WARTAC); and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion request that both the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs continue to offer its WARTAC program to all servicemembers, in particular to those in areas where unemployment or underemployment is high.

**Committee on Veterans Education, Other Benefits, & Homelessness
Approved Resolutions or Approved With Amendment**

Resolution No. 104: GI Bill Fairness for Activated National Guard Servicemembers

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, Reserve and National Guard servicemembers may only attain eligibility for the Post-9/11 GI Bill through authorized active duty service; and

WHEREAS, The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance of 2017 recognized and retro-actively authorized GI Bill eligibility to National Guard and reserve servicemembers who deploy alongside Active Duty servicemembers under 10 USC §12304b orders; and

WHEREAS, In 2017 Army Human Resources Command ordered a change in Interpretation of Service Qualifying for Post-9/11 GI Bill to count active duty training orders pursuant to 10 USC §12301(d) as eligible service, providing thousands of Army Reservists GI Bill eligibility for dates activated to military training including primary military education; and

WHEREAS, Thousands of National Guard servicemembers have been activated to duties alongside said reservists such as joint training operations and primary military education, but are denied eligibility for the Post-9/11 GI Bill due to orders pursuant to 32 USC §502(f), which is not currently recognized as Active Duty Service qualifying for Title 38 benefits; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion supports present and future amendments to U.S. Code Titles 5, 10, 37 and 38 commensurate with U.S. Code Title 10 authorized service, including but not limited to 32 USC § 502(f) in order to provide Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for wounded and active-duty eligible National Guard and reserve servicemembers.

Resolutions Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 52 (IL): Remove Tax Liability for Forgiven Federal Student Loans

Resolution No. 69 (IL): Surviving Spouse Mortgage Eligibility

Resolution No. 77 (IL): Raise Ceiling on VA Home Loans for Two Legally Married Eligible Veterans

Addendum A

Resolutions to Remain Part of the Legislative Program

Pursuant to Resolution No. 25 approved in October 2016 by the National Executive Committee the following resolutions previously approved by a National Convention or the National Executive Committee are to remain as part of the legislative program of The American Legion through the 116th Congress.

No.	Year	Meeting	Title
58	2016	Convention	Support Legislation That Prohibits Discrimination Against Veterans In Federal Contracts
60	2016	Convention	Support Full Funding Of Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERS) And Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist (DVOPS) Positions
68	2016	Convention	Support The Increased Funding Of Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist And Local Veterans' Employment Representative Programs
69	2016	Convention	Support The Elimination Of Department Of Labor's Veterans' Employment And Training Service Regional Offices
70	2016	Convention	Improve Transition Assistance Program
71	2016	Convention	Oppose Department Of Labor's Veterans' Employment And Training Service Hiring Of Non-Veterans
72	2016	Convention	Oppose Efforts To Change The Residency Requirements For State Directors Of The Veterans' Employment And Training Service
73	2016	Convention	Oppose The Transfer Of Veterans' Employment And Training Service To The Department Of Veterans Affairs
74	2016	Convention	Oppose Any Weakening Of The Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist And Local Veterans' Employment Representative
75	2016	Convention	Support Legislation That Ensures That All Agencies That Receive Funding From The U.S. Department Of Labor Or The Workforce Investment Act Meet The Mandatory Compliance Standards For Veterans' Preference

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76	2016	Convention	Support Improvements In The Reporting Programs Available To And Administered By Veterans' Employment And Training Service
77	2016	Convention	Support For The Military Transition Program
78	2016	Convention	Support For The Strengthening And Adequate Funding Of The National Veterans' Training Institute
79	2016	Convention	Support The Restoration Of The Duties And Responsibilities Of The Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist And Local Veterans' Employment Representative
80	2016	Convention	Support Legislation That Would Return Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist And Local Veterans' Employment Representative Funding To A Staffing Grant
81	2016	Convention	Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshops For National Guard And Reserve Members
149	2016	Convention	Support "Buy American" Policy At The Department Of Veterans Affairs To Create Jobs And Opportunities For Veterans
150	2016	Convention	Expanding Post-9/11 GI Bill For Entrepreneurship
151	2016	Convention	Status Of Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business After Death Of The Veteran Owner
152	2016	Convention	Affirm Support For Emerging-Internet-Based And Peer-Financed Alternative Capital Options For Veteran-Owned Small Businesses
153	2016	Convention	Support Effort Of The Small Business Administration (SBA) Office Of Veterans Business Development
154	2016	Convention	Support Reasonable Set-Aside Of Federal Procurements And Contracts For Businesses Owned And Operated By Veterans
155	2016	Convention	Support Verification Improvements For Veterans' Business
156	2016	Convention	Veterans Entrepreneur Training Program
170	2016	Convention	Oppose The Department Of Labor's Restructuring Of Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist And Local Veterans' Employment Representative Roles
254	2016	Convention	Raise Ceiling On VA Home Loans For Two Legally Married Eligible Veterans
269	2016	Convention	Surviving Spouse Mortgage Eligibility
274	2016	Convention	Support Employment Services For Spouses Of Servicemembers Killed In The Line Of Duty
304	2016	Convention	Support Accountability For Institutions Of Higher Learning
305	2016	Convention	Support The Development Of Veterans On-The-Job Training Opportunities
306	2016	Convention	Allow Military Retirees To Apply For Positions In Federal Law Enforcement After Age 37
307	2016	Convention	Support Legislation To Amend Title 38 United States Code, To Prohibit Discrimination And Acts Of Reprisal By Employers Against Veterans That Seek Treatment For Their Service-Connected Disabilities
308	2016	Convention	Amending The Eligibility For The Transfer Of The Post-9/11 GI Bill Educational Benefits

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309	2016	Convention	Supporting The U.S. Economy And Increase U.S. Energy Security Through A Canadian-American Pipeline
311	2016	Convention	Federal And State Incentive For Employers To Use Veterans' Preference
313	2016	Convention	Support Elimination Funding Fees For Government Guaranteed Loans
314	2016	Convention	Support Elimination Of The VA Home Loan Funding Fee
315	2016	Convention	Support Employment And Reemployment Rights Of National Guard And Reservist Returning From Deployment
316	2016	Convention	Support Employment Of Veterans In The Public And Private Workforce
317	2016	Convention	Enforcing Veterans' Preference Hiring Practices In Federal Civil Service
318	2016	Convention	Ensuring The Quality Of Servicemember And Veteran Student's Education At Institutions Of Higher Education
319	2016	Convention	Expanding Veterans Employment And Homeless Services Within The Department Of Veterans Affairs
320	2016	Convention	Support For Expansion Of Oil Refineries
321	2016	Convention	Support Extended Time For Mortgage Payments For Servicemembers
322	2016	Convention	Support Joint Services Transcript Evaluation Of Military Training And Experience Of Veterans, Active-Duty, Reserve And National Guard Personnel
324	2016	Convention	Support Funding For Homeless Veterans
325	2016	Convention	Support Funding And Changes To VA's Grant And Per Diem (GPD) Program
326	2016	Convention	Support Funding For Additional Housing For Homeless Veterans With Families
327	2016	Convention	Support Further Assessment And Evaluation Of Institutions Of Higher Learning To Enable Veterans To Make Informed Education Choices
328	2016	Convention	GI Bill Medical Transferability Rights
329	2016	Convention	Support Home Loan Guaranty Program
330	2016	Convention	Homeless Veterans Assistance
331	2016	Convention	Support Housing Preference For Low-Income Veterans In The Department Of Housing And Urban Development
332	2016	Convention	Support Funding For The Department Of Housing And Urban Development (HUD) And Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Homeless Program
333	2016	Convention	Support Increase In Reporting Fees For Educational Institutions
334	2016	Convention	Support Legislation To Increase Telework (Telecommuting) Opportunities For Service-Disabled Veterans And Military Spouses
335	2016	Convention	Support Major Enhancements For The Montgomery GI Bill

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336	2016	Convention	Support Legislation That Would Change The 12-Year Delimiting Date For Eligibility To Chapter 31 Benefits (VA's Vocational Rehabilitation And Employment Program)
338	2016	Convention	Support Licensure And Certification Of Servicemembers, Veterans And Spouses
339	2016	Convention	Support The Rollover Of Ira Account Penalty Of Tax Liability Of A Permanent And Total 100 Percent Service-Disabled Veteran With Individual Unemployability
340	2016	Convention	Support Permanent Authorization For The Supportive Services For Veteran Families (SSVF) Program
341	2016	Convention	Support Recognition Of Military And Pay When Calculating Starting Federal Civilian Salaries
342	2016	Convention	Support And Strengthen The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA)
343	2016	Convention	Support Student-Veterans Return-On-Investment Education Outcomes
344	2016	Convention	Support Federal Legislation That Protects The Employment Of Veterans In The U.S. Postal Service Mail Processing Facilities That Are Slated For Closure
345	2016	Convention	Support For Vocational Rehabilitation And Employment Program Hiring More Counselors And Employment Coordinators
346	2016	Convention	Support An Investigation Of Hiring Practices In The Federal Government
347	2016	Convention	Veterans Education Debt Forgiveness
348	2016	Convention	Support Legislation That Bolsters The Hiring Of Veterans In The Public And Private Sectors
349	2016	Convention	Support Legislation To Improve The Post-9/11 GI Bill
351	2016	Convention	Support Tax Credit For Certain Employers
352	2016	Convention	Transitional Housing Allotments For Returning Combat Veterans
353	2016	Convention	Support A Veteran-Centric Website For Employment
354	2016	Convention	Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program
355	2016	Convention	Veterans Employment Initiative
356	2016	Convention	Veterans Home Loans
357	2016	Convention	Support Veterans Housing Repair And Modification For Pilot Program
358	2016	Convention	Support Veterans' Preference In Public Employment
20	2016	Fall	Oppose Efforts To Downgrade Low-Level Wage Positions Within The Department Of Veterans Affairs
21	2017	Spring	Support State And National Funding For Troops To Teachers Program
20	2017	Spring	GI Bill Fairness For Wounded Servicemembers And Activated National Guard And Reservists
26	2017	Convention	Support Efforts Of The Small Business Administration's Office Of Veterans Business Development And Veteran Business Outreach Centers
78	2017	Convention	Support Greater GI Bill Outcomes By Closing 90-10 Loophole
81	2017	Convention	Military Spouse Employment

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82	2017	Convention	Preserve Veteran And Servicemember Rights To Gainful Employment And Borrower Defense Protections
83	2017	Convention	Protect Veteran And Servicemember Rights To Fair Consumer Arbitration
84	2017	Convention	Support And Strengthen The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA)
85	2017	Convention	Support Employment And Reemployment Rights Of National Guard And Reservists Returning From Deployment
20	2017	Fall	Support Of An Acting Operator For Deployed Servicemember's Small Business
19	2017	Fall	Expanding Employment Services To Non-Service Connected Disabled Veterans
12	2018	Spring	Accountability And Enhancements Of Transition Assistance Program, Outcomes And Delivery For Today's Digital Transitioning Servicemembers
11	2018	Spring	Support Veteran And Reserve Servicemember Financial Protections
14	2018	Spring	Oppose The Cessation Of The Department Of Defense Hiring Heroes Program

Commander Rohan, as a duly elected and registered delegate of this convention from the Department of Kentucky, I move the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

It has been moved and seconded to approve the report of the Veterans Employment & Education Committee. Are there any questions? All those in favor, signify by saying aye. Opposed, say nay. Carried. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

**Presentation: Employer of the Year Award for Hiring Veterans
Large Category
Southwest Airlines, Dallas, Texas**

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Military members transitioning home have few priorities that are more important than finding meaningful employment. A number of outstanding employers were recognized by The American Legion at the Veterans Employment & Education Convention Committee meeting for their work in hiring veterans. But we would like to recognize a couple of other award winners today.

For their outstanding record of hiring veterans in the large business category of 200 or more employees, Southwest Airlines. Accepting the award is Senior Recruiter Tracy McDonald. (*Applause*)

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2017. Presented to Southwest Airlines, Dallas, Texas, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans, presented at the 100th Annual National Convention, Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 29, 2018

TRACY MCDONALD: On behalf of Southwest Airlines, I accept this award. From the front lines of our country to the front lines of Southwest Airlines, we love our veterans. Thank you for your service. (*Applause*)

**Presentation: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year Award
Samuel L. Denson, Pensacola, Florida**

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The American Legion is also proud of the men and women who work on behalf of disabled veterans seeking employment. This year I am happy to present the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist of the Year Award to Samuel L. Denson of Pensacola, Florida. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist 2017, presented to Samuel L. Denson, for your outstanding service to the veterans of the state of Florida. Presented at the 100th National Convention Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 29th, 2018.

SAMUEL DENSON: To Commander Rohan, the National Headquarters of The American Legion, honored guests, dignitaries and all Legionnaires, I'm honored, elated but yet humbled to receive this prestigious award. Thank you very much for bestowing me with this great honor. Special thanks and gratitude go out to the Florida Department of The American Legion for recognizing not only my contribution made to our veterans, but also congratulations on the many awards that you won today. Thank you again, Legionnaires. Enjoy the rest of your convention and have a safe travel back home. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair recognizes the Honorable Vincent Gaughan of Illinois, chairman of the Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments, for the purpose of making a report.

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

To the 100th National Convention of The American Legion, Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 28, 29 and 30, 2018.

The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 26, 2018, in the Minneapolis Ballroom, Salon B, Third Floor of the Hilton Hotel, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Committee Liaison Kevin J. Bartlett (MI) called the roll and announced that 50 members of the Constitutional Amendments Committee were present. The following report was authorized by the members and is hereby submitted to this Convention.

The meeting was opened by Kevin J. Bartlett (MI), National Judge Advocate, who acted as temporary chairman. He stated a quorum was present and proceeded to the first order of business, which was the election of a chairman and secretary.

Vincent Gaughan (IL) was elected Chairman and Cathy Gorst (WI) was duly elected Secretary. Thereupon they assumed their respective places.

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

The Chair called upon Kevin J. Bartlett, National Judge Advocate, to give a summary background report on the resolution assigned to the Committee, which was done.

A motion was made by Charles Mills (NY) and seconded by James Johnson (LA) that all members of the Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws who were present at the meeting, but not actual delegates to the Convention Committee be seated with voice but no vote. The motion was carried.

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

Resolution No. 94 (WV) was considered. The Chair announced this resolution is out of order. It does not provide the complete text to be voted on for The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and the American Legion Corporate Charter and it also does not provide that the change cannot take effect until Congress changes the charter. It would also end the right of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and American Legion Charities to accept tax deductible

donations. In addition, it would require The American Legion to incur the expense of returning donations to the donors.

James Johnson (LA) made a motion, seconded by Larry J. Marcouillier (DE) to affirm Chairman's ruling that **Resolution No. 94 (WV)** was out of order. Motion carried unanimously.

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

Frank A. Porter (MD) made the motion, seconded by Gerald Lakey (OK) to attach the Report of the Constitution and By-laws Committee to this report as an exhibit. The motion carried.

Jim Demarest (IA) made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chairman. The motion was seconded by Charlie Arkwell (NH). The motion carried unanimously.

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

Madame Commander, as a delegate to the 100th national convention of The American Legion, I move the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: I heard a second. Are there any questions? All those in favor of adoption of this report, signify by saying aye. Opposed, same sign. The report is adopted. Thank you very much.

The American Legion Family has a strong and mutual beneficial relationship with the organization that is headed by our next guest. Did you notice that I said family? It's appropriate because USAA cares about financial security for families of our current military and of our veterans who served in the past. And, yes, I am also a proud member of USAA. A veteran of the United States Air Force and CEO of USAA is also a Legionnaire. He joined USAA in 1988 and led the development of its financial planning practice. He was named the chief operating officer in May 2014 and has served as CEO since March 2015. Please give a warm welcome to USAA Chief Executive Officer Stuart Parker. (*Applause*)

**Address: Stuart Parker, Chief Executive Officer
USAA**

Thank you, Commander Rohan. That was a very kind introduction. The American Legion and USAA do have a lot in common. We just celebrated our 96th birthday, and we are looking forward to our 100th as well. Here in Minneapolis, where the first Legion convention was gathered about 100 years ago, this does feel like a family reunion because we grew up together.

The time after World War I brought incredible change. More than two million U.S. military personnel came home ready to build something positive. Meanwhile, the automobile had become part of that American dream. From 1918 to 1922, car registrations doubled to over 12 million, and in that environment, USAA was born.

The mission of USAA is to facilitate the financial security of its members and their families. We were founded in 1922 by 25 Army officers who came together to insure each other's vehicles. Like the military, USAA is built on core values -- honesty, integrity, loyalty, and service. Everyone here shares those same values.

I grew up wanting to serve and to fly in the Air Force. While in high school in southern Georgia, I even gave a speech about patriotism at an American Legion contest. I went on to join the Air Force and flew missions during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. I was living my dream. But a medical retirement ended my flying career. So I went back to school. Thanks to a program supported by The American Legion, Vocational Rehab, that paid for my MBA, and I was able to go to work for USAA.

Today I am happy to stand here as an example of how much the Legion does for veterans. It's also why USAA's chairman, retired Air Force General Lester Lyles, is thrilled to serve on the Legion's 100th Anniversary Committee. USAA and The American Legion have a natural affinity,

and our members understand the value that we both provide. We have built an emotional bond on taking care of each other, and these stories never get old.

...The convention viewed a video. (Applause)

Thank you. Well, last summer the Legion and USAA were in Houston helping veterans and their families after Hurricane Harvey. The hurricanes and wildfires of 2017 caused widespread damage and heartbreaking loss to thousands. Already this year, too many families have had their homes destroyed. I firmly believe that communities and companies should come together to support each other. We focus on military causes in the cities where we live and work. This year USAA will contribute at least one percent of our pretax income to help those in need. That amounts to about \$40 million. *(Applause)*

Thank you. Our employees and retirees also donate their time, treasure, and expertise. In 2017, they gave \$11 million and volunteered almost 450,000 hours. We serve families of the fallen and wounded veterans. The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, or TAPS, provides critical support to Gold Star spouses and their children. In 2018, we are funding a TAPS program that is helping more than 3,000 families, including those facing a financial crisis. But we're also investing money to end veteran homelessness in our home city of San Antonio. Around America, almost 40,000 homeless veterans were counted on one single night last year. This is a national tragedy that so many who defended our country have fallen on hard times. *...The convention viewed a video. (Applause)*

Well, post-9/11 veterans have been through 17 years of war, and they need help. When veterans leave the military, they enter a new world. They need jobs that match their skills and companies with the right culture. Forty-four percent of veterans leave their initial post-military job within one year, and that is why meaningful careers for vets and their transition is important to us. We teamed with Hiring Our Heroes and the Disney Veterans Institute to prepare servicemembers for jobs. We cannot do this alone, and that is why I join you in saluting Southwest Airlines and the Veteran Employment Program. Well done, Tracy. I know she spoke just a moment ago. So thank you, Southwest Airlines. What a great partner. Yes, please, let's recognize them. *(Applause)*

Thank you for doing that. USAA's VetsLeaD program offers training that has helped more than 98 percent of participants stay beyond that elusive first year; another program enables employees to move quickly into IT positions.

But we have so much more to do, and that's where you come in. One hundred years into The American Legion story, the needs of veterans and their families is as great as ever. You have never left behind fellow servicemembers or this country. We are honored to serve with you. Thank you so much for your time today. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: National Adjutant, any announcements?

Announcements

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Tomorrow the Vice President of the United States will visit our convention. Shuttles from hotels will begin running at 6:30 a.m. Skywalk into the convention center will be open. The Second Avenue entrance where the buses drop off will be open. The Third Avenue doors will be locked. No entrance or exit from those doors. Magnetometers will be operational beginning at 6:00 a.m. Bring as little as possible with you. No liquids, cans, bottles, or weapons, including such dangerous objects as nail files, scissors, and/or pen knives. You are free to roam inside the secured area, but if you leave the secured area, you must go through the mags again to re-enter.

The national commander election and election of national vice commanders is scheduled to begin at 9:15 a.m. Vice President Pence is scheduled to appear at 11:25 a.m. Stage seating: National officers, past national commanders, commission chairmen, commander candidates, members of the Auxiliary and their spouses should check their e-mail for special information concerning stage seating during the vice president's remarks.

One announcement was sent out, and it was incorrect. There is a revised announcement. If you are to be on the stage, please be in the auditorium by 0800. Not on stage. You will be called

to the stage after the election of national officers and the stage has been cleared of those who are not to be on the stage. Madam Commander, that completes the announcements.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Legionnaires, please join me in a salute to the flag of the United States of America: One.

...The delegates rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Two. The time is now 2:19. The convention will stand in recess until 8:15 a.m. tomorrow.

...At 2:19 p.m., Wednesday, August 29, 2018, the National Convention was recessed, to reconvene at 8:15 a.m., Thursday, August 30, 2018.

**PROCEEDINGS
THIRD DAY**

Thursday, August 30, 2018

... At 8:15 a.m., the delegates assembled for the third day of the 100th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.

**Call to Order
Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin, National Commander**

Ladies and gentlemen, as we begin our program, please join me in a round of applause for Rick Pedro at the keyboard. (*Applause*)

The convention will come to order. Sergeant-at-Arms, please order a salute.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HELMS: The colors of our nation in place, hand salute. ... *At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HELMS: Two.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Robert A. Vick of Florida. Please uncover.

**Invocation
Robert A. Vick, Florida, National Chaplain**

Bow with me please, if you will. You are my king. You are the Lamb. You're the Lion of Judah and the Seed of Abraham. You are the One, God's Holy Son. You are the King of who I am. As we repeat these words this morning, Father, may everyone in this audience take them to heart and lift You up so that You can draw all men unto Yourself as You said You would. Father, bless our deliberations today. May our fellowship be sweet. May we forgive everyone that we have ought against and may they forgive us likewise. Bless our veterans. God bless our commander and her family. God bless The American Legion. Father, thank You for America, the country not only worth fighting and dying for, it's a country worth living for and making it better. I pray this prayer in the name of my King. Amen and amen.

**Pledge of Allegiance
Roy A. Helms, Wisconsin, National Sergeant-at-Arms**

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Ladies and gentlemen, please remain uncovered as National Sergeant-at-Arms Roy A. Helms of Wisconsin leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance. ... *At this time, the delegation recited the Pledge of Allegiance.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The convention will now come to order.

Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: We begin this morning by recognizing outstanding achievement in journalism that had a positive impact on a community. The American Legion Fourth Estate Award is difficult to earn. It is a testament to the demanding nature of the competition and the quality of entries. Not only do the reports have to be informative and entertaining, they have to provide a tangible benefits to society.

Broadcast Category
KARE 11 Investigates, Golden Valley, Minnesota

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Being honored in the Broadcast Category is KARE-TV, 11 Investigates, of Golden Valley, Minnesota. In its series "Disconnects, Delays & A Pattern of Denial," the NBC affiliate examined the Department of Veterans Affairs handling of emergency treatment claims, organ transplants and BVA appeals delays. The series assisted veterans with compensation, exposed previously hidden problems, was praised by members of Congress and is prompting reform and improvements in policy. Please turn your attention to the video monitors.

... *At this time, the delegation viewed a video.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Ladies and gentlemen, Investigative Reporter A.J. Lague of KARE 11. *(Applause)*

A.J. LAGOE: Good morning. I know my gruff World War II Marine Corps grandfather, who lugged a rifle and a radio across the Pacific to places like Peleliu and Okinawa, is smiling down as I stand here today in front of other men and women who have recognized the call to serve this country and now serve its veterans.

I want to publicly say thank you to my brother, Mike Lague, and tell him how proud I am of his service. He was an airman in Operation Iraqi Freedom and is still serving as a medic in the U.S. Coast Guard. *(Applause)*

And thank you, American Legion, for this honor and for your long-standing recognition of the vital role journalism plays in this country that we all love. I have a quote I'd like to read to you. "We've made mistakes. We haven't always used our power wisely. We've abused it sometimes and we've been arrogant. But as often as not, we recognize those wrongs, debated them openly and tried to do better. And the good we've done for humanity surpasses the damage caused by our errors." Senator John McCain said that about our country. I think it applies equally to my chosen profession.

There's a scripture verse in the Old Testament Book of Micah that I try to apply to my life and my reporting. It says "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." If my wife, Sheila, were here today, she'd tell you I need to work harder at that last part about being humble. But doing justice, loving mercy, apply that to journalism and you get what we do when we are at our best: Seeking truth; giving a voice to those who don't have one.

Among those whose voices we were able to share in our reporting was Bob Morris, a veteran from Avon, Minnesota, who just wanted someone to answer the phone when he called to get a date for his Agent Orange benefits hearing. Ben Krauss, Rocky Waite, Richard Staub, Jerry Molwits and numerous other veterans shared how their emergency medical bills had been improperly denied, some even turned over to collection agencies through no fault of their own because bureaucratic red tape placed performance metrics in front of patient care.

By shining the bright light of truth on their cases we've been able to spark some justice. Not just for those veterans, but for numerous others in similar circumstances. The voices of those Minnesota veterans were heard all the way to the halls of power in DC and their message resulted in policy changes and even some new federal laws, sponsored by leaders on both sides of our great political divide.

We've all heard the quotes lately that the press is the enemy of the people. It should come as no surprise that I don't agree with that sentiment. A reporter friend of mine, his name is Jeremy Jojola, he works in Denver, recently penned an essay about this issue that I think hits the nail on the head. I'll quote some of it. He wrote of journalists: "We are the enemies. The enemies of corrupt officials, the enemies of fake news, the enemies of bad journalism, of public records deniers and shady government contracts, of those who exploit the poor for profit, of scam artists who target grandma, of unjust and outdated laws of bad businesses, of bogus charities, of lead-tainted water, dangerous buildings, crumbling

bridges and roads, of lazy officials, of debilitating health-care costs, of no help for people with mental illness, the enemies of broken promises, the enemies of stolen valor, the enemies of failing to care for veterans. Enemies of the people. No."

I want to repeat that again. "Enemies of the people. No." We, with you, are the people, and, when at our best, provide a vital service as our nation's truth seekers. Like it says in the Book of Micah: Doing justice and showing mercy. On behalf of photojournalist Gary Knox, our investigative producer Steve Eckert, and all of our team at KARE 11 News, American Legion, welcome to Minnesota, and thank you again. (*Applause*)

Online Category
The War Horse, Ridgeland, North Carolina

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Fourth Estate Internet/New Media Award goes to the media outlet War Horse. The website exposed the scandalous private Facebook group "Marines United." Female veterans and servicemembers were exploited by having their nude images posted on the group's site without their knowledge or consent. Just as startling was the tolerance of this exploitation by military commanders and the site's nearly 30,000 followers. The reports prompted congressional action, and the Navy quickly issued an order prohibiting such behavior. Nearly 100 military commanders have been held accountable. Here is a look at some of our award winners' reports.

...The convention viewed a video. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome a previous Fourth Estate Award winner, The War Horse founder and investigative reporter, Thomas Brennan. (*Applause*)

THOMAS BRENNAN: I can't promise that my speech is going to be as good as the last one. That's kind of hard to follow up on. First off, I would like to thank The American Legion for selecting The War Horse and our team as the recipient of the Fourth Estate Award. For those of you who don't know our newsroom, The War Horse is an award-winning non-profit newsroom that educates our nation on military service, war and its impact on those who serve. Today marks the second time that I've stood at this podium for this honor. The first time was in 2014 when I had written a story about military mental health programs that were being gutted by government sequestration.

This year, The War Horse's work is being honored for uncovering sexual exploitation across the defense department. That work has changed military and federal law, and it's helped give voice to thousands of survivors of sexual violence across the military and veteran community. Military sexual trauma isn't included in the conversation about the "Me Too" movement. It should be.

Journalists are defenders of democracy, which is something that he said before me. It's something that veterans and journalists have in common. It's why I enlisted in the Marine Corps, and it's why I served 10 years before I was medically retired. It's exactly why I started The War Horse, and it's why I've committed my life to journalism.

Our country is at a crossroads right now. Journalists now face threats of physical violence at home here in the United States. I thought that was something I left behind in conflict zones. I implore you to defend the public's right to know the truth, to know that there is truth. Journalists challenge power and authority every single day. My hope is that everyone here today will stand up for journalists and for the work that we dedicate ourselves to.

We are not the enemy of the people. We are the people. We've been at war for 17 years now. Seventeen years in which servicemembers have served and come home, if they're lucky, to start their own families. Seventeen years in which servicemembers who were children when we first invaded are now old enough to fight in the same war. Yet the public doesn't talk about these wars or those other conflicts in which we fight, not with the respect and attention and rigor that it deserves. Seventeen years of stories largely untold.

So reporting focused on military and veteran affairs is more important than ever. The first step for The War Horse was for us to publish journalism worthy of your attention and trust. I think we checked that box. Now we're going to maintain your trust.

Again, I would like to thank The American Legion for recognizing us with this award. Lastly, I'd like to thank our team at The War Horse for all the hard work they put into it and for allowing me to come here and accept this award on their behalf. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Print Category

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel went well beyond typical regional reporting when it exposed widespread problems with tainted alcohol being served to American tourists in Mexico. This alcohol put travelers at risk for robbery, assault and rape. It has led to at least one known death and possibly more. Undaunted by massive resistance from Mexican authorities and the resort industry, the newspaper documented the problem in great detail, provided closure to past victims, captured the attention of the U.S. State Department and warned Americans about one of the dangers of traveling south of the border.

...The convention viewed a video. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Accepting the award is Investigative Reporter Raquel Rutledge. *(Applause)*

RAQUEL RUTLEDGE: Thank you very much. I will say that is the heaviest award I've ever received. Thank you so much to The American Legion for this award. I think in our industry, in journalism, often we are accused of being very self-congratulatory, almost like Hollywood. We get awards for all sorts of different types of journalism.

In my early days I used to sort of pooh-pooh that and say, that's very narcissistic and we don't need those. But I want to tell you how much we do appreciate them and how important they are, not just for us individually, but as an organization, as news organizations. These awards mean more than you can imagine. They encourage our editors to continue this type of work. This type of investigative work is expensive. And not many news organizations are able to do it.

So when you draw attention to these stories it does a number of things. First of all, it gets more eyes on our stories. So it increases awareness about the issues that we're writing about. It encourages, like I said, our news organizations to pursue this type of work. It also, as you know, improves our democracy as my other winners of the award have said.

That cannot be done without all of the fighting and the support that you guys have all done for our country. The freedom of the press is something that often is taken for granted. I can tell you by doing these stories from covering Mexico, that is not the case in Mexico. A number of journalists, Tom mentioned journalists in the United States starting to come under threat. That is something that we have certainly taken for granted over the years. We haven't had that sort of thing that you see in other countries. Eight journalists were killed in Mexico so far this year. It was eleven last year.

We are so fortunate, thanks to all that you all have done to support our democracy in this country and freedom of the press, that we have not suffered so much in that way. That may be changing, so we do need continued effort on your part and support. So thank you so much again. It's truly more important than you know. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Special Presentations

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: As my family prepares to move to the lectern, this is my moment. I just want to show everyone who has been wondering, yes, I am wearing the same pair of earrings I did coming in as I am going out. *(Applause)*

A lot of people have been asking me what I'm going to do tomorrow and with the rest of my time. Well, I'm going to sleep a little bit later, I hope. I was thinking I might actually have a day where I leave my pajamas on all day and I'll be wearing jeans and sweat pants and sweatshirts, and it will be fun. Mike convinced me to buy a new smart watch, and what he doesn't realize is that almost at least hourly I get an alert on what sales are going on at the stores downtown. (*Laughter*)

So I'll have some time to go to the mall also. One of the things I'll be doing is reading the rest of the stories that so many of you have shared with me this year. All of those stories that I didn't take the time to learn when I was in school. I thank you for sharing your stories. I hope that you continue to share your stories of your service so that people will get interested enough in our history so that they will turn the page and know the rest of the story, and how each and every one of you put your lives on hold to serve our nation and to give our youth, our country what they have today. So I thank you for all of that. (*Applause*)

So I'm going to start by introducing my aide, Mike. I would like to take a quote from President Trump's earlier years. You're fired! (*Laughter*) Stay, stay, stay. Now I would like to introduce my husband, Mike. (*Applause*)

I also want to thank the past national commander's wives for welcoming him into your group. (*Laughter*) So now it's the past national commander wives and Mike.

My two sisters who have known me all my life because they're my older sisters, Bonnie Nuss and Terry Larson. My other family members who I've known all of their lives, well most of their lives, except for my daughter-in-law. My son, Nick; daughter-in-law, Angie; our grandson, Sawyer, and our granddaughter, Isla. (*Applause*)

To the Department of Wisconsin. I thank you for all of your support. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for all the hard work that each and every one of you have done for me, and I look forward to coming home. I'm sure you look forward to Mike coming home also. So we'll be there pretty soon. Thank you for all of what you've done for us. (*Applause*)

The last person on stage is with the Wisconsin National Guard. I was going to call him a gentleman, but he probably wouldn't agree with that. Dan Killam, we call him Canada. He's the one who got Mike and I involved with the Family Readiness Group team. He's here to make sure that the two of us get back to Wisconsin so that we can get back to our work, helping our military families take care of each other while we're on deployments. So Dan Killam. (*Applause*)

Then there's the staff at national headquarters who have helped me so much over the years. So I thank you. Keep up the great work. We have a great American Legion Family. I want to say thank you to each and every one of you for purpling up this year and putting family first. Thank you so much for the honor of serving as your national commander. Please keep up the great work. You all have something so special inside of you. Thank God for whoever planted it. Thank God for each and every one of you who help continue to plant that love for this nation inside of me and each and every one of you, pass it on, please. Let the nation know what a great family we have in the American Legion Family. I will be thanking the past national commanders in a minute. So if you thought I forgot about you, I didn't. But thank you so much for your honor. God bless you all and God bless our great nation. Thank you. (*Applause*)

Would my national vice commanders please come forward. All of my national vice commanders have represented me well during the past 12 months. I appreciate their devotion and sacrifice for this great organization, as do I appreciate their families' sacrifice while they were away traveling on our behalf. As a token of my appreciation we have some gifts to present to them as well.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER STEPHENSON: When we put our heads together as the national vice commanders to see what we could present to our great commander, we enlisted the aid of the entire American Legion Family. I want you to know that your husband listens to you when you say, oh, I like that. (*Laughter*)

Because he came up with a really good idea. Then in putting this whole thing together, we enlisted the aid of a co-conspirator, Nick. As this thing progressed, I enlisted the aid of

an Auxiliary lady who knew how to sew because of an idea that came out of an SAL guy who said let's do this. So it was truly an American Legion Family project that put this whole thing together. It may not be much, but I think you might like it. She's getting her very own Army rocking chair for the front porch of her new home. The cushions that go along with it so it's comfy, with the national commander's logo on it. *(Applause)*

We added one other thing. We have a surprise for Mike, too, even though he was a co-conspirator, too. Mike is getting a matching chair so that they can sit on their front porch together and enjoy the days after their command. *(Applause)*

I want to thank everybody, all the national vice commanders and all the family members, that helped us. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The best thing of sitting on our front porch and in the morning, having a cup of coffee, is that on the way to school, our granddaughter passes by, so I get to wave at her on the way to school in the future.

I now call on national historian, sergeant-at-arms, chaplain and my recently fired aide to come forward. You each played important roles in the success of our organization during this past year. I salute you for your service, and I also thank your families for sharing you with us this year. Please accept these gifts of appreciation.

NATIONAL HISTORIAN DUBAY: On behalf of the national sergeant-at-arms, national chaplain, national historian, and the first gentleman, we have a small token of our appreciation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: They are gift cards to Kalahari Resort and Convention Center. Some extra family time for us. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mrs. National Commander, I would like to ask my two executive directors, the national judge advocate and the national treasurer, to join me on the stage. Mrs. Commander, it has been our honor to serve you and First Gentleman Mike. You have led us effectively and productively and demonstrated grace under pressure numerous times.

Being national commander is a job you cannot prepare for except by living a life of being concerned about others and determined to be the positive difference in the lives of those you meet. You have done your job well and I and all of your staff is proud to have served with you. You indeed have something special inside of you and we have seen it exhibited every day. We thank you and we love you for it. We understand that as you go back home you like to garden. We have a little present for you, a watering can filled with a \$1,500 gift certificate to your local gardening store. *(Applause)*

I'd now like to call on First Gentleman Mike. Mike, your sense of humor has never failed. We've loved working with you. As a token of appreciation from the national staff, we'd like to present you with this diamond lapel pin. Thank you so much for your service. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: I now call on National Vice Commander Paula Stephenson. Will you please take the gavel and preside over the next order of business? ...*National Vice Commander Stephenson assumed the Chair.*

**Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander
Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota, Past National Commander (Colors)
John P. 'Jake' Comer, Massachusetts, Past National Commander (Plaque)**

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER STEPHENSON: Before our next presentation, please turn your attention to the video monitor as we reflect on our national commander's year in office. ...*The convention viewed a video.* *(Applause)*

After serving this past year as national vice commander, I am honored to represent all members of The American Legion in presiding over the next order of business. This is the time when we present to our national commander, Denise H. Rohan, the Colors of her year in office and a plaque. At this time I call on Past National Commander Daniel A. Ludwig to present the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER LUDWIG: Thank you, Madam Vice Commander. Legionnaires and distinguished guests, please rise for the presentation of Colors to National Commander Rohan. National champion Color Guard from Post 291, Newport Beach, California, please present the Colors. ...*Presentation of colors.*

Please be seated. National Commander Rohan, please join me here at the lectern. Commander, your theme, Family First, caused us to focus on a fundamental truth: Family is the foundation of The American Legion and our personal lives. It is the foundation of our freedom and our nation.

In your acceptance speech one year ago in Reno, Nevada, you expressed a profound axiom that really struck home. You stated, "Because you see, I believe that we are put here for the greater good. We're not here to judge one another. Families grow through love and support for one another. As an American Legion Family, we need to treat each other in that same spirit." That's an amazing sentiment.

May that sentiment be a guiding principle for all of us for all time. Commander, you are a pioneer woman. Every day you have been faithful to the cause of The American Legion and fearless in your inspirational leadership. You can return now to Verona, Wisconsin, with a sense of pride and satisfaction in a job well done and a mission accomplished. Know, too, that you return home with the respect and gratitude of the entire Legion family. And so, Commander Rohan, I am proud to present these Colors, your Colors, to you. I present them on behalf of all Legionnaires who love and respect you for your courage and commitment to The American Legion, for your service and sacrifice to all veterans, and for your love and loyalty to God and country. May God bless you and your family always. Commander Denise, your Colors. (*Standing applause*)

Please remain standing. ...*Retiring of colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Please be seated. Thank you, Commander Ludwig. You've been a great advisor and close friend. You and so many of our past national commanders have been so helpful to me simply by providing a classic example on how to represent The American Legion as a national commander.

I just told a "Minneapolis Star" reporter that I'm in awe of all national commanders, and I'm truly in awe of all of you. I can't believe that I'm joining the ranks of a past national commander. I only hope to be able to provide the same wise counsel and advice to my successor as my predecessors have provided me. I will always treasure all of your friendships.

And to all the Legionnaires as we prepare to elect our new national commander, I would ask every Legionnaire to continue to recruit at least one new member a year and to help retain every single one of our American Legion Family members to keep our American Legion strong. I will now call on National Vice Commander Byron Callies to assume the podium. ...*National Vice Commander Callies assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER CALLIES: I now call on Past National Commander John P. "Jake" Comer to present the plaque to our outgoing national commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Commander, please join me. You have been an historic commander during an historic year. You have presided magnificently over our 100th National Convention and you are also our first female national commander. But make no mistake about it, you did not get elected because you are a woman. You were elected because you are a great Legionnaire! You earned it! (*Applause*)

You have frequently reminded us that it isn't just veterans who serve and sacrifice, but their families as well. There has been important legislation passed during your year, most notably the VA Mission Act, which will provide increased benefits for more veterans' caregivers. People who are often the spouses, children or even parents of those who have been hurt while serving our country.

You have been an outstanding advocate and ambassador for our American Legion Family. I am happy to present to you a plaque, which attests to your election to the high office of national commander of The American Legion for the year 2017-2018. It is given

in appreciation of your dedicated leadership and in recognition of your devoted service to God and country, and a token of the high esteem of your fellow Legionnaires. It is presented this 30th day of August, before the delegates and alternates assembled at the National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

To go off from the script, I personally want to attest to the fact that this woman, our national commander, will go down in history as one of the greatest national commanders that we have ever elected. Congratulations, Commander Rohan. *(Standing applause)*

...National Commander Rohan resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Thank you, Past National Commander Comer. Most of you know that I had a rough time during my year as a candidate. There was an accident that involved a ladder which left me in a wheelchair for a few months. And on top of that there was another serious illness in our family. But you stood behind me with compassion and support. You never lost your confidence that when the time came for my tenure as national commander to begin, that I would be able to do the job. Thanks to some outstanding medical care for both me and my our son, I was able to serve without any difficulty. But it makes me appreciate even more the importance of providing first-class health care for all of our veterans and their families. But again, your unwavering support through difficult times helped inspire me and made me a better commander as a result. Thank you for your leadership and continued service to all of us.

Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: We now come to a special order of business, the election of the national officers. National Judge Advocate Kevin Bartlett will read the Rules of Convention governing the nomination and election of officers.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE BARTLETT: Thank you, commander. The rules for election of national officers are as follows: Voting shall be by acclamation, except when a roll call is demanded by the chairmen of at least three departments. Election of national officers shall be by roll call.

Prior to the election of national officers, the national commander shall appoint, subject to the approval of the Convention, a judge of election and such number of tellers as she deems necessary, provided that the total tellers so appointed shall be an odd number.

In a contested election each candidate going to the ballot shall be entitled to one teller of their choice. Nominations for national officers shall be from the floor on roll call of the departments alphabetically arranged. Each department may present as many candidates as it chooses.

Nominating speeches for national officers shall be limited to five minutes each. Not more than two seconding speeches shall be made for any candidate, and said speeches shall be limited to three minutes. When more than two candidates are nominated for any offices, balloting shall continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes of the Convention, except in the election of national vice commanders.

In a contested election for national vice commanders, balloting shall continue until, A, majorities, and, B, pluralities are established for one or more candidates under the following provisions: If, on any ballot taken, less than five candidates receive the necessary majority to elect, the candidate or candidates receiving a majority vote shall be declared elected and a new ballot shall be taken for the remaining number of places to be filled. The candidate receiving the lowest number of votes on the preceding ballot shall be disqualified; except should two candidates remain to fill one place, a new ballot shall be taken. The Convention will nominate and elect a national commander and five national vice commanders, in that sequence.

At the conclusion of balloting on national vice commanders, each department delegation chairman shall deliver a written ballot to the tellers. Such ballots shall be in the hands of the tellers before communication is made to the national commander for announcement of the results. That concludes the rules.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: As chairman of this Convention, I now appoint as judge of the election, Amber L. Nikolai, the adjutant of the Department of Wisconsin; and as tellers of the election, Dale Chapman, adjutant, Department of Virginia; Randy Cash, adjutant, Department of North Carolina; and William R. West, adjutant, Department of Texas. Will the judges and tellers of the election please come forward. National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler will now call the roll of the departments. The purpose of the roll call is to receive nominations for national commander of The American Legion. *[The national adjutant calls each department in turn.]*

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CHRISTIAN (AL): Madam Commander, Harry Christian, chairman of the delegation from Alabama. Madam Commander, Alabama yields to Virginia.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LEE (VA): Madam Commander, Thomas Lee, chairman of the delegation from Virginia. Madam Chairman, I request that the Chair recognize Past National Commander Dan Dellinger for the purpose of a nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair recognizes Past National Commander Dan Dellinger of the Department of Virginia.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER DELLINGER: National Commander Rohan, national officers, delegates to this 100th National Convention, guests, friends, one and all, good morning. As National Commander Rohan stated a few days ago, and I quote, "Our founding fathers gave us a gift." Yes, they formed The American Legion based on our four pillars. If you visited Exhibit Hall you saw the wall which is now located outside the doors of Hall B here. The one that chronicled and highlighted our first 100 years, our accomplishments, important accomplishments that have fulfilled our mission, but more importantly made the lives of our veterans better and America stronger.

It is critical that we elect a leader, someone that will lead us in this centennial year, but more importantly, will start us on a path, as Theodore Roosevelt IV stated on Tuesday in our opening: "On our second tour, as we enter our second century of service to our veterans, our communities and our nation."

I stand in front of you today to place in nomination a dedicated and knowledgeable Legionnaire who has demonstrated through his leadership at every position he has held in our great organization that he is not only qualified to lead us in this most historic year, but what possibly can be the greatest year of our storied organization.

You've heard through the years in The American Legion a term: He was the right man. Or in last year's instance, the right woman at the right time. I can honestly say he would be the right man for the job this year. As someone who has held the office of national commander, I know what it takes to be successful, and Brett Reistad possesses all the qualities necessary to fulfill the duties of the office he is about to assume. I have no doubt he will make us proud as we navigate the issues facing our nation and our veterans this upcoming year.

You may ask how can I make such a statement. I have known and worked with Brett for 35 years. I not only consider him a friend but a very close friend. His post is six miles from my post. He and I served as post commanders together, served in the same district, following each other through the chairs. Not only at the district, but within the Department of Virginia.

Brett earned his eligibility in The American Legion through his honorable service in the United States Army, serving in The Old Guard, the 3rd Infantry Regiment. The Army's official ceremonial unit in escort to the president of the United States at Fort Myer, Virginia outside Washington D.C. Brett served in the elite Old Guard for four years, separating at the rank of sergeant. During his tour he supported numerous funerals of all military services at Arlington National Cemetery and served in the Presidential Salute Battery, rendering cannon salute honors to the president of the United States and many visiting dignitaries.

After separating from the Army, he joined the Fairfax County Police Department in Virginia starting as a patrolman, being promoted through the ranks and retired as a

lieutenant with 26 years of service. His assignments included patrol, criminal investigation, forensics and oversight, mostly in a supervisory position. After his retirement, he joined a Regional Information Sharing Systems program, serving as a law enforcement coordinator for its Southeastern U.S. component.

His career in The American Legion is just as storied. He was District Commander of the Year in the Department of Virginia in 1993. He served as the Department of Virginia's historian for 13 years where he acquired a vast amount of knowledge of our great organization, which will be very beneficial this coming year. He was an all-time high department commander in 2005-2006 and served with distinction in many other capacities throughout the years, to include president of Virginia's Press Association, chairman of our Public Relations and Communications Committee, just to name a few.

Brett served on Virginia's Joint Veterans Leadership Council to include its chairman, working with other VSOs in Virginia advising and lobbying our legislators on veterans issues. At the national level, Brett served many capacities to include chairman of the Legislative Commission, where he gained additional knowledge walking the halls of Congress, advocating for our members and for our veterans. Brett, throughout his American Legion career, has left his mark with his knowledge of our history, understanding of our programs, with his organizational and oratorical skills and his selfless dedication, unparalleled professionalism in every assignment he's undertaken. That is why, my fellow delegates, it gives me great pleasure as a duly elected delegate to this 100th National Convention to place in nomination Brett P. Reistad for the high office of national commander of The American Legion for this most historic year, 2018-2019. Thank you, national commander. (*Applause*)

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CARTER (AK): Commander, Nate Carter, chairman of the delegation from Alaska. Commander, Alaska yields to New York.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NESSLER (NY): Madam Commander, Rena Nessler, chairwoman of the delegation from New York, home of Past National Commander Fang Wong. Madam Commander, I request that the Chair recognize V. James Troiola for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair recognizes V. James Troiola.

PAST NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER TROIOLA: Commander Rohan, national officers, delegates and alternates to this 100th National Convention of The American Legion, good morning. It is indeed an honor as a delegate to this 100th National Convention to be here on stage before you to second the nomination for a friend and distinguished Legionnaire, Brett P. Reistad, for national commander of The American Legion.

If anyone was to research Brett's personal and professional accomplishments, they would realize that he was destined for a strong leadership role at some point in his distinguished life. I have researched some of his accomplishments from an early stage of his life, and there is no doubt in my mind he deserves to take his place among those national commanders who have served The American Legion to date.

Brett was born in Flint, Michigan, to Dale and Averine Reistad, who came from a long line of military connections. Brett was raised in northern New Jersey, Highland Falls, New York, and in Connecticut. His family's military connections played a large part in shaping his future. His maternal grandfather was a World War I veteran and a proud member of The American Legion in New York. His father was a military policeman at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

Brett attended the New York Military Academy in Cornwall on Hudson, New York, as a middle school student, and served as a Civil Air Patrol cadet. Brett graduated from Greenwich High School in Connecticut in 1974. He graduated with honors from Bluefield College in Virginia with a B.S. degree in criminal justice. Brett is married to Jessica Sabatino, formerly a resident of Annandale, Virginia. Together they have raised four children -- Brenna Leigh, Alan Hunter, Philip Andrew, and Isabel Taylor. All are members of The American Legion Family.

Brett's service to The American Legion influenced his daughter, Brenna Leigh, who served as past department junior auxiliary president. Brett and Jessica have two grandsons, Leo and Killian, from Hunter and his wife Francesca. Brett and Jessica are members of the McLean Post and Unit 270 located in McLean, Virginia, and currently reside in Manassas, Virginia.

Brett enjoys studying military and American Legion history. Wherever possible, he enjoys spending time with his family in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. There are certain traits that great leaders must have to become successful. They are decisiveness, empathy, accountability, confidence, optimism, honesty, focus, and inspiration. Brett Reistad possesses all of these traits that will help translate into a successful year as our national commander. It is both an honor and a privilege that I second the nomination for Brett P. Reistad for the high office of national commander of The American Legion. (*Applause*)

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BONILLA (AZ): Madam Commander, Domingo Bonilla, chairman of the delegation of Arizona. Madam Commander, Arizona yields to Kentucky.

DELEGATE KING (KY): Madam Commander, David King, duly elected delegate from the Department of Kentucky. Madam Commander, I request that the Chair recognize Randall Fisher for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair recognizes Randall Fisher.

DELEGATE FISHER (KY): Commander Rohan and delegates, it's my pleasure to second this nomination. I've known Brett P. Reistad for several years. He is a very dedicated, proud Legionnaire who continues to work for The American Legion principles and our veterans and families.

Brett joined The American Legion in 1981, earning his membership eligibility through his honorable service in the United States Army during the Vietnam War era as an infantry motorman assigned to the elite 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment. After four years of active service, he separated at the rank of sergeant in 1978.

After discharge from the military, Brett took a basic law enforcement training in 1978, got his associate degree in 1986 and his bachelor's degree in criminal justice in 2004. In 1978 Brett began his career with the Fairfax County Police Department. He retired as a lieutenant, working his way through the ranks with 26 years of service. Brett was also employed as the law enforcement coordinator for the Regional Organized Crime Information Center.

He has used his leadership capability in his roles with The American Legion. He has served in all functions -- post commander, vice commander, service officer, historian, corporate board, editor for the post newsletter, district commander, department commander, and served on various committees. He continues to work his way up the ladder. With national, Brett continued to work as a legislative chairman, and now it's my honor and privilege that I second the nomination for Brett P. Reistad for the high office of national commander of The American Legion. (*Applause*)

...At this time, a demonstration of support ensued.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: I now call the convention back to order, and I ask the national adjutant to continue roll call for the purpose of nominations.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (AR): Madam Commander, Arkansas yields.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HEINISCH (CA): Robert Heinisch, delegation chairman, Department of California, seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CLINTON (CO): Delegate chairman Terri Clinton seconds the nomination.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (DE): Delaware, World Series Champions, seconds the nomination.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (DC): District of Columbia, second.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN (FL): Delegate chairman from Florida seconds it.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (FR): Department of France seconds.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FRANKLIN (GA): Stanley Franklin, delegate chairman for the great state of Georgia, seconds the nomination.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (HI): Hawaii seconds.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (ID): Idaho seconds.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (IL): Illinois seconds the nomination.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (IN): Indiana, the Hoosier State, next year's 2019 National Convention, proudly seconds.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (IA): Iowa seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MARR (KS): Terry Marr, delegation chair from Kansas, second the motion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY (LA): Rodney Holliday, past department commander for the great state of Louisiana and chairman of the delegation, seconds the nomination.

DELEGATE LAURIA (ME): Amedeo Lauria from the great state of Maine. I second the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JOHNSON (MD): David Johnson, delegation chairman of the Department of Maryland. Department of Maryland seconds the nomination of Brett Reistad for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WHITE (MA): Fred White, chairman of the delegation from Massachusetts, home of Past National Commanders Jake Comer and Paul Morin, seconds the nomination.

DELEGATE WOOD (MX): Mike Wood, Mexico, seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HOLT (MI): Brett Holt, delegation chairman from Michigan, seconds.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SCHAFFER (MN): Mike Schaffer, delegation chairman of the Department of Minnesota, proudly seconds the nomination of Brett Reistad for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (MS): Mississippi seconds.

DELEGATE KELLETT (MO): Cary Kellett, Department of Missouri, pass.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER KLOSE (MT): Richard Klose, department commander, Big Sky Country, Montana, yes.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN (NE): Delegation chair from the great state of Nebraska, we second the nomination. Also home of Past National Commander Mike Helm.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (NV): Nevada seconds the motion for Brett Reistad.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MEANEY (NH): Dave Meaney, delegate chairman, we second the nomination.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (NJ): Department of New Jersey seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ESPINOZA (NM): Paul Espinoza, Department of New Mexico delegate chairman, home of the red and green chile, we second the motion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BARKER (NC): Carol Barker, delegate chairman for the great state of North Carolina, seconds the nomination.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (ND): North Dakota seconds the nomination.

DELEGATE PLEASANT (OH): Stanley Pleasant, delegate from Ohio, seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BLOXOM (OK): Delegate Chairman John Bloxom, Department of Oklahoma, seconds the nomination.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER HARRIS (OR): Tom Harris, commander for the great state of Oregon, we second that nomination for Brett Reistad.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN VOLLRATH (PA): James Vollrath, delegation chairman for the Department of Pennsylvania, the largest department in The American Legion, home of Past National Commanders Dominic D. DiFrancesco and Ronald F. Conley, also the home of the NFL Super Bowl Champion Philadelphia Eagles, proudly seconds the motion for Brett P. Reistad.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WADE (PI): Lawrence Wade, delegate chairman, I second the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NARVAEZ (PR): Angel Narvaez, chairman, second the nomination for Puerto Rico.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (RI): Department of Rhode Island proudly seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN STRAUSS (SC): Michael Strauss, delegation chairman for the great state of South Carolina, home of Past National Commander E. Roy Stone, seconds the motion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HOLMES (SD): Hugh "Homer" Holmes, delegation chairman South Dakota, home of American Legion Baseball and the world's only Corn Palace, seconds the motion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WEISMANN (TN): Steve Weismann, delegation chairman Department of Tennessee, seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HINCE (TX): John Hince, delegation chair from the great state of Texas, home to Past National Commander John Brieden and home to Henry D. Lindsley, who chaired the 1919 meeting. We proudly second the nomination of Brett Reistad from the great state of Virginia.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (UT): Utah seconds the nomination.

DELEGATE WOODWARD (VT): Dave Woodward, Department of Vermont, proudly seconds the nomination for our friend Brett Reistad.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROACH (WA): Gary Roach, delegate chairman to the great state of Washington and the beautiful Pacific Northwest, also home of the Seattle Seahawks, proudly seconds that nomination.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER COMBS (WV): William Combs, department commander, great state of West Virginia, and number one in the nation in membership, proudly seconds the motion.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (WI): Wisconsin, home of our current national commander for a few more minutes, proudly seconds the nomination of Brett Reistad.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PERSSON (WY): Ken Persson, delegate chair from the equality state of Wyoming, proudly seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY (CT): Ed Montgomery, chairman of the delegation of Connecticut, land of all the taxes you can handle, we proudly second the nomination of Brett.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mrs. Commander, that completes the roll call.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Thank you. I am going to now recognize microphone number one.

DELEGATE BROCKMANN (OR): Madam Commander, Cory Brockmann, Department of Oregon. Madam Commander, in view of the fact there is but one candidate for national commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this convention, close nominations, and that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this convention and that Brett P. Reistad be elected national commander by acclamation. I will now make the first motion. Madam Commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this convention pertaining to the election of national commander and the nomination and election of the national vice commanders, which rules shall be reinstated at the conclusion of the election for national vice commanders. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: There is a motion before us to suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the national commander and the nominations and elections of national vice commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election of national vice commanders. There is a second. This motion is nondebatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor of the

motion, signify by saying aye. Opposed, nay. Motion carried. I now recognize from the floor microphone number two.

DELEGATE PLEASANT (OH): Madam Commander, Stanley Pleasant, delegate from Ohio. Madam Commander, I move that nominations for the office of national commander be closed. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: We have a motion that nominations for the office of national commander be closed. And there is a second. The motion to close nominations is a nondebatable motion and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor, signify by saying aye. All opposed, signify by nay. Motion carried. I now recognize from the floor microphone number one.

DELEGATE GRIMES (NC): Madam Commander, Derric Grimes, delegate from North Carolina. Madam Commander, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this convention and that Brett P. Reistad be elected national commander by acclamation. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Hearing a second. There is a motion before us that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention and Brett P. Reistad be elected national commander by acclamation. All those in favor of the motion, signify by saying aye. Those opposed, nay. Motion carried. I now call on the national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mrs. Commander, as national adjutant, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for the election of Brett P. Reistad as the national commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: I declare Brett P. Reistad elected national commander of The American Legion. (*Standing applause*)

Will the Sergeant-at-Arms assist the new national commander of The American Legion to the platform. He will be escorted to the stage by the NEC member from the Department of Virginia Michael F. Mittrione. (*Applause*)

Commander Reistad's daughter, Brenna Reistad, has removed his cap, has placed the red commander's cap on his head. She is also placing the pin on the commander's lapel. The chair recognizes Past National Commander Butch L. Miller for the purpose of administering the oath of office to our new national commander of The American Legion.

Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Raise your right hand and repeat after me: I, Brett P. Reistad, do solemnly pledge myself to perform faithfully and impartially the duties of the office of national commander of The American Legion. I further pledge myself that I will support and defend the Constitution of The United States of America and that of The American Legion. I do not subscribe to the principles of any group opposed to our form of government, so help me God. Congratulations.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Ladies and Gentlemen, the 2018-2019 national commander of The American Legion, Brett P. Reistad.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REISTAD (via video): I was influenced at an early age. In my seventh grade, I went to a military school for a year. That taught me a lot. Taught me about discipline, taught me about reward, taught me about responsibility, it taught me about personal pride, and it gave me a respect for the military. And ever since that point, I had always had a desire to serve my country. So there was no question, when I was going through high school, that I was going to go in the military, not go to college. And for two purposes: to serve my country as a patriotic citizen, and, secondly, to start on the road of becoming independent. And I achieved both.

I learned about my eligibility in The American Legion back in 1981. I was serving as a police officer in one of our district stations, and I was responsible for managing the traffic control for a downtown parade. And while in the staging area, before the parade kicked off, I ran into four gentlemen from The American Legion: two carrying flags and two

carrying M1 rifles. Now, when I served in the Army, for ceremonial purposes and for field purposes, we carried M14 rifles instead of M16s. So there's a similarity between the M1 and the M14. And I just asked if I could look at the M1, because I had never handled one before. So the gentleman gave it to me. And I stood there and I did the manual of arms with it. And then all of a sudden the eyes open up like this, and the gentleman asks me if I'm a veteran. And I said, "Well, I served in the military." He said, "When did you serve in the military?" And I said, "From 1974 to 1978." He pulls an application out of his wallet and opens it up and looks at it and says, "You qualify for membership in The American Legion." And he puts that application down on the hood of my police car, gives me a pen and says, "Sign here and give me 25 bucks."

Well, I realized down the road that I had a desire to be a public servant. And public safety was something I had an interest in. I was a volunteer fireman for about five years and then became a police officer. I started the job a week after I left the military and have been involved in that for 26 years.

You know, I still wake up in the morning pinching myself over the fact that is this really happening to me. I'm very proud of this organization, and I will do my very best as national commander to promote it and to open the doors of our Legion posts to make sure people know of our history. I think that that's important for communities to understand where we've been and what we've done, to know where we're going in the future. Oh, I meant to tell you that after joining The American Legion, at that parade, the following year I was marching down the road as part of that color guard. *(Standing applause)*

**Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander
Brett P. Reistad, Virginia**

Commander Rohan, fellow delegates, distinguished guests, family, and friends, thank you. Thank you for this tremendous honor and for the trust you have placed in me to represent you in this great American Legion as your 100th elected national commander. *(Applause)*

I would not be standing here today if not for those who taught, mentored, advised, supported, and gave me a chance to hone my skills and develop the knowledge and confidence necessary to assume The American Legion's highest office.

I wish to thank you, the Legionnaires, that make this organization great. I wish to thank my family, especially my loving wife, Jessica, who believes in me and supports everything I do. She wasn't feeling up to making the trip here but is watching from home and is here with me in spirit. I love you, honey. *(Applause)*

To my loyal Virginia Legionnaires, Team Virginia, who have supported me and our campaign in every way imaginable, I'll never be able to adequately thank you except to make you proud. To my good friend and campaign manager, Linden Dixon, who hasn't missed a beat, you're the best. To my McLean Post 270 family, who have encouraged my development and supported me every step of the way since 1981. To my employer, the Regional Organized Crime Information Center, for giving me the flexibility to engage in a national campaign. To our past national commanders, who provided me with sage advice and support. To the leadership team for giving me the opportunity to audition for the role I'm about to assume. To the Legion staff, who made me look better than I would have without them.

And to my family and friends, some of whom are with me today, my daughter, Brenna, and some of my Army buddies and lifelong friends who served with me more than 40 years ago. Thank you all. I'd like to take a moment to congratulate Commander Rohan for a great year. Someone recently told me that I have some high heels to fill. *(Laughter)*

Also, congratulations to our soon to be elected national officers, a great group of dedicated Legionnaires who are committed to making The American Legion the best it can be. I would also like to congratulate my American Legion family partners, newly elected American Legion Auxiliary National President Kathy Dungan of Mississippi, and Sons of

The American Legion National Commander Greg "Doc" Gibbs of New York, two very capable leaders who I'm looking forward to working with. The American Legion family is in great hands.

Today begins a 15-month celebration of our centennial. A lot of history has been made in the past 100 years. This is a unique opportunity for us to reflect on our many accomplishments and share them with our friends, neighbors, and communities. It's also an opportunity for us to be a part of that history. My theme for the year is "Celebrating Our Legacy," but it's more than that. It's also about charting the course for our future and remaining strong and relevant. Strength, my friends, is paramount. That's why I have chosen Team 100 to be our centennial membership theme, to bring all our resources to bear, increase our membership, and start our second century of service off on the right foot. To demonstrate what I mean by Team 100, let's watch this brief video.

...The convention viewed a video. (Applause)

You, my fellow Legionnaires, are Team 100, and I need your commitment to achieve this success just as you once committed yourself to serving your country. A wise man once said: In order to succeed, we must believe that we can. I not only believe that we can, I know we can. I truly believe that you are the right team at the right time.

I've spent much of the past two years traveling this great country of ours, visiting with members of The American Legion family and absorbing as much knowledge as I can to prepare for this moment. I not only learned a great deal about The American Legion, but also about the spirit and commitment of our Legionnaires, the same spirit and commitment that inspired our founders as they built this great organization from nothing more than an idea. Whether it be volunteering in a VA medical center, conducting funeral honors for our departed brothers and sisters in arms, volunteering at American Legion Boys State or raising money for a Legion charity, you make a difference in the lives that you touch, and I was privileged to see it firsthand.

Over this next Legion year, I am challenging you to raise \$5 million for our veterans. In the very near future, I will report to you how this money will be used. I also made a considerable number of friends during this campaign who gave me support and encouragement. Many of you are seated before me. Thank you for your friendship. It means so very much to me.

As you saw in the video, I'm a retired police officer. I'm also a former volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician. The similarities between first responders and veterans are many. We are all committed to public service, a commitment that requires the willingness to risk our own lives to perform our sworn duties.

And that's exactly what the founders of our organization did more than a century ago. They sacrificed, fought, and many were wounded to free Europe so Americans could be safe at home. It's a scenario that has repeated itself in other parts of the world in every war era since.

The wartime veterans of The American Legion are freedom's first responders. From World War I to the current global War on Terrorism, Legionnaires have responded to our national emergencies. Whether stateside or in a combat theater, we all sacrifice something to ensure that our liberties and our communities would be preserved. This is a legacy set by our founders. It's also a legacy worth celebrating and continuing for the next century.

What those Legionnaires created in 1919 was unprecedented. They formed a network committed to a half dozen bedrock principles. They included care for one another, support the families of those who did not come home from World War I as well as those who came home sick and disabled. Provide a support network for children and youth who the early Legionnaires saw as the future of the nation and the key to strengthening the nation in the event of future national security needs. Promote patriotic values, the concept of Americanism, at a time of rising threat to the democratic way of life in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution and its spread to the United States, and later the emergence of fascism and Naziism. Fight for a well-resourced and equipped military that would give Americans the best chance to succeed in future armed conflicts and to promote the

honorable nature of military service. Ensure that the United States military sacrifices are not forgotten by serving essentially as global ambassadors of remembrance at cemeteries, memorials, and monuments to American military heroes. Out of these principles arose what The American Legion calls its Four Pillars -- veterans, youth, defense, and Americanism.

Built on a strong foundation of God and country, under each pillar are programs and services undertaken at every level of America. From the local American Legion post to the department to the national headquarters and international United States military duty stations located in foreign countries, all the same values envisioned by the World War I generation are performed in communities, states, the nation, and around the world today.

The American Legion received its federal charter from Congress on September 16, 1919, in part to fulfill functions the government would otherwise need to perform. Foremost is representation of veterans in the pursuit of VA benefits, education, health care, and respect from a grateful nation. To best deliver such benefits, The American Legion spent much of its first decade lobbying to assemble all federal veterans services under one agency, the United States Veterans Bureau, now called the Veterans Administration, which was created in 1930. At any given time, The American Legion's more than 3,600 accredited service officers today are working on the disability claims of some 750,000 veterans worldwide. Prior to The American Legion's efforts, veterans had little or no route to appeal their benefits decisions.

As The American Legion reflects on its first century, one world-changing accomplishment stands out. The drafting, promotion, passage, and ongoing stewardship of the G.I. Bill. When American Legion Past National Commander Harry Colmery distilled multiple government responsibilities into just ten initiatives in the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, critics declared that it would break the United States Treasury. Instead, the provisions approved in the G.I. Bill return \$7 for every \$1 the government invested. Among the provisions were free college education for wartime veterans, which educated tens of millions over the decades and changed United States expectations generally about higher education, making it available to Americans other than the elite classes. Low interest home loans requiring no down payment, which drove a construction and civil engineering boom that rapidly accelerated the United States economy and helped create the American middle class. Low interest business and farm loans, fair appeals processes for military personnel, disputing the conditions of their discharges. Adequate VA hospitals, timely VA benefits delivery. Short-term unemployment compensation for newly discharged veterans making a transition to civilian careers.

The American Legion has worked with Congress over the decades to improve the G.I. Bill for subsequent generations of wartime veterans. The most recent example of this is the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, which improves and extends G.I. Bill benefits for post-9/11 generation veterans and their dependents. This measure, named for The American Legion past national commander who drafted the original bill, represents an upgrade from the original post-9/11 G.I. Bill, which was passed in 2008, for one thing: To lift restrictions on a time a veteran must use the benefit. It's known as the Forever GI Bill. But only in Washington does "forever" not always mean "forever."

Last month, the Defense Department announced a new rule which prohibits members of the armed forces with more than 16 years of service from transferring their G.I. Bill benefits to their dependents. We have a message to the Pentagon, Congress, and the White House: Veterans earned these benefits, and The American Legion will not stand by as you slash the intent of the Harry W. Colmery Forever GI Bill. (*Applause*)

We will also honor the pillars by working to eradicate veteran homelessness, lobbying for a well-funded Department of Defense, supporting diplomatic solutions to global problems. No one dislikes war more than those who have fought in them. Fighting to hold together retirement benefits and health-care services for military retirees. Such incentives help attract top people to the military. Pressing for a constitutional amendment that would protect our United States Flag from intentional desecration. Providing programs like Boys

State and Boys Nation and the National High School Oratorical Contest to incentivize young people to take a strong interest in government, public service, and constitutional awareness. Offering competitive programs like American Legion Baseball and Junior Shooting Sports that promote good sportsmanship, discipline, and teamwork. Raising and delivering millions of dollars in scholarship money for the children of military personnel killed on duty since 9/11 or disabled at a rating of 50 percent or greater. And nobody does this better than our American Legion Riders. (*Applause*)

Providing comfort items and recreational activities free of charge for military personnel recovering from wounds and illnesses in Department of Defense facilities. We have impacted more than 9,000 veterans, patients, and their families last year through our Operation Comfort Warriors program, standing strong for veterans and families coping with the challenges of post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury, signature wounds of the war on terror. Delivering unparalleled natural disaster relief, including cash grants and the use of American Legion posts as civil defense centers and shelters for people who have been driven out of their homes by unforeseen circumstances, and much, much more.

To commemorate The American Legion Centennial, our organization has focused largely on empowering its galaxy of local posts, each of which has its own legacy of service, to tell the centennial story at the community level and increase awareness of all The American Legion is and does, why The American Legion exists. Each American Legion post is different, its own separate corporation, and its functions vary by community.

Some American Legion posts operate local ambulance services in hospitals. Some have Blue Ribbon child safety programs. The Wyoming American Legion runs that state's high school rodeo championship, while Legionnaires in Mexico dedicate their time, money, and efforts to disabled children there. In Pennsylvania, The American Legion's Housing For Homeless Veterans program is a model of success for the rest of the nation. In Montana, The American Legion places markers along the roadways to remind drivers to slow down and be careful.

Throughout America, The American Legion adopts highways for cleanup, teaches schoolchildren about military history, leads flag retirement ceremonies with Boy Scouts, offers after-school mentoring for inner-city children, leads and sponsors Junior ROTC programs, marches in Memorial Day and Veterans Day parades, coordinates fireworks displays on the 4th of July, commits millions of hours a year to volunteer at VA medical facilities, donates tens of thousands of pints of blood a year, and decorates the graves of those who fell fighting for our nation.

The American Legion does all this at the community, state, and national levels because veterans believe they have an individual obligation to continue serving their country. In doing so, they serve one another by sharing in a commitment to meaningful purpose, which for most veterans is something they learned by serving in the United States Armed Forces.

Today, The American Legion is crossing a threshold, an opportunity to connect its legacy of accomplishments and significance in communities to a vision for the future. Just as it was when the World War I generation handed the reins over to the World War II generation, then the Korean War generation, Vietnam, and Gulf War, the future belongs to a new generation of veterans, those who have served in the war on terror.

One by one and in groups, these honorable wartime veterans are joining The American Legion, assuming leadership roles and advancing a vision for the future that matches that of our World War I founders: serve veterans, support the military, promote Americanism, and create healthy, educational opportunities for young people.

Many are joining because they've been the firsthand beneficiaries of American Legion support in the struggle to resume civilian life after wartime service. The American Legion's values, regardless of when they were first conceived, are as timeless as the common bond of military service across the generations. How The American Legion executes those values, the pillars, is certain to change as the future unfolds, but the underlying commitment to service, to community, state, and nation under the flag for which so many lives were

given to ensure our nation's freedoms will never change. It's also a legacy that under my watch we will continue to celebrate.

Again, thank you for your support and for giving me the honor to serve you. Thank you for your service to our country and for your continued service in The American Legion. I hope you will all have the opportunity this afternoon to visit us in the Hilton Hotel from 4:00 to 6:00 on the 3rd floor for hospitality.

May God bestow plentiful blessings upon you, this great American Legion and the greatest of all nations, the United States of America. Thank you. (*Standing applause*)

First Lady Presentation

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Ladies and gentlemen, as a point of personal privilege, I would like to call on Margaret Dellinger, wife of Past National Commander Daniel Dellinger, for a presentation by the First Ladies and Mike to the new First Daughter of The American Legion.

MARGARET DELLINGER: Brett, you know that I told Jessica, when you started on your journey, that I would support her in any way that I can, and I still mean that. Brenna, I'm giving this to you to give to the First Lady, Jessica. It's her pin and her First Lady memento, with the best wishes of all these ladies here and the gentleman. And we hope very much, send her wishes, that we will see her soon wearing this pin.

BRENNA REISTAD: I will. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Thank you, Margaret. I now recognize microphone number two.

Election of National Vice Commanders

DELEGATE EHART (KS): Madam Commander, Jeremy Ehart, delegate from Kansas. Madam Commander, since the rules of this Convention have been suspended, I move that nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor of this Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: There is a motion before us that nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor. Is there a second? ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: This motion is nondebatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor, signify by saying aye. Opposed, nay. Carried. We will now entertain nominations for the office of national vice commander from the floor. I will recognize microphone number one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CARTER (AK): Madam Commander, Nate Carter, chairman from the delegation from Alaska. Madam Commander, I request that you recognize Past National Commander Jimmie Foster for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The chair recognizes Past National Commander Jimmie Foster.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER FOSTER: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm here today to nominate an individual, his name is James E. Pisa. Jim started his American Legion career in 1974 in North Collins, New York, at Post 1640 after he was honorably discharged from the United States Navy. He reenlisted in the United States Coast Guard in 1976. He then transferred his membership to Ketchikan Post 3 in Alaska.

Jim worked his way through the chairs and was elected as Post 3's post commander in 1988. He was then transferred to Juneau, Alaska with the Coast Guard in 1994, transferring his membership to Auke Bay Post 25, where he served as their post commander for eight years.

Jim ultimately retired from the Coast Guard in 1997 after 25 years of serving his country. He then moved to Anchorage in 2009 where he worked as our department service

officer, transferring his membership to Susitna Valley Post 35 in Wasilla. No, he cannot see Russia from Wasilla. (*Laughter*)

He was elected National Executive Committeeman for the Department of Alaska in 2010 and is still serving in that position today. I know him personally, that he will be a great asset to The American Legion next year as I watched his work and performance as he served as my campaign manager for Team Alaska, ultimately having to serve as my aide for six weeks when my aide's wife passed away. As a duly registered delegate to this National Convention, it is with honor and pride that I place the name of James E. "Jim" Pisa into nomination for the position of national vice commander of The American Legion for the year 2018-2019. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair recognizes microphone number two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DEGUMBIA (CT): Madam Commander, Ed DeGumbia, chairman of the delegation of Connecticut. Madam Commander, I request that you recognize Sandra Spedaliere for purpose of nomination for national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair recognizes Sandra Spedaliere.

DELEGATE SPEDALIERE (CT): Madam Commander, National Adjutant Wheeler, past national commanders, distinguished guests and fellow delegates, I'm Sandra Spedaliere, past commander of the Lebanon American Legion Post 180 and delegate of this Convention from the Department of Connecticut. It is my honor and privilege to come before you today to place into nomination for national vice commander a dedicated and highly motivated Legionnaire, Paul Spedaliere.

Paul earned his membership and eligibility by serving over 21 years in the United States Navy, joining at the age of 17 and retiring in 2002 with the rank of chief petty officer. Paul joined The American Legion in 2005 and has been actively involved ever since. Paul has held many offices and earned numerous accolades during his 14-year American Legion career, including post commander, district commander and department commander.

Paul was a 100% post commander and 100% district commander who also earned District Commander of the Year for two consecutive years. He's a graduate of the National American Legion College Class of 2011. On the national level, Paul served as a member on the Americanism Council and is a member of the Veterans Employment, Education and Homelessness Committee. In his civilian career, Paul is the assistant tax collector for the town of Lebanon and the municipal veterans representative assisting fellow veterans on their respective benefits.

Our candidate is a people person, visionary and a leader. As a leader, he epitomizes what author John Maxwell declares a leader to be: A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way. Paul is hands-on and all-in, dedicated to the ideals and beliefs that are the core of The American Legion. Comrades, this agent of change, that motivated, dedicated Legionnaire Paul Spedaliere. Therefore, as a duly elected delegate to this Convention from the Department of Connecticut, I'm honored to nominate him to serve as our candidate for national vice commander for 2018-2019. I encourage and charge you to cast your vote in support of your fellow Legionnaire, and my husband, Paul Spedaliere. Thank you. And go Team 100. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Microphone number one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JOHNSON (MD): Madam Commander, David Johnson, chairman of the delegation from Maryland. Madam Commander, I request that you recognize Charles Gannon for the purpose of a nomination for office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair recognizes Charles Gannon.

DELEGATE GANNON (MD): Commander, adjutant, reverend clergy, and other officers on the dais, delegates and guests, I stand to nominate a Legionnaire who has the experience and possesses the attributes that will help him serve as national vice commander. A Legionnaire who will serve as a great ambassador as we celebrate the end of 100 years of making a difference and open a path to the next century of service to God

and country, and strengthen the four pillars to meet the needs of the current and future generations.

John F. "Jack" Milburn has been an active part of that service for 52 years. Upon completion of Naval service during the Vietnam era, he joined Parkville American Legion Post 183 in the community which he grew up in and lives today.

During the past 52 years, he served in many capacities, as an officer, chairman, committee member and just that volunteer that does what needs to be done. Jack served as commander of Post 183 in 1990-92. At that time, Parkville Post 183 was one of the king-sized posts in the country with over 4,500 members. Always looking for an opportunity for more responsibility, Jack has served as commander within the county and district.

In 2001-2002, for him, a year of distinction, under his leadership the Department of Maryland achieved 100 percent in membership and moved many programs to new heights and communities throughout our state. Serving as alternate and then as National Executive Committee as well as being a member of many committees and councils for 27 years.

Jack does have another life, a 54-year marriage to wife Peg. All three children, five grandchildren are members of the Legion Family. And no, we must not forget that young great-grandchild. Jack is well prepared and ready to serve as national vice commander and continues to build on that Legion spirit of daring to care. As a duly elected delegate to this convention, I am honored to nominate John F. "Jack" Milburn for the office of national vice commander. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair recognizes microphone number two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HOLT (MI): Madam Commander, Brett Holt, chairman of the delegation of Michigan. Madam Commander, I request that you recognize John Mella for the purpose of nomination of office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair recognizes John Mella.

PAST NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MELLA: Madam Commander and fellow delegates to the 100th National Convention of The American Legion, good morning. It's a great honor to be able to place the name of a candidate for the high office of national vice commander, James "Jim" E. Wallace. Jim's eligibility to belong to The American Legion comes from his service in the United States Army during the Vietnam War era. Jim is a 47-year member of Pinckney Memorial Post 419 in Pinckney, Michigan.

He has demonstrated his ability to lead by holding chairs in the post, district and department levels. He's a 2012 graduate of the National American Legion College. In 2014, he represented Michigan after being elected department commander. His service to The American Legion has included committeeman on both the Americanism and the National Security Councils.

Jim retired from the city of Ann Arbor Fire Department as an assistant chief after 30 years with the fire service, graduating with a degree in fire science and attending the Eastern Michigan University Fire Staffing Command School. In his community he has served on the Putnam Township Board of Review for 18 years, past commander for the Livingston County Veterans Council, charter member of The American Legion Riders Chapter 419, and a charter representative for Boy Scout Troop 312, sponsored by his post.

Jim and his wife, Linda, have been married for 51 years. They have two daughters, one son and a daughter-in-law and five grandchildren who are all members of the American Legion Family. Jim has the full support from the Department of Michigan. And as a delegate to this Convention I nominate James "Jim" E. Wallace for the high office of national vice commander. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair recognizes microphone number one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BARRETT (MS): Madam Commander, Ray Barrett, chairman of the delegation from Mississippi. Madam Commander, I request that you recognize Past National Commander Robert Turner for the purpose of nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The Chair recognizes Past National Commander Robert Turner.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER TURNER: As a duly authorized delegate to this convention, I rise to place in nomination for national vice commander Steve Sweet from the Department of Mississippi. A United States Navy veteran, Steve served from 1966 to 1970, earning his eligibility for membership in The American Legion by his service in Vietnam. Steve served his last three years as a flight deck troubleshooter with Attack Squadron 94.

Having been a Legion member now for 46 years, Steve has held every office at his post, district and in the Department of Mississippi, serving as department commander for 2009. At the present time he's serving his third term as the alternate NECman. His father, Al Sweet, was a Legion member, having served aboard the USS Enterprise (CV-6) in World War II. His father-in-law, J.M. Gailey, also a Legion member, landed in the first wave on D-Day. These were the kind of men that inspired Steve to become active in The American Legion.

He comes from a Legion family. His wife, the former Ruthy Gailey, is a member of the Auxiliary as is his daughter and two granddaughters. His son, son-in-law and grandson are all members of The American Legion Sons. An active hunter and fisherman, Steve joys taking trips on his Harley and riding with the Legion Riders in the Patriot Guard. This year he made his seventh trip in The American Legion Legacy Run. Having said this, it is my honor to place into nomination for national vice commander Mr. Sweet for all of us, Steve Sweet, from the Department of Mississippi. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: I now recognize microphone number two.

DELEGATE WESTERGREN (AR): Madam Commander, Michael Westergren, delegate from the Department of Arkansas, Madam Commander, I move that the nominations for the office of national vice commander be closed. ...*Second*.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: We have a motion that the nominations for the office of national vice commander be closed. There has been a second. The motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed nay. Motion carried. The Chair recognizes microphone one.

DELEGATE GUERRA (CO): Madam Commander, Desiree Guerra, delegate from Colorado. Madam Commander, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that James Pisa, Paul Spedalieri, John Milburn, James Wallace and James "Steve" Sweet be elected national vice commanders by acclamation. ...*Second*.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: We have a motion that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegation strength of this Convention, and that James Pisa, Paul Spedalieri, John Milburn, James Wallace and James "Steve" Sweet be elected national vice commanders by acclamation. There is a second. The motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed, nay. I now call on the national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: National Commander, as national adjutant for The American Legion, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for James Pisa, Paul Spedalieri, John Milburn, James Wallace and James "Steve" Sweet for the offices of national vice commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Will the new national vice commanders come to the platform for introduction. Ladies and gentlemen, James Pisa, Paul Spedalieri, John Milburn, James Wallace and James "Steve" Sweet. *(Applause)*

Installation of National Vice Commanders

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN At this time I'm honored to swear you in to your newly elected offices as national vice commanders. I know you will uphold the trust that has been placed in you by the comrades who nominated and supported you and the

Convention delegates that elected you. I trust you will fulfill every obligation that is required of you. I challenge you to familiarize yourselves with the duties of your office and carry them out with the same spirit of which arose The American Legion.

The welfare, success and integrity of this great organization depends on you as you travel in the departments and throughout this country promoting the mandates of The American Legion as approved by the National Convention and the National Executive Committee. It is your duty to protect the good name of The American Legion with the people of our great nation that you meet as you travel. Help them to know the Legion's purpose and our policies. Remember the Four Pillars that motivate us as members to serve this nation. As you serve, always remember there is no rank, for we all serve as equals. We are all aimed for the same goals -- the ideals of justice, freedom, democracy and loyalty.

This means you should always employ the cardinal principles of The American Legion to all of those that we serve: The rehabilitation of our disabled veterans and the care of those who now suffer from wounds, disease and want to include the care of their family members, the education of our children, educating citizens on the ideals of true Americanism, and maintaining a strong national defense. In your travels representing The American Legion, always practice these Four Pillars in your promotion of service to the community, state and nation. Please raise your right hand and repeat after me?

I, state your name, do solemnly pledge myself to perform faithfully and impartially the duties of the office of The American Legion I am about to assume, and I further pledge myself I will uphold the principles outlined in the National Constitution and the Preamble of The American Legion in service to our veterans and their families, their communities, state and nation. Congratulations to all of you. Ladies and gentlemen, let's have a big round of applause for our newly elected national vice commanders. *(Applause)*

Congratulations to all of you once again. And I now call on Past National Commander Thomas L. Bock of Colorado to present the Colors to our incoming national commander.

Presentation of Colors to Newly Elected National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BOCK: Thank you, Commander Rohan. Commander Reistad, will you join me at the lectern? Legionnaires and distinguished guests, please rise for the presentation of our National Colors by the Color Guard of Newport Harbor Post 291 of Newport Beach, California, to the national commander. Present the Colors of the new national commander of The American Legion. Hand Salute. *...At this time the delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BOCK: Two. Brett, you stand before this Convention having received a unanimous vote of endorsement from all the delegates. Your ability to represent not only Legionnaires but also America's veterans in the centennial year of this great organization. As a veteran, I know you are up to the challenge. We served together about 15 years ago. I've seen your performance, and you have the skills and the ability to lead The American Legion.

I know the delegates know that you have all the capabilities to lead The American Legion. You have served the public as a leader in law enforcement and now you have the opportunity to lead the veterans of this great country and our organization. Your election was earned through hard work and determination, just like your predecessors. May the Colors that we present to you today inspire you and motivate you throughout this next year to do great things. Color Guard, return the Colors of the national commander of The American Legion to post. Hand salute. *(Applause)*

...At this time the delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BOCK: Two.

**Presentation: Newly Elected National President
American Legion Auxiliary**

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: This is an exciting time for any National Convention. We have elected our new national commander and look forward to an exciting and historic time of growth and community involvement. This is also an exciting time for The American Legion Auxiliary who elected a new president as this important part of our American Legion Family. She is also poised to meet the needs of veterans and their loved ones.

The woman chosen to lead the American Legion Auxiliary has worked many years for veterans and their families. She served as the organization's national vice president and has been a member of The American Legion Auxiliary for 40 years. Eligible for Auxiliary membership through her father, World War II veteran Wittie Card, and her husband, William, she has served The American Legion Auxiliary at every level.

She is a proud member of ALA Unit 79 in Wesson, Mississippi. She retired as a judicial assistant with the Mississippi Supreme Court after more than 20 years. Now, she is ready to assume the top leadership position of the nation's largest patriotic women's organization. Please give a warm welcome to National President of The American Legion Auxiliary Kathy Dungan. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL PRESIDENT DUNGAN: Good morning. Wow, I'm so excited about this year. I bring greetings from the members of the American Legion Auxiliary. And I want to personally thank you for electing your national commander, Brett Reistad. What an honor and a privilege it is to have the opportunity of working with him hand in hand as we serve our veterans, active duty military and their families and our children and youth.

Brett, I offer you my sincerest congratulations to you on your election to the highest office of The American Legion. And I offer the support of all dedicated members of the American Legion Auxiliary. I wish you a very successful and rewarding year and look forward to seeing you as our paths cross from time to time during our travels. God bless you all. Thank you. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Newly Elected National Commander
Sons of The American Legion**

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: The man chosen to lead the Sons of The American Legion is the son of a World War II combat Marine. His father fought in Iwo Jima, among other locations. Our new Sons commander is also the brother of a Vietnam War veteran. He has served in the Sons of The American Legion for more than 19 years and was awarded a life membership in Squadron 527, near Buffalo, New York. He is a tenured university professor and holds a Ph.D in administration from the University of Buffalo. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome National commander of the Sons of The American Legion Greg "Doc" Gibbs. *(Applause)*

SAL NATIONAL COMMANDER GIBBS: Commander, members of the dais, Adjutant Wheeler, Legion Family and guests, good morning. I bring you greetings from our 365,000-plus members of the Sons of The American Legion. I would like to share this morning a little bit about what we said to our gathering the past few days, just so you know where your Sons of The American Legion stand this year and where we're headed under the guidance of your new commander, Brett Reistad, myself and our Auxiliary president, Kathy. But before I begin that, you know that when you get to the high level of national commander, your state emblem disappears from the front of your cap. Well, I'm not going to be able to safely leave Minnesota unless I acknowledge New York. Just a quick shout out to New York. *(Applause)*

But we as Sons are indeed proud possessors of a priceless heritage. That's what we're about; that's what it states in the Preamble to our Constitution. We need to be ever diligent to continue the tradition and the honor that's assigned with that responsibility. Just as you

heard, my eligibility comes from my father who served in the United States Marine Corps during World War II. Although he's no longer with us, he travels with me all the time during our American Legion events. (*Applause*)

My father served along with his two brothers. Joining the United States Marines the Monday directly after the Pearl Harbor attack, as his enlistment papers verify. What has impressed me the most over the years with my father is that he very rarely spoke of his experiences. Even when prompted, he would change the subject. It was obvious that the memories of the painful incidents remained fresh many years later. It appeared to me that his efforts were to shield us from the horrors of war as my brother and I grew up in relative peace. But we as a Sons organization strive to keep that sacrifice known and honored.

It is our legacy as Sons of those who serve to continue to keep people aware of that level of sacrifice, that hardship that all families face when their loved ones are in harm's way so far from home. That is why we have chosen the phrase "honoring the past, continuing a legacy" as our motto for this upcoming year, which we feel aligns very well with the national commander.

Keeping memories alive as well as attending to the needs of our current active military and their families is a huge part of our mission. We ask that the Sons embrace their heritage. We as Sons are the legacy of a family serving their country. Whether it be World War I, II, Korea, Vietnam or all the conflicts that have followed. We have all shared in that sacrifice and in that commitment to not only protect our United States but to help keep the world free from tyranny and oppression.

World War I, the Last War, the War to End All Wars, was not. War seems to be an inevitable element of human interaction. Here we are commemorating 100 years from that war and we still have global strife. Our organization can continue to strengthen, to help and aid those that are willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice for all of us. We have a continuing purpose. Let us be vigilant in maintaining our organizational strength so that we may fulfill that mission.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. I wish you all a successful convention as we begin to celebrate 100 years of service. We as the Sons of The American Legion are very proud to be an active part of Team 100. God bless us all. God bless the United States of America. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Doc is staying on stage, and I would ask National Commander Reistad and National President Dungan to please join us also. Ladies and gentlemen, National Commander Reistad, National President Dungan and Sons of The American Legion Commander Gibbs. Our dynamic leadership team for the upcoming year, your American Legion Family leaders. Congratulations. (*Cheers and applause*)

...A musical interlude was played.

Our next speaker is a living testament to the character, potential and leadership ability of our youth champions. In 1977, as a senior at Columbus North High School, he won The American Legion Department of Indiana Oratorical Contest. (*Applause*)

He had been the runner-up the year before. I guess the scholarship was put to good use. He earned a bachelor's degree in history at Hanover College and a law degree at Indiana University. He practiced law and hosted a radio talk show before being elected to represent Indiana's 2nd Congressional District in 2000. In 2008, "Esquire Magazine" listed him as one of the "10 best members of Congress." He served as governor of Indiana from 2013 to 2017. His son is a U.S. Marine, and our guest proudly displays the Bronze Star earned by his Korean War veteran father in his office. He also attended our Salute to Veterans Inaugural Ball in 2017. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my high honor to introduce the vice president of the United States, the Honorable Mike Pence. (*Applause*)

Address: Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President of the United States of America

Commander Rohan, incoming Commander Reistad, distinguished guests, to all the cherished veterans who have fought for the freedom of the people of the United States in the uniform of the United States of America and your families, it is my great honor to be at this celebration, the 100th National Convention of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

To all the Legionnaires today and to every member of the Legion Family across America, I bring greetings and congratulations. From a leader that you heard from last year and a great champion of our armed forces, past, present, and future, I bring greetings and congratulations from the 45th president of the United States of America, President Donald Trump. *(Applause)*

This week The American Legion returns to the city of Minneapolis, the site of your very first convention 100 years ago, where your forbearers adopted a Constitution, voted to establish your national headquarters in the great city of Indianapolis, Indiana. *(Applause)*

And embarked on a century, a century of service and sacrifice. Thanks to the men and women of The American Legion, we are now at the start of a new century of American strength, and The American Legion has been there every step of the way. *(Applause)*

I'm here today on behalf of our commander-in-chief to put down one more installment of the debt of gratitude that we owe to each and every one of you who have worn the uniform. It's a debt that we know we can never fully repay. Freedom isn't free. To be preserved, it demands vigilance. To be defended, it requires strength. To be secured for our children and grandchildren, it calls for the loyalty of patriots and the courage of warriors. It requires Americans to answer the call, and you, Legionnaires, answered that call in your time. *(Applause)*

You come from the rest of us, but you are the best of us. The American people cherish all the men and women who bear the title of veteran of the armed forces of the United States. You veterans are emblematic of American greatness. You stepped up to serve your country, to serve a cause greater than yourselves.

That also describes a particular veteran that I know is on the hearts and minds of people all across America as we gather here. He came from a long line of service in uniform, served in the Vietnam War, spent five and a half years as a prisoner of war, and he did not yield. After he made it home, he took on a new kind of service in the halls of our nation's capital. And in the Congress of the United States, he would become one of the most unwavering advocates of our armed forces to ever serve. We remember this man in Arizona today, tomorrow and the day after in our nation's Capital, before he's laid to rest at the United States Naval Academy. But I can assure you, America will always remember and honor the lifetime of service of United States Senator John McCain. *(Applause)*

By honoring him, we also honor all of you, his fellow members of The American Legion, who for 100 years have proudly stood for God and country. This centennial celebration begins this week as a time to reflect on the roots of your founding, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918, when the guns of the First World War fell silent. As the world searched for meaning in the unfathomable horror of that struggle, an idealism about the future arose, a hope that the total destruction of the Great War might chasten the hearts of men and in the end make it the war to end all wars.

The fathers of The American Legion fought for freedom in that war, and while they too sought to promote peace and goodwill on earth, they also knew that peace only comes through strength. *(Applause)*

They created The American Legion to promote that strength at home and abroad. They and all of you who followed in their footsteps have fulfilled this mission with distinction now 100 years later. For the past century, you fought tirelessly to ensure our national defense, seeing in the lessons of history the truth that weakness arouses evil. For 100 years you've instilled in our nation's youth a love for the principles of Americanism, including

through that National Oratorical Contest, which the commander just mentioned I competed in more than four decades ago, and it began my lifelong love for the Constitution of the United States. *(Applause)*

Most importantly, for 100 years The American Legion has been known for your matchless work to fulfill the words of our 16th president, to care for him who shall have borne the battle. You gathered here know the challenges that await America's war fighters when they return home from the battlefield. You step into the gap day in and day out to help your brothers and sisters in arms adjust to civilian life in ways that only a fellow veteran can. Every year Legionnaires generously volunteer time and resources to provide comfort and care to America's wounded warriors. You support active duty military families during difficult times of overseas deployment and provide scholarships to the sons and daughters of America's fallen heroes. This is a legacy of kindness and generosity of which The American Legion should be proud. *(Applause)*

Throughout your storied history, The American Legion has advocated for our nation's veterans at the highest levels of our government, and your work over the past century has made an incalculable difference for our nation's veterans, our future leaders, and all those who serve in the armed forces today and their families. In case you haven't noticed, you have an ally and a champion in President Donald Trump. Just as you fought for our freedom, we will always fight for you. *(Applause)*

In this White House, under this president's leadership, we know that veterans benefits are not entitlements. Veterans benefits are simply the earned compensation for men and women who served in the uniform of the United States. *(Applause)*

Since day one of this administration, we've taken decisive action to ensure that America keeps the promises we made to each and every one of you and all of our nation's heroes. Last year on the stage of this very convention, President Trump signed into law an historic bill that would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of The American Legion, the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act. *(Applause)*

This new law brought the veterans, the VA's appeals process into the 21st century. It gives our nation's heroes the answers that they need on a timeline that you deserve. Over the past year, the VA has actually awarded more than \$55 million in retroactive benefits to America's veterans, and we're currently on pace to process the most appeals cases in a single year in American history. *(Applause)*

I promise you, this VA, this administration will not rest until we end the backlog at the VA once and for all. *(Applause)*

President Trump also signed the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act with the strong support of The American Legion, ensuring that our veterans receive the highest levels of service across the entire VA system. I'm pleased to report today under our administration, just a year and a half in, with the new strength found in that legislation, we've already fired, suspended, or demoted more than 3,200 VA employees for negligent behavior. They're gone. *(Applause)*

At the same time we're restoring accountability at the VA, we've also been working to keep our promise to give veterans health-care freedom and choice. Nearly three months ago, President Trump signed the historic VA Mission Act. We're now giving veterans access to the real-time health-care choices they deserve. *(Applause)*

The Mission Act was one of the largest and most important VA reforms in a generation, and we're going to continue to make sure that our veterans have access to the world-class health care that you earned in the uniform of the United States of America. As the president has said, no one who defends our country in uniform should have to fight for their lives when they come home. It's a new day at the VA. *(Applause)*

Thank you. Truthfully, it's a new day at the VA, and working with Secretary Wilkie we've also implemented the Decision Ready Claims Initiative to ensure that veterans claims are processed quickly and efficiently, and we've already reduced the average wait time from months to just two weeks. *(Applause)*

We've been working hard, been working hard to live up to President Trump's promise to reform the VA. We've expanded telehealth options. We've opened a brand new White House VA hotline run by veterans for veterans. And we've made it easier for America's veterans to access the mental health services that they need to treat the invisible wounds of war.

You know, I stand before you today deeply humbled because, while I am the son of a combat veteran and the proud father of a United States Marine, my life's journey did not take me into the uniform of the United States. But my dad's did. He saw action in the Korean War. A few years after he passed away, I was visiting a cousin of his, now 30 years gone. He'd grown up with my dad in Chicago, and he talked to me about the way the war had changed my dad. When I asked him how, he said, "You know, when I knew your dad growing up on the south side of Chicago, he was one of the most happy-go-lucky guys I ever met," but he said, "The war changed him, and he never was quite the same when he came home." And I asked him, "How do you mean?" And my dad's cousin looked at him and said words that I'll literally never forget. He said, "I don't think your dad ever got over the guilt of coming home."

You know, in those words in an instant, this son of that veteran understood every unfinished sentence, every faraway look on my father's face whenever the war came up, and that's when I began to understand the quiet cost of freedom and the burden that so many of our veterans bear when they return from combat to everyday life.

Understanding that burden, our administration is taking unprecedented steps to improve access to counseling and mental health-care services for our veterans, especially those in the first year of transition from uniformed services. Today, for the first time ever, every VA medical facility in America provides same-day emergency health-care services. And to all of our veterans that are looking on, just know we are with you. You do not carry that burden alone. (*Applause*)

Beyond health care, beyond the VA, I'm proud to say this administration's also taken decisive action to get the economy moving again and to get it working for America's veterans so that when our war fighters come home and return to civilian life, they have an opportunity for a good living and to pursue their dreams.

I'm proud to report to you that thanks to the pro growth policies of this administration, tax cuts, regulation, unleashing American energy, the unemployment rate among American veterans has fallen by nearly 40 percent since election day 2016. Veterans unemployment has reached its lowest level in nearly 20 years. (*Applause*)

Now, every day our administration works to honor you and ensure that our veterans have the benefits you earned and the opportunities that you deserve for all that you've done for this country. Finally, I know you would want to hear that we also honor your service by ensuring that we learn from the lessons of history and we protect all that you've won for us on fields of battle, in cold wars and in combat.

In this centennial year of The American Legion, as we prepare to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the Great War that inspired your founding, be assured that this administration has not forgotten the lessons of that era.

The First World War represented a turning point in the history of our country and the world. In the span of just a few years, the United States went from being isolated between two vast oceans to becoming the preeminent power in the world. While we won the war, in time we lost the peace. A little more than a generation later, America's best and bravest were again crossing the Atlantic to return to a continent at war. Much like the time between the two World Wars, the world that our administration inherited is filled with widening challenges and unknowable threats. Rogue regimes race for nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them. Radical Islamic terror networks spread as never before. And rising rival powers aggressively seek to undermine American interests at every turn. For too long, the national policymakers stood silent while others exploited the international institutions and rules that we helped build, subsidized foreign industries at great risk to our own.

Today Russia and China challenge American power and influence wherever they can, and dangerous dictatorships in North Korea and Iran destabilize their regions and threaten our people while brutalizing their own. But today, America is no longer ignoring these threats. Thanks to the leadership of President Donald Trump, we are confronting these challenges head on. *(Applause)*

We're once again putting the security and vital national interests of America first. Under our administration, the United States is pursuing a new national security strategy based on, as the president said, a principled realism, guided by our vital national interests and rooted in our timeless values. At the heart of this new strategy is the belief, borne out of history, that the United States and our armed forces are the world's greatest force for good. *(Applause)*

With that conviction, we've taken decisive action under President Trump's leadership to make the strongest military in the history of the world stronger still. After years of budget cuts to our military, just last year President Trump signed into law one of the largest increases in our national defense since the days of Ronald Reagan. *(Applause)*

The era of budget cuts to our armed forces is over, and a new era of American strength is under way. To all of you who served and who even now have loved ones in the armed forces, let me make you a promise: We will continue to rebuild our military, restore the arsenal of democracy until we give our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guard the resources and the training they deserve to accomplish their mission and come home safe. *(Applause)*

With renewed American strength, the United States is once again standing without apology as leader of the free world. Thanks to our president's leadership, our NATO allies have increased defense spending by over \$33 billion, and they're now paying more to support our common security than ever before. *(Applause)*

Together with our allies, we've taken the fight against radical Islamic terrorism on our terms to their soil. In Afghanistan, we're giving our war fighters the resources and the tools they need to fight and win. In Syria and Iraq, thanks to the courage of our Armed Forces, ISIS is on the run, their Caliphate has crumbled, and we will soon drive ISIS from the face of the Earth. *(Applause)*

Earlier this summer, as our president secured a historic commitment for the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, he also had our fallen on his heart. President Trump secured a promise from Chairman Kim to return the remains of all our missing fallen servicemembers lost in the Korean War.

I will tell you this son of that combat veteran from the Korean War was honored beyond words to be there when the first 55 flag-draped cases bearing the remains of our missing fallen arrived on American soil. Thanks to the leadership and compassion of President Donald Trump, our boys are finally coming home. *(Applause)*

Now, what I've described to you today, men and women of The American Legion, is nothing short of a great renewal of American strength at home and abroad. Over the past year and a half, with the strong support of The American Legion, our administration has replaced weakness with vigor, doubt with confidence, and timidity with leadership. Under President Donald Trump, together with all of you, we are forging a new century of American strength.

So thank you again. Thank you for the honor of addressing you in this historic year at the start of your centennial celebration. For 100 years The American Legion has brought together heroes who stepped forward to serve and who still serve their nation long after you hang up the uniform. In this year of celebration, it's fitting and proper to dwell on what distinguishes you the most, the defining characteristic that's made you members of this storied organization and heroes to your entire nation.

In the words of a veteran from 50 years ago, we are reminded it is the soldier, not the minister, who has given us freedom of religion. It is the soldier, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press. It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech. It's all of you. Each and every one of you who have served in the uniform of the

United States and the brave men and women who are serving at this very hour -- standing a lonely post, manning a deck on a rolling sea, patrolling the skies, or marching into darkness -- who have given us freedom, who preserved that freedom since the birth of this nation, this is the land of the free because it is still the home of the brave, and you are that brave. (*Applause*)

You counted our lives more important than your own. You were in your time prepared to lay down your lives for your friends, your families, your nation, and our freedom. So on behalf of your commander-in-chief and on behalf of a grateful nation, 100 years on from the founding of this great organization, I say to each and every one of you from my heart, thank you for your service.

To The American Legion, thank you for a century of service, for doing your part not only in years past but in the century that is to come to preserve this last, best hope of Earth for ourselves and our posterity. So God bless The American Legion, God bless our Armed Forces, and God bless the United States of America. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Our vice president of the United States of America, the Honorable Michael R. Pence!

...The convention viewed a video.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Ladies and gentlemen, for purposes of a presentation, please welcome a friend and our legal ally in defending veterans memorials, the CEO and president of First Liberty Institute, Kelly Shackelford. (*Applause*).

**Presentation: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. Religious Liberty Award
Kelly Shackelford, President & CEO, First Liberty Institute**

First Liberty is the largest legal organization in the country that all we do is religious freedom. We have a wonderful relationship with The American Legion for one reason, we both love freedom and are committed to freedom.

I wanted to start with you to mention a couple of the things that we're doing that you might not know about and then get to the award. It has been our honor to represent The American Legion whenever the Pledge of Allegiance has come under attack across the country, and I'm here to report that we have won every single one of these cases in federal court across the country. (*Applause*)

It's been our honor to represent The American Legion whenever the national motto, In God We Trust, has come under attack, and, again, we have won every single one of these cases in federal courts across the country. (*Applause*)

As veterans memorials have come under attack across the country, we've been able to preserve and defend every one of those memorials. But I do have an update, and it's an update that we have to pay attention to, and that's the Bladensburg Veterans Memorial. This memorial was put up almost 100 years ago by The American Legion and by Gold Star moms who had lost their sons in World War I. And after almost 100 years, a lawsuit was filed by the American Humanist Association. This memorial is special not just because it's a veteran memorial, but this memorial was actually put up originally on the land of an American Legion post. It was dedicated at an American Legion ceremony, and emblazoned on this memorial is the symbol of The American Legion. I hate to tell you this, but the federal court of appeals ruled six or eight months ago that this memorial, after almost 100 years, is now unconstitutional because it's in the shape of a cross.

The idea of bulldozing a national memorial is just something we can't even fathom, but it even goes further than that. What precedent would that set? And more than that, the 4th Circuit, which issued this opinion, within that circuit is Arlington National Cemetery. So this precedent, if not overturned, would mean they would have to go into Arlington and begin removing crosses. We're going to do everything in our power to make sure that doesn't happen. So please be aware this case is now at the United States Supreme Court, and we are going to fight until we win. (*Applause*)

To follow this, if you want to follow the case and see what's going, feel free to go to firstliberty.org and follow that. Keep this in your prayers. Let other people know about this. I think this is something that most Americans would never stand for, but this is a battle that's ahead, and in the upcoming months, we're going to find out about what the Supreme Court does about taking this case. It's one of the most watched cases in the country.

But the good news is, while we're fighting, there are some who have been doing an incredible job of fighting for our religious freedom, and as you saw, we give a pretty great award, a Henry .22 caliber repeating arms Golden Boy rifle. I don't know if any of you know the president of Henry, which is Anthony Imperato, when he found out that we were first going to give this award at The American Legion, he said: We want to donate that rifle every year because we think this is that important.

So we just couldn't be more thankful for Henry and their commitment to The American Legion and to our Constitution. This year's award recipient really wasn't that difficult. We've never really had a year where somebody so surpassed anybody else in the advances they made for religious freedom. This year's Philip B. Onderdonk Jr. Award is going to President Donald J. Trump. (*Applause*)

The reason for that is, within months of taking office, President Trump passed an executive order advancing religious freedom throughout all of our federal agencies and government, including the military. Shortly thereafter and as part of the order, he asked the attorney general to produce guidelines, and the attorney general has now produced guidelines for religious freedom, which has been distributed throughout the federal government, to ensure more accommodation and protection of religious freedom throughout all of our federal agencies, departments, and the military.

And just a few months ago, following up on that, the Department of Justice for the first time in our history created a Religious Liberty Task Force to make sure that these guidelines and this order were being implemented throughout our federal government.

That's just the beginning. When President Trump took office, we had almost 100 lawsuits going on against ministries like the Little Sisters of the Poor and others who had problems in their faith because of some of the requirements of Obamacare. Those lawsuits have all been stopped across the country. And look at the judges being appointed, from Justice Gorsuch all the way down, 60 now, these have been justices and judges who are at the highest level of excellence in their commitment to religious freedom and the Constitution.

I could go through list after list after list, but realize the award this year, the biggest problem is going to be how we get that rifle into the White House. But we are going to get that rifle into the White House, and President Trump has agreed to accept the award. In fact, Vice President Pence has agreed to accept it on his behalf as well. So we will be getting him that award, and he is the recipient this year of the Philip B. Onderdonk Jr. Award for Religious Freedom. (*Applause*)

I just want to end by telling you what an honor it is to work with The American Legion on these cases and for our country and our Constitution. I just want to end with something that I'm sure all of you agree with. That Bladensburg Veterans Memorial is not coming down. It is not coming down. It is not coming down. Thank you, and God bless you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Thank you, Kelly Shackelford and First Liberty Institute, as we stand together to protect our veterans memorials and our religious freedoms.

A reminder that the Post-Convention National Executive Committee meeting will occur in the Convention Center, Level One, Room 101, Sections C and E, immediately following the adjournment, and all the new officers are to attend.

As we come to the close of our 100th National Convention, I again want to say thank you. Thank you to all of you who came, to our commission, committee, and council chairmen and members, to our entire staff who supported us all year long, and especially to the director of National Convention and Meetings, Bridget Robinson, and her entire

staff, who I don't think have slept since I know when. So, Bridget, if you can hear us, and staff, thank you. (*Applause*)

When I came into the 2011 National Convention here in Minneapolis, I came in as a newly elected department commander, and I leave this 100th convention as a past national commander. Minnesota, Minneapolis, will always hold a very special place in my heart. Is there any further business to come before this convention?

Please rise and uncover as National Chaplain Vick offers our benediction.

Benediction

Robert A. Vick, Florida, National Chaplain

May the God of all blessing and unmeasurable love shine His face on each of us as we leave this place and enlighten our minds with Your spirit that our next 100 years will be even more successful than this one has been. Father, I pray a special blessing on our first female commander and her precious family, and I pray that same blessing on every family represented here today. God bless The American Legion. God bless America. God bless our veterans. And Father, God bless our government. Help them to govern wisely and do what pleases You and benefits us as a nation as we worship You. And I pray this prayer in the name of my savior and my soon-coming king, amen and amen.

Retirement of Colors

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Thank you, chaplain. Sergeant-at-Arms, please retire the POW/MIA flag. ...*The POW/MIA flag was retired.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Thank you. Please cover. I now call on the Color Guard to retire the colors of the United States. Present arms.

...*The delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Two. The time is now 12:42 p.m., and I declare this 100th Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned. *Sine die.*

...*At 12:42 p.m., Thursday, August 30, 2018, the 100th Annual National Convention of The American Legion was adjourned.*

2018 OFFICIAL AWARDS

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANNUAL RECIPIENT(S)

The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal Award: Awarded annually to an individual(s) or organization for their outstanding service to the nation and to the programs of The American Legion by nomination by department action or by the National Commander.

RECIPIENT: Hon. Elizabeth Dole

American Legion Baseball Graduate of The Year Award: Presented to the major league baseball player who played American Legion Baseball as a teenager and best exemplifies the principles and purposes of the program in sportsmanship, citizenship, general good conduct, integrity and playing ability.

RECIPIENT: Brian Duensing, Chicago Cubs

Bob Feller American Legion Pitching Award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player recording the greatest number of strikeouts during the regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.

RECIPIENT: Jimmy Gambino, Post 40, Las Vegas, NV (25 strikeouts)

Commissioner of Baseball Trophy: Awarded annually at the Major League World Series to that baseball team which becomes the National Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.

RECIPIENT: Wilmington Post 1, Wilmington, DE

Dr. Irvin L. "Click" Cowger Memorial R.B.I. Award: Awarded annually to The American Legion Baseball player who is credited with the most runs batted in by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.

RECIPIENT: Bryce Marsh, Post 45, Randolph County, NC (15 RBI's)

Ford C. Frick Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department having within its jurisdiction the runner-up team in the National Finals of The American Legion Baseball program.

RECIPIENT: Las Vegas Post 40, Las Vegas, NV

The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department which has rendered the most outstanding service during the year to the program of the Boy Scouts of America.

RECIPIENT: Department of Missouri

George W. Rulon Baseball Player of the Year: A Plaque is presented to recipient by appropriate official upon conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series. Citation is presented to recipient at a special Hall of Fame ceremony at Cooperstown, NY, the following summer.

RECIPIENT: Chris Ludman, Post 1, Wilmington, DE

The Howard P. Savage, Jr. Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department having the baseball team which becomes the Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.

RECIPIENT: Wilmington Post 1, Wilmington, DE

Jack Williams Memorial Leadership Award: Awarded annually to the manager and coach of the national championship team, as representative of the adult leadership Jack Williams stressed during his lifetime.

RECIPIENT(s): Manager: Brent Treml, Post 1, Wilmington, DE
Coaches: Stephen Lex, Mark Wihelm, Matthew Schubert and Dane Walter

James F. Daniel, Jr. Memorial Sportsmanship Award: Awarded to The American Legion Baseball player participating in the World Series that represents the principle of good sportsmanship emphasized by the program.

RECIPIENT: Sam Goodman, Post 137, Dubuque County, IA

American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Trophy: Awarded annually in four categories to the top performing Individual and Team in the Sporter and Precision categories competing in the annual USA Shooting National Junior Olympic Air Rifle Championship who are members of clubs and teams affiliated with The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program.

RECIPIENT(s): **Precision Team:** Ontelaunee Jr. Rifle Team, Post 173, New Tripoli, PA - Calista Smoyer, Emma Rhode, Sarah, Frantz, Jeanne Haverhill
Precision Individual: Jared Eddy, Ole Mill Rangers, Post 15, Midland, GA
Sporter Team: Des Moines North MCJROTC, Post 42, Des Moines, IA - Adrianna Campos, Kevin Nguyen, Sydney Krejci, Nicole Masteller
Sporter Individual: Bailey Hoenig, Zion Benton HS NJROTC, Post 865, Zion, IL

The American Legion Baseball “Slugger” Trophy: Plaque is presented to recipient, or designated representative, by appropriate official upon the conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series.

RECIPIENT: Sam Link, Post 137, Dubuque County, IA (.555 batting average)

Ralph T. O’Neil Education Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department within the continental limits in the United States showing the greatest Americanism activity in use of The American Legion School Medal Awards.

RECIPIENT: Department of New Mexico

The American Legion Baseball “Big Stick” Award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player having the highest total number of bases as determined by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.

RECIPIENT: Austin Colmery, Post 1, Wilmington, DE (21 total bases)

Spafford National Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department of The American Legion having within its jurisdiction the winner of the National High School Oratorical Contest.

RECIPIENT: Department of Kentucky

Francis M. Redington Sportsmanship Award: Awarded annually to the athlete competing in The American Legion Junior Air Rifle National Championship who best exemplifies good sportsmanship and fair play.

RECIPIENT: Kaylene Castillo, Post 49, Eldorado HS MCJROTC, New Mexico

Daniel J. O'Connor Award: Awarded annually to that Department attaining the greatest number of percentage points compiled from information contained in the Consolidated Post Reports and supporting Department narrative. (Originally named the William Randolph Hearst Trophy)

RECIPIENT: Department of Virginia

The American Legion and Scouting "Square Knot" Award: This award is designed to recognize American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion members who are actively involved in the Scouting program. This award is not meant to be a selective or limited award, but one that is available to any American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member who completes the requirements for the award. The Award is meant to recognize dedication and work required by an American Legion, American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member to assist in furthering the Scouting program in The American Legion.

RECIPIENT(s): 2018 Robert C. Monto, James M. Hughes, Richard L. Hewett, William Hogg, John P. Wiltenmuth III, Richard T. Markley, Benjamin M. Strong, Michael C. Macku, William Lindberg, Ricky N. Riggins, Bruce Olson, Don Hall, Stacy L. Hall, Jaime J. Gonzalez, James Colvin, Frederick Drzewiecki II, Ronald Comtois, Jason Sansburn, Richard C. Barnard, Dana Edwards, Ralph E. Belter, Robin Hoyle

The American Legion National Education Award: Awarded annually to an individual, group or organization that has promoted the education programs of The American Legion, including the promotion of "Need A Lift?", correspond to the goals of The American Legion or has promoted or advanced education programs at the national level.

RECIPIENT: None Awarded for 2018

The American Legion Canadian Friendship Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of authentic veterans' organization in Canada. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans' affairs and in the development and perpetuation of the spirit of international good will and comradeship between the United States and Canada and between their veterans' organization and The American Legion.

RECIPIENT(S): ANAVICUS – Gordon MacEachern, Lucille Foubert, Bruce Wilson, Joy Fidler, Darlene Michel, Karen Kitchen, Fred Kanne, Lloyd Shaw, William "Bill" Sadler, Rae Roberts, Karen Wright, Michael Berridge, Donald Hinse, Kelly Kwong, Marilyn Marsh, Grant Taylor, Chester McComb, Eleanor Beaulieu, Wayne Miller

INDIVIDUAL – MAJ John Mahon (Ret.)

Department Award for 100% Post Children & Youth Reporting: Awarded annually to those Departments which achieve 100% of Posts indicating Children & Youth activity on Consolidated Post Reports.

RECIPIENT: Departments of Delaware, Alabama, Oklahoma, Nebraska and Montana

National Employer of Veterans Award Recipient(s): Awarded to an employer in recognition of outstanding achievement in the employment and retraining of veterans.

outstanding service in the field of veterans affairs and for service and contributions made in the development of international good will and comradeship between their organization and The American Legion.

RECIPIENT(s): None awarded for 2018

Distinguished Public Service Award: Awarded annually by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the Commander’s Advisory Committee at the time of the annual Washington Conference. It may be awarded to one or more person(s) of the United States Congress.

RECIPIENT(s): Honorable Phil Roe, M.D., U.S. House of Representatives (TN)

The Arthur D. Houghton Sons of The American Legion Trophy: Awarded annually to that Detachment of Sons of The American Legion in each of five membership categories (I – 200-1,000 members; II - 1,001-3,000 members; III - 3,001-6000 members; IV – 6001-12,000 members; V – 12,001 or more), each of said Detachments attaining the greatest percentage of increase over previous year’s membership when compared with all Detachments in its category.

RECIPIENT(s):	Category I	Detachment of Nevada
2018	Category II	Detachment of Alabama
Winners	Category III	Detachment of Colorado
	Category IV	Detachment of Arizona
	Category V	Detachment of Michigan

General Henri Gouraud Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department in each of six categories established by the National Membership and Post Activities Committee, each of said Department having been the first in its respective category to attain or exceed its nationally assigned membership quota (effective 1986).

RECIPIENT(s):	Category I	None qualified
	Category II	None qualified
	Category III	Department of Wisconsin
	Category IV	None qualified
	Category V	Department of West Virginia
	Category VI	Department of France

General John J. Pershing Honor Award: Awarded annually to that Department having the greatest percentage of its posts receiving the Honor Ribbon for having 100 percent or more, of the post’s previous year’s membership enrolled for the coming year by December 31, and having reported such achievement to National Headquarters by not later than January 31.

RECIPIENT: Department of District of Columbia

Henry D. Lindsley Trophy: Awarded annually to the Department attaining the highest percentage of membership over its preceding year's membership by March 31.

RECIPIENT: None awarded for 2018

The American Legion National Recruiter of the Year: Awarded annually to the individual certified with the highest number of new members recruited from among all of the departments.

RECIPIENT: David L. Witucki, Department of Texas

Jerry L. Hedrick Membership Award: Awarded annually to the Department, not included among the several state Departments or the Department of the District of

Columbia, attaining the highest percentage of membership as of March 31, over its preceding year's membership.

RECIPIENT: None awarded for 2018

O. L. Bodenhamer Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department designated to lead the parade at the time of the ensuing National Convention.

RECIPIENT: Department of West Virginia

The American Legion Air Force Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class at the Air Force Academy who demonstrates the highest proficiency in all academic subjects.

RECIPIENT: Ryan I. Silva

The American Legion Coast Guard Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class of the United States Coast Guard Academy who is considered to have personally excelled in athletics.

RECIPIENT: Dana Rohde

The American Legion Merchant Marine Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the Merchant Marine Academy, enrolled in the Pre-Commissioning Seminar Course, and selected by the Academy Faculty, as achieving the highest grade pertaining to a 1,000-word composition dealing with the subject of National Security.

RECIPIENT: Tyler Dugan

The American Legion Military Academy Award: Awarded annually to cadet of the graduating class at the United States Military Academy with the highest standing in Chemistry.

RECIPIENT: Louis Kurcz

The American Legion Naval Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the United States Naval Academy who stands highest in those English, History and Government courses taken to complete a Foreign Affairs major.

RECIPIENT: Nathan Bermel

National Commander's Blood Donor Awards: Presented to departments in different sized categories for participating in The American Legion's Blood Donor Program.

RECIPIENT(s):

Category I - <u>Departments with 100,000 or more members:</u>	
Post Participation:	No Submission
Individual Participation:	No Submission
Category II - <u>Departments with 70,000 to 99,999 members:</u>	
Post Participation:	No Submission
Individual Participation:	No Submission
Category III - <u>Departments with 40,000 to 69,999 members:</u>	
Post Participation:	Department of Maryland
Individual Participation:	Department of Maryland
Category IV - <u>Departments with 25,000 to 39,999 members:</u>	
Post Participation:	No Submission
Individual Participation:	No Submission
Category V - <u>Departments with 10,000 to 24,999 members:</u>	
Post Participation:	Department of Montana
Individual Participation:	Department of Montana
Category VI - <u>Departments with less than 10,000 members:</u>	

Post Participation: No Submission
Individual Participation: No Submission

The American Legion National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award: To recognize an outstanding law enforcement officer as selected from Department law enforcement officer winners for distinguished on-and off-duty service. The accomplishments for which the award is presented shall have been in accordance with, or in furtherance of, established American Legion policies or programs and it shall have contributed to the preservation of law and order as well as the American way of life.

RECIPIENT: Brett Walsh, Fuquay-Varina, N.C. Police Department, Fuquay-Varina, NC

The American Legion National Firefighter of the Year Award: To recognize an outstanding firefighter as selected from Department for distinguished on-and off-duty service. The accomplishments for which the award is presented shall have been in accordance with, or in furtherance of, established American Legion policies or programs and it shall have contributed to the preservation of law and order as well as the American way of life.

RECIPIENT: Damon Faust, Estacada, OR, Rural Fire District 69, Estacada, OR

Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department giving the highest degree of support to the ROTC program within its jurisdiction, based on criteria drawn up by the National Security Commission.

RECIPIENT(s): Departments of Connecticut and Maryland

The American Legion Fourth Estate Award: Awarded to press, radio, TV, or other communications media; to associations of same, to owners, executive heads or staff members; such award to be in recognition of outstanding service to community, state, or nation, which service shall have been in accordance with or the furtherance of established American Legion policies and programs.

RECIPIENT: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Milwaukee, WI (print)
2018 NBC-affiliate KARE-TV, Minneapolis, MN (broadcast)
 The War Horse, Richlands, NC (online)

The American Legion Patriot Award: Awarded to an outstanding citizen who has demonstrated a profound and exceptional commitment to military personnel and their families.

RECIPIENT(s): Diane Carlson Evans

The American Legion Spirit of Service Award: Awarded annually by the Department of Defense and the six military departments that have identified the most outstanding men and women that have received press coverage in Armed Service News dispatches, the Pentagon Channel, their military base newspapers and their hometown publications.

RECIPIENT(s): **Army:** Sgt. Drew Hunnicutt
Navy: Petty Officer 2nd Class Sha'nae Wilson
Marine Corps: Sgt. Molly Hampton
Air Force: Staff Sgt. Robert P. Andrews
Coast Guard: Machinery Technician 2nd Class Brian Gogo
Air National Guard: Staff Sgt. Heather J. Hyon

Arch M. Cantrall Trophy: Awarded annually to that American Legion Band winning first prize in competition with all other American Legion bands during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.

RECIPIENT: American Legion Band of the Tonawandas, Williamsville, NY

Glen R. Hillis Trophy: Awarded annually to that Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.

RECIPIENT: Harrisburg Post 472, Houston, TX

The Lemuel Bolles Trophy: Awarded annually to that band winning first prize in competition with all other bands during the annual National Convention.

RECIPIENT: American Legion Band of the Tonawandas, Williamsville, NY

William F. Lenker National Service Trophy: Awarded annually to that State Department of The American Legion excelling in welfare work for war veterans, providing the membership of that Department shall be no less than 80% of the membership of the preceding year.

RECIPIENT: Department of Montana

Department of Veterans Affairs Health-Care Provider of the Year Award: To be awarded annually at the Washington Conference to one outstanding non-physician direct patient care provider in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), nominated and selected under such conditions as the Internal Affairs Commission should from time to time select as necessary and consistent with the effective administration of such an award.

RECIPIENT: Nurse Jillene Sroczynski, Oklahoma City, OK

Department of Veterans Affairs Physician of the Year Award: To be awarded annually at the Washington Conference to one outstanding physician in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), nominated and selected under such conditions as the Internal Affairs Commission should from time to time select as necessary and consistent with the effective administration of such an award.

RECIPIENT: Dr. Amy Candy Heinlein, Minneapolis VA Health Care System

The American Legion 99th Annual Report

FOREWORD

The American Legion continued to have a strong year under the leadership of National Commander Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin. Membership was strong with 2 million veterans in more than 13,000 posts throughout the nation and overseas. We recorded another year of rewarding service to America, her veterans, and their families.

The American Legion National Headquarters is located in Indianapolis, Indiana. In addition to the Indianapolis facilities, offices are maintained in Washington, DC, to house those organizational functions requiring a close working relationship with the Congress and the appropriate agencies of the federal government. The editorial and advertising staffs of *The American Legion Magazine* are located at The American Legion's Indianapolis Headquarters.

The National Commander's report is published herein as a part of the National Convention proceedings. Reports of the other national officers, the national commissions, financial statement with accompanying data, and a report of the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary are included.

Throughout the year, the two organizations continued to provide vital leadership to the nation and, through our activities and programs, contributed significantly to the preservation of the American way of life. We are proud of our accomplishments and look forward to the challenges ahead in the coming year.

Daniel S. Wheeler
National Adjutant

EXCERPTS FROM CONSTITUTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

ARTICLE II

Nature

Section 1. The American Legion is a civilian organization; membership therein does not affect nor increase liability for military or police service. Rank does not exist in the Legion; no member shall be addressed by his military or naval title in any convention or meeting of the Legion.

Section 2. The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.

ARTICLE III

Organization

Section 1. The American Legion shall be organized in Departments and these in turn in Posts. There shall be one Department in each state, in the District of Columbia, and there may be one Department in each territory and insular possession of the United States. The National Executive Committee may establish Posts in the territorial and insular possessions of the United States and foreign countries, and shall designate the Department under whose jurisdiction they shall function, but this shall in no way affect the status of Departments already established.

ARTICLE IV

Eligibility

Section 1. Any person shall be eligible for membership in The American Legion who was a member of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Air Force of the United States and assigned to active duty at some time during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990 until a date established by Congress for ending the Desert Storm period; all dates inclusive, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of his entry therein, served on active duty in the armed forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any said periods; provided however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation, or continued honorably after any of said periods; provided, further, that no person shall be entitled to membership who, being in such service during any of said periods, refused on conscientious, political or other grounds to subject himself to military discipline or unqualified service.

Section 2. There shall be no form or class of membership except an active membership, and dues shall be paid annually or for life.

Section 3. No person may be a member at any time of more than one Post.

Section 4. No person, who has been expelled by a Post shall be admitted to membership in another Post, without the consent of the expelling Post except that where such consent has been asked for and denied by such Post, he may then appeal to the Executive Committee of the Department of the expelling Post for permission to be admitted to membership in another Post, and shall be ineligible for membership until such permission is granted.

ARTICLE V

National Convention

Section 1. The legislative body of The American Legion shall be the National Convention, except as otherwise provided in the Constitution and By-Laws.

Section 2. The time and place of the National Conventions shall be determined by the National Executive Committee, which shall have authority to change such time and place for sufficient reasons to it appearing.

Section 3. In the National Convention each Department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each one thousand members, or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention and whose registration fees, as fixed by the National Executive Committee, for its total authorized delegate strength, have been paid, and to one alternate for each delegate. The delegates shall be chosen not less than 2 weeks before the National Convention at Department Conventions or in any other manner specified by the Department Constitution.

Section 4. Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote. The vote of any registered delegate absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his Department. Alternates for registered delegates shall have all the privileges of registered delegates except that of voting. A registered delegate is one who has received his credentials after his registration fee has been paid.

Section 5. A quorum shall exist at a National Convention when 60 percent of the Departments are represented as provided above.

Section 6. The National Executive Committee shall provide a Uniform Code of Procedure for the orderly organization and operation of National Conventions with continuing power of revision, and said Code shall be applicable at all National Conventions unless it is amended, suspended, or repealed by a majority vote of the total authorized representation at a National Convention.

ARTICLE VI
National Officers

Section 1. The National Convention shall elect a National Commander, and five National Vice Commanders, who shall serve without seniority. No two Vice Commanders shall be chosen from the same Department. No person shall be eligible for re-election to the Office of National Commander or National Vice Commander.

Section 2. Such officers shall serve until the adjournment of the succeeding National Convention following their election and thereafter until their successors are chosen. Vacancies in these offices occurring between National Conventions shall be filled by election by the National Executive Committee, and any member of The American Legion, in good standing, shall be eligible for election to such vacancy. Provided, however, that no Past National Commander or Past National Vice Commander shall be elected to fill any vacancy in these respective offices.

Section 3. The National Executive Committee at its first meeting following the National Convention shall appoint the National Adjutant, National Treasurer, National Judge Advocate, National Chaplain and National Historian, such officers to hold office at the pleasure of the appointing power. All persons having the custody of funds shall give adequate bonds, which shall be approved by the National Executive Committee.

Section 4. All Past National Commanders, while in good standing in their respective Posts, shall be members for life of the National Executive Committee, without vote, and shall also be life delegates to all National Conventions of The American Legion, with vote, to be exercised by them with their respective Departments.

ARTICLE VII
National Executive Committee

Section 1. Between National Conventions, the administrative power shall be vested in the National Executive Committee, which shall be composed of the National Commander, the National Vice-Commanders, and one National Executive Committeeman and one alternate from each Department to be elected as such Department shall determine, the alternate to act only in the absence of the National Executive Committeeman.

Section 2. The term of office of such National Executive Committeeman and alternates shall be two years. The term of office of each National Executive Committeeman and alternate shall commence immediately upon the adjournment of the National Convention next ensuing after their election and shall end at the adjournment of the second next succeeding annual National Convention.

Section 3. Members of the National Executive Committee shall be delegates to the National Convention with vote, which vote shall be exercised with their respective Departments, except that the vote of the National Commander shall be exercised only in his capacity as chairman of the National Convention

Past National Commanders

Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland
John P. Comer, Massachusetts
Miles S. Epling, West Virginia
Robert S. Turner, Georgia
Dominic D. DiFrancesco, Pennsylvania
Bruce Thiesen, California
William M. Detweiler, Louisiana
Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota
Joseph J. Frank, Missouri
Anthony G. Jordan, Maine
Butch L. Miller, Virginia
Hon. Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho

Richard J. Santos, Maryland
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania
John A. Brieden, III, Texas
Thomas L. Bock, Colorado
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts
Martin F. 'Marty' Conatser, Illinois
Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
David K. Rehbein, Iowa
Clarence E. Hill, Florida
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska
Fang A. Wong, New York

James E. Koutz, Indiana
 Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia
 Michael D. Helm, Kansas

Harold D. Barnett, Georgia
 Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon

National Executive Committeemen

Willis Frazier, Alabama
 James E. Pisa, Alaska
 Richard W. Perry, Arizona
 Mary V. Erdman, Arkansas
 Janet M. Wilson, California
 Thomas J. Florez, Colorado
 D. Joseph Jackson, Connecticut
 John A. Endres, Delaware
 Bron R. Mogenis, D.C.
 Dennis R. Boland, Florida
 Nola L. Maloney, France
 Charles F. Wessinger, Georgia
 David R. Carlson, Hawaii
 Arthur L. Gimpel, Idaho
 Bernard A. Stegmueller, Illinois
 Jerry L. Jordon, Indiana
 Jerry D. Sebben, Iowa
 David O. Warnken, Kansas
 Randall A. Fisher, Kentucky
 Charles D. Aucoin, Louisiana
 John W. Hargreaves, Maine
 Michael L. Mooney, Jr., Maryland
 William J. Chisholm, Massachusetts
 Michael D. Wood, Mexico
 Raymond W. Moore, Michigan
 Marland A. Ronning, Minnesota
 Robert E. Gosa, Mississippi
 Kenneth J. Goth, Missouri

Mervin G. Gunderson, Montana
 William D. Crosier, Jr., Nebraska
 Ronald L. Michalski, Nevada
 William R. Roy, New Hampshire
 Charles K. Robbins, New Jersey
 Felix M. Trujillo, New Mexico
 Edward Bertrand, New York
 Jeff W. Joyner North Carolina
 Robert L. Krause, North Dakota
 Dennis E. Clausing, Ohio
 Marvin A. Sandbek, Oklahoma
 Robert D. Liebenow, Oregon
 Dennis C. Haas, Pennsylvania
 Lawrence E. Wade, Philippines
 Angel O. Narvaez Negron, Puerto Rico
 Cory D. Bates, Rhode Island
 Cecil F. Hennis, South Carolina
 James Huls, South Dakota
 Don E. Mathis, Tennessee
 C. W. Sparks, Jr., Texas
 Terry D. Schow, Utah
 Marlys A. Lemnah, Vermont
 Michael F. Mitrione, Virginia
 Ken C. Lee, Washington
 William W. Kile, West Virginia
 Kenneth J. Rynes, Jr., Wisconsin
 Terry E. Miller Wyoming

Alternate National Executive Committeemen

Hardwick "Rico" Hall, Sr., Alabama
 Steven L. Huisman, Alaska
 Judith S. Beischel, Arizona
 C. Jacob Greeling, Arkansas
 Edward J. Grimsley, California
 John W. Bowen, Colorado
 Robert S. Murray, Connecticut
 Robert L. Michael, Delaware
 George E. Roundtree D.C.
 Arthur J. Schwabe, Florida
 James M. Settle, France
 Phil Youngblood, Georgia
 Marvin R. Siegfried, Hawaii
 Rolland D. Adams, Jr., Idaho
 Tom Marciciak, Illinois
 Edward J. Trice, Indiana
 Dennis J. Soppe Iowa

Gaylord K. Sanneman, Kansas
 Joseph M. Flynn, Kentucky
 Harold D. Burson, Louisiana
 Ronald A. Rainfrette, Maine
 Lewis E. Trott, Jr., Maryland
 Louis E. Brault, Jr., Massachusetts
 Jerry A. King, Mexico
 John W. Knox, Michigan
 William C. Barbknecht, Minnesota
 Steve Sweet, Mississippi
 Thomas K. Goodin, Missouri
 David A. Driver, Montana
 Frederick C. Craigie, Nebraska
 John F. Warden, Jr., Nevada
 Kenneth B. Maynard, Jr., New Hampshire
 Berley Hanna, Jr., New Jersey
 Paul L. Espinoza, New Mexico

William R. Kearsing, Jr, New York
 Patricia A. Harris, North Carolina
 Don Weible, North Dakota
 Robert M. Klostermeier, Ohio
 Timothy W. Smith, Oklahoma
 Robert A. Millar, Oregon
 E. Michael Stelacio, Pennsylvania
 Stanley Gene Wylazlowski, Philippines
 Isaac Rodriguez, Puerto Rico
 David A. Williams, Rhode Island
 Gary L. Mitchell, South Carolina

Terry L. Hanson, South Dakota
 Don E. Mathis, Tennessee
 Kenneth W. Mueller Texas
 Richard G. Fisher, Utah
 Frederick E. Latour, Vermont
 Linden B. Dixon, Jr., Virginia
 Dale F. Davis, Washington
 William E. Burkett, West Virginia
 Robert L. Shappell, Wisconsin
 Keith R. Davidson, Wyoming

**EXCERPTS FROM BY-LAWS OF THE
 AMERICAN LEGION
 ARTICLE I
 National Executive Committee
 Commission, Committee, and Employees**

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

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

Section 7. The National Executive Committee shall provide for the appointment and employment of such subordinate officers and employees as may be needed for the administration of the affairs of The American Legion, and prescribe their duties and emoluments.

**REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
 Larry J. Marcouillier, Delaware**

My year started in August when I traveled National Headquarters in Indianapolis for a week of orientation and participated in the national membership workshop along with the four other National Vice Commander candidates. We received detailed briefings from each of the Division Directors and also toured the Geiger Center. We had some training on conducting media interviews and the talking points of the organization. After a week long training at Indianapolis we went to the Washington DC office where we were briefed as to the current Legislative, Veterans Employment and Education, National Security and Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

At the National Convention in Reno, Nevada, I was nominated for the office of National Vice Commander. After the convention I attend the National Executive Committee meeting where I was introduced as the National Vice Commander for the Northeast region.

In October, I attended the Fall meeting and National Commander Rohan reception at Indianapolis. I also attended the National Executive Committee meeting. In addition to the activities of the Executive Committee, I made a short presentation on my American Legion experience and goals for the ensuing year to the Commanders of the North East Region.

I was also deeply honored to represent The American Legion and National Commander Denise Rohan at the Veterans Day Observance in Washington DC at Arlington National Cemetery and the Vietnam wall. I was met at the Hilton hotel with a driver and an escort for breakfast with the Sectary of the VA.

After breakfast there was a picture session, then we were escorted unto buses for the trip to Arlington Cemetery. We were seated in The American Legion box seats for the ceremony then I was escorted to the steps next to the tomb of the unknown after the wreath was place on the tomb I went on stage for the rest of the ceremony.

After leaving Arlington we went to the Vietnam Veterans memorial. At the conclusion of the ceremony I laid a wreath in conjunction with other Veterans Organizations. Following the wreath lying, the ceremony concluded with the playing of taps. It was a day that I will never forget.

My visit to the department of New Hampshire on Oct. 27-28 for there fall conference. I was met by the department commander and the NEC who drove me to a District meeting for a short speech on membership. The next day was the conference were I talk about membership and the need to get the word out about the good things there Post are doing use the local news paper and Facebook.

My trip to the Department of Massachusetts on Nov. 18-19 was for the DEC and Commanders Testimonial Dinner. At the DEC I talk about membership and all the great things that there department is doing for there community. At the Testimony I talk about using the media to relay things that there Post are doing for the community. I also talk about membership and how important the membership numbers are in order to get things done in DC.

My next trip was to the Department of Rhode Island on Nov. 24-27 for a membership meeting and Commanders Testimonial Dinner. At the round table discussion on membership we talk about the numbers and getting members from the DMS program. At the Testimonial Dinner I talk about the need in getting the membership numbers.

My first trip to the Department of Pennsylvania was on Jan. 19-21 for there DEC and Dinner for Housing for Homeless Veterans. The first speech was about the Homeless program run by the department of Pennsylvania and the pride that they have in there support of this worth wile program.

At the DEC I talk about the need to get the word out as to what each Post is doing in there community. The use of face book, the local news paper and get them run there story. How to use the internet as a tool in getting new members and let there community

know all the good that the American Legion is doing.

The trip to Vermont on January 26-27 was for the mid winter conference I talk about the need for there local community to know what the local Post family is doing for them and there community. About the Legion programs and how there Post is making it a better place to live.

At the DEC we talk about how important it is to keep the membership growing. How through there membership we are able to get bills pass in congress and in the State house. This is how they can make a big difference for each veteran who lives in Vermont.

The next trip was to the Department of New Jersey on Feb. 15-17 for membership revitalization. This was in Union County. The team members were able to transferred 51 members and get 5 renewals. They insure me that they will keep on working the list in getting new members.

On 25-28 of Feb I was at the DC conference where I attended a meeting with the members of North East Region to discus what they are doing to improve membership. I also attend the Commanders reception and meet the candidates at the Greenbelt Post. At the Commanders testimonial to Congress I watch as Commander Denise Rohan answer questions about the VA and veterans programs.

The next trip was back to the Department of New Jersey on April 14-16. First stop was for a dedication on a new post home in Ocean City, NJ. This new post home will also serve as the VA Telehealth Program. I spoke about how there Post will be the first Legion

Post to work with the VA using the Telehealth system. At the Commanders Testimonial Dinner I talk as to how close they are in reaching there membership goal and that there is still time for them to make 100%.

Return to the Department of Pennsylvania on April 20-22 for the DEC and the Commanders Testimonial Dinner. At the DEC we talk about the programs that their department has and about the Aid that they sent to the hurricane victims. I talk about how there Department has a lot of pride in helping others that are in need. At the Dinner I talk about membership and getting the word out as to what they are doing in each of there communities.

Return to the Department of Massachusetts on June 8-10 for their convention. Talking points were communication and membership. How by getting the word out as to all the good things the local Post do fore the community will help with membership.

On June 15 and 16 I attended the Merchant Marine Academy for awards and gradation.

On June 22-23 I went to the Department of Vermont for their convention. The talking points were on membership and how important it is when the American Legion needs a bill pass for Veterans programs.

On July 6-7 I was at the Department of Delaware for there convention and talk about membership.

On July 9-10 I was at the Department of Maryland for their convention. There the talking points was on communication and membership.

On July 12-14 I was in Connecticut for there convention. I talk to there Past Commanders Club on leadership how they need to pass on there knowledge and experience. At the convention I spoke on the need to get there membership numbers up.

On July 19-21 I was in New York at their convention. I talk to there DEC on the consulted post report and the need to get all of the Post to send them in. At the convention the subject was on Veterans and how we as members need to make sure that they are not forgotten. The country needs to respect them for all that they have done for our country.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER William J. Flanagan, Illinois

As National Vice Commander of the Central Region, I was responsible for working with the following Departments: Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Kentucky, Michigan and Ohio. In working with Jeff Chapman, my membership liaison, we set up a conference call schedule with all the Central Region departments to discuss membership, as well as the Four Pillars of The American Legion. They are: Americanism, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, Children and Youth, and National Security.

We held monthly conference calls discussing ways to improve our membership numbers. Each department explained what they were doing to reach higher goals, with everyone's goal being to attain 100% or higher in membership. By sharing this information, each department was able to listen and hear what different ideas may work in their department. As we discovered, some ideas would work in one department, and not in another. On all conference calls, someone from each department participated and gave input.

Membership was the main objective, as I felt a larger membership would increase our influence with Congress concerning the veterans and Legislative issues we support. During some conference calls, the Four Pillars of The American Legion came into the discussion when a department representative wanted to talk with all attending. The discussion was regarding ideas about a particular pillar and an upcoming activity in their department.

As I visited each department, either during a mid-winter conference or a department convention, the member attendance was exceptional. During my visits, I was able to attend various committee meetings and learn what each department was doing under the Four Pillars. To most attendees, they were amazed that a national vice commander would take

the time to visit and talk with individual members. This was an opportunity to meet and visit with the regular blue cap members in a comfortable setting.

The highlight of the year was my attendance at Ohio Buckeye Boys State. The attendance of over 1,000 young men was so impressive. The number of counselors who were former Buckeye Boys State participants and are now back helping with the program, as well as the Legion members who are involved, attests to the accomplishment of the program. Many of the staff have been involved in the program for 20 or more years.

As my year comes to a close, the excitement of everything will soon end. But I will always carry with me the experience and knowledge gained from this opportunity. The friendships I have made will be everlasting.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER Bobby D. Bryant, Oklahoma

The Department (State) of Oklahoma nominated me for national vice commander in May of 2016 by a unanimous vote of the Department Executive Committee via a formal resolution.

Our formal training began on July 23, 2017 in Indianapolis, Indiana and concluded in Washington DC on August 1st, 2017. During the training we, myself along with the four other national vice commanders and our national commander elect, were thoroughly immersed in the history and workings of the American Legion. We were introduced to each of the division directors and their staff who provided us with a complete detailed overview of their respective departments and answered all questions regarding their work with the American Legion.

The southeast region contains fourteen (14) departments (States). I had the honor and privilege of visiting each one plus the formal meetings in Indianapolis and Washington, DC. My wife Linda traveled with me and attended all meetings and conferences with the exception of Puerto Rico and a membership revitalization in Florida. She is a member of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Following our national convention in Reno, NV, where I was elected and installed, and my next stop was back in Indianapolis for our fall conference. Immediately following the fall conference, we attended the midwinter conference of the Department of Virginia, in Virginia Beach on October 20-22, 2017. There I was introduced to their Leadership and many Legionnaires. I spoke about the importance of assisting Veterans and the Legion Family and the importance of having well trained Veteran Service Officers.

December 4-8, 2017, I traveled to Orlando, FL to attend a revitalization effort of several American Legion Posts. During the five (5) days, we visited 27 Posts, a new National Cemetery, a VA Hospital, and the Florida Vietnam Wall Memorial. I was invited and attended both the largest and the 2nd largest populated American Legion Posts in the world, what an honor! I was also provided with a tour of their headquarters building. We also attended Posts that were devastated by the hurricane.

On January 11-13, 2018 we attended the midwinter conference of Oklahoma where we discussed the support of the Legion coin for 100 years of service to Veterans and their families. We also discussed the importance of membership to support the programs that assist Veterans in their time of need. I reaffirmed the importance of filing the consolidated Post Report (CPR) with our national office so when our National Commander testifies before congress in February she has proof of the work we are doing on behalf of Veterans.

Mississippi midwinter conference was our next stop on January 19-21, where I discussed the overall support of the Legion on behalf of all Veterans. I thanked each one for their service to our great country, and reaffirmed that the Legion wrote the GI Bill and we are still protecting it and making changes, through Congress that makes sense to protect Veteran's rights.

On January 26-28, 2018 we reported to Austin, Texas for their midwinter conference. I spoke of the need for well-trained Veteran Service Officers that can assist all Veterans

with VA claims and overall health issues. We also discussed the Legion Coin Bill and gaining Legislative support for passage. We discussed the importance of filing their consolidated Post Report (CPR) with our national office so when our National Commander testifies before congress in February she has proof of the great work we are doing on behalf of Veterans. We also discussed the devastation of the hurricane and how the other Departments (States) and individual Legionnaires stepped forward with goods and people power to assist Texas in time of need.

Following a brief stop at home, we headed to the great State of Tennessee for their midwinter conference. We were met with much enthusiasm and patriotism. I was included and escorted to all department committee meetings. We discussed local issues like the formal training of their Veteran Service Officers and the revitalization of some of their Posts. I emphasized the importance of filing their consolidated Post Report (CPR) with our national office so when our National Commander testifies before congress in February she has proof of the great work we are doing on behalf of Veterans.

We then headed to South Carolina February 8-11, 2018 for a district revitalization effort in Savannah. There were many Legionnaires present to assist with this effort. They assisted many local posts with membership and overall the Department of South Carolina. We attended the resetting of a tombstone of a WWII Veteran that did not have the appropriate awards. We were also able to tour Paris Island Marine Base (MCRD) and learned about the history and significance of the base.

Although we didn't receive a formal invitation to Georgia, we did stop by and visited with a couple of Posts along the way. We of course discussed Veteran's care and programs of the American legion.

February 15-17, 2018 we attended the North Carolina midwinter conference where I was escorted to all committee meetings and conference functions. I made a point of discussing the importance of filing their consolidated Post Report (CPR) with our national office so when our National Commander testifies before congress in February she has proof of the great work we are doing on behalf of Veterans. We discussed the importance of protecting the American Flag as many of our brothers and sisters sacrificed their lives fighting for this country and that flag totally represents our country!

February 25-28, 2018 we reported to Washington DC for the American Legion DC Conference. Attended our Commanders Call and received the discussion points as we met with our National Congressional Representatives. There we met with several of those Representative s and thanked them for what they do for Veterans and the American Legion. I was honored to be one of the five National Vice Commanders, as we placed a wreath at the Tome of the Unknown Solider in Arlington, VA! We attended the National Commander Denise Rohan's testimony to Congress on Wednesday the 28th.

Traveled to Puerto Rico and attended a Revitalization effort for the Department, on April 8-13, 2017. We traveled the entire Island and had a first-hand look at the devastation created by the two hurricanes. They informed me that the level of support by the American Legion, by both National and the Departments like North Carolina and Florida were extraordinary! I received a personal tour of the VA Hospital in Puerto Rico. I was totally honored to present, on behalf of the American Legion and Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) \$30,000.00 in \$50.00 gift cards, \$20,000.00 from Home Depot and \$10,000.00 from Walmart to the Puerto Rico VA Hospital for them to distribute to individual Legionnaires and Veterans as needed.

We traveled to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD, May23-25. We were there on behalf of the American Legion, to present an award to a graduating Midshipman. We were provided with an official escort and attended the formal Pass in Review prior to the Awards Ceremony. Along with Dean of Faculty, Dr. Anthony Phillips, we presented and Academic Award to Midshipman I/C Nate Brumel. Our Escort provided us with a tour of the Academy and also tickets to the graduation the next morning.

On June 8-10 we attended the Department convention of Louisiana in Alexandria. I attended several meetings and really enjoyed their southern hospitality. During the general

session I spoke about life membership and later met with many life members. We discussed the hurricane issues in Puerto Rico, Texas, and Florida. Louisiana folks were very thankful that these storms passed them by this time. I informed them how important our National Emergency Fund (NEF) is in the time of need for both individual and Legionnaires.

We were honored to attend the annual convention of Alabama, in Montgomery. I was escorted to all meetings and Department functions. We were taken on a tour of their beautiful Headquarters building and their renovation was almost complete. We discussed the importance of filing their consolidated Post Report (CPR) with our national office so when our National Commander testifies before congress in February she has proof of the great work we are doing on behalf of Veterans. I happily installed the newly elected officers for the 2018-2019 Legion Year.

June 22-24 2018 found us in Little Rock, Arkansas for their annual Convention. During the banquet we witnessed a spectacular version for the POW/MIA ceremony. Again I attended many meetings and discussed many Legion programs and training for those programs. We discussed the NEF program because Arkansas went out of their way to send Legionnaires and goods to Texas to assist them getting back to normal.

After about ten days at home, then we were on to the Orlando, Florida's annual convention held July 4-8 2018 I was informed there could be a many as 10,000 Legionnaires in attendance. The Department of Florida is all about Legion business, especially assisting Veterans and their families. As I attended the various committee meetings there were discussions pertaining to Service Officer Training, Legion College, and other areas of training. We discussed the importance of filing their consolidated Post Report (CPR) with our national office so when our National Commander testifies before congress in February he/she has proof of the great work we are doing on behalf of Veterans. Following the elections, I was requested to install the Alternate National Executive Committeeman. I did so with great pride.

In closing I would like to thank the American Legion, all those Legionnaires and Legion Family members we met along the way and for the opportunity to serve in this position of National Vice Commander, such a great honor. My wife Linda and I travel more than 22,678 miles to attend functions in 14 Departments in the American Legion, for God and Country!

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER Byron I. Callies, South Dakota

JULY/AUGUST 2017

My year started on July 23, 2017 when I traveled to National Headquarters in Indianapolis for a week of orientation and participated in the national membership workshop along with the four other National Vice Commander candidates. We received detailed briefings from each of the Division Directors and also toured the Geiger Center and Emblem Sales Division. We received training sessions on conducting media interviews and talking points of the organization. On July 30, my birthday, I traveled with the other National Vice Commander Candidates to the Washington DC office. We were briefed on the current Legislative points, Veterans Employment and Education, National Security and Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation. I arrived back at home station on August 1. At the 99th National Convention in Reno, NV, on Thursday, August 24th, I was nominated by Paul Evensong, National Executive Committeeman from South Dakota for the office of National Vice Commander. My first duty was to attend the National Executive Committee meeting where I was introduced as one of the National Vice Commanders. At the close of the Executive Committee meeting, we attended a short briefing and introduction by all Division Directors from the Indianapolis and Washington, DC offices. We attended the reception for newly elected National Commander, Denise Rohan of Wisconsin. Following a leisurely drive, I arrived at home station on August 27.

SEPTEMBER 2017

On September 12, I began my first in a series of conference calls with Department Commanders. Matt Herndon from NHQ acted as recorder and offered some insight on some of the topics. Topics discussed were: Membership status of each Department, discussion on how to reach the agreed-upon goal set by the National Commander and each Department Commander, National American Legion on-line training course, reconnect project with military bases and National Guard units, renewals normally made after January 1, retention plans, family ribbons, Veterans Day dinners, holding post issues, mylegion.org, consolidated post reports, and post excellence awards. Paper work was stressed.

September 29, 2017, the 153rd Engineer Battalion redeployed from the Mideast and a welcome home was put on by the community. Several hundred were in attendance including Representative Kristi Noem, Senator Mike Rounds, Senator John Thune, and LT Gov Matt Micheals. I, along with the Department Commander, Hugh Holmes were in attendance as well.

OCTOBER 2017

October 5, 2017. I did a radio interview on local station FM KXLG with radio host David J. Law. With me was fellow Legionnaire Dick Vohlken, who sat up the interview. The host was very enthusiastic about me being elected National Vice Commander, being from Watertown. I explained the process and also described the four pillars of the American Legion. We discussed the requirements of being eligible for membership.

October 6-12, 2017, I attended the Fall Meetings in Indianapolis. All five Vice Commanders were in attendance. Department Commanders and their Adjutants met in the NEC room and received training on training programs that were available from National HQ. That evening the Annual Ye Steivos Play Day Reception and Dinner were held.

October 9 and 10, 2017. Beginning Monday, the Commanders and Adjutant held their annual fall meetings. I sat in on the Commanders' sessions. Matt Herndon held the Big Twelve roll call where departments bid their goal for the upcoming year. Tuesday morning, NVCs hosted a working breakfast for their respective department commanders. The NEC had their fall meeting being led by Commander Rohan and several reports from various staff members and committee chairmen. Bridget Robinson announced the retirement of long term employee Marti Wooden. The meeting was adjourned on Thursday at 0914.

My homecoming was held the weekend of 13, 14, and 15 October 2017. On Friday night a 'meet and greet' was held at the Post home and Saturday afternoon at 1 pm a social hour was held preceding the program scheduled at 2 pm at the Ramkota Event Center Theater.

I visited the Department of Kansas in October, 2017, and participated in a membership tour. The following Sunday I was invited to attend the Governor's Hunt near Pierre, SD.

NOVEMBER 2017

The Department of Iowa was my next visit. I participated in a membership tour and concluded with a membership rally in Van Meter.

I attended a membership tour in the Department of Nebraska which ended up with a visit to the VA Hospital in Hot Springs, SD.

JAUARY 2018

I attended the Midwinter Conference for Nebraska, which was held in North Platte, NE. I attended the DEC meeting beginning at 1000 on Friday. The main session began at 0800 on Saturday with opening remarks by Department Commander Costello. I arrived home at 1800, Sunday evening.

I attended the Department of North Dakota Midwinter Conference in Mandan, North Dakota. The joint memorial service was held at 1100 with about 250 in attendance. I left for home station at 1300 and arrived at 1800.

FEBRUARY 2018

In the middle of February, I attended the South Dakota Mid-winter conference in an unofficial capacity. Saturday evening, I attended the annual go-getters reception hosted by Post 3, of Chamberlain. On Sunday morning the Department Chaplain held the annual

Memorial Service which was followed by the finals of the South Dakota Oratorical Contest.

The Washington Conference began on Feb 23, 2018. Sunday started quickly with a leadership meeting with all national officers to discuss the issues of the day. Following that we broke out into regions and I lead discussions on the issues pertaining to the Central region. All commanders but the North Dakota commander were in attendance. PNC Dan Ludwig and PNC Dave Rehbiem were also in attendance and contributed to the meeting. Tuesday morning, leadership had a “Know Before You Go” meeting where information was disseminated for the planned meetings with our individual state legislatures. Tuesday afternoon the 5 National Vice Commanders were honored to present a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and a short tour of Arlington Cemetery. Tuesday afternoon we went to the Dirksen Office building to meet with our individual legislators. Senator Mike Rounds was unable to attend since his father passed away a few days previous, but we were able to meet with his Chief of Staff, Mark Johnston. Senator Thune was able to attend and we discussed the talking points of the American Legion. Our final meeting was with Representative Kristie Noem. She has always been a stalwart supporter of veterans. There were about a dozen South Dakotans who attended these sessions. On Wednesday morning, we were bused to the Dirksen Office building again for the National Commander’s presentation. Following the presentation we flew back to Sioux Falls.

On Thursday, I arrived in Independence, Missouri, for my unofficial meeting. I participated in a membership tour of several Posts throughout the northwestern part of the state. We also visited the Missouri Veterans Home for a tour. Saturday started with a drive to Savannah for a Revitalization and lunch. Sunday morning I had a short meeting with the Department Historian and then left for home station.

MARCH 2018

I left for Buffalo, Minnesota early Friday, March 9, 2018, to attend several meetings of the Department of Minnesota. Saturday began with me attending the Strategic Planning Committee meeting. Later in the day, the Department held their membership rally where I was the main speaker. During the meeting the Districts presented awards to their 10 outstanding District Vice Commanders.

I attended the Post 15 American Legion Birthday Party in Sioux Falls on Sunday night. At that banquet they handed out awards to the Eagle Scout of the Year, Educator of the Year, LEO of the Year, Firefighter of the Year, EMT of the Year, as well as longevity certificates to 50, 55, 60, 65, and 70-year members.

APRIL 2018

The Department of South Dakota held their new District Commander training seminar on April 28-29 with much of the department leadership in attendance. I attended part of the session and spoke for a few minutes on leadership qualifications, duties, responsibilities, and pitfalls.

MAY 2018

May 6, I attended the annual Parade in Brandon, SD. I arrived in Indianapolis for the Spring NEC meeting on May 7 and spend the next two days in session with the NEC. I left on Thursday and arrived home that same day.

The Department of Kansas held their annual convention in Hutchinson. I arrived on May 18 and had a leadership session with department leaders. Following the memorial service, the election for new Department Commander was held with Dan Wiley being elected Commander for 2018-2019.

On Monday, May 21, I left Sioux Falls for Hartford, CT, to attend the annual Coast Guard Academy graduation and awards program.

I attended the National Memorial Day event which showcases President Trump placing the wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

JUNE 2018

The first weekend in June, I attended the 2nd Annual Tractor Cruise in the great state of Missouri. I met up with the Commander, Adjutant, and 1st Vice Commander in St. Joe, MO, and then went on the cruise. I returned home on June 3.

On June 7, I left for Spearfish, SD, to attend their annual convention. I was the main speaker at their joint banquet.

July 13-15, I attended the annual convention and election of new officers in Iowa
AUGUST 2018

I attended the homecoming for newly elected Department Commander of South Dakota, Denny Brenden and newly elected SAL Commander for South Dakota, Kerry Jorgenson. It was held at the Convention Center in Watertown, SD, on August 4, 2018

The rest of my report will be ‘as scheduled’ since it will not happen until after the deadline of this report.

I will be traveling to Winnipeg, Canada, to attend the Dominion Canadian Legion on August 24, 2018, through August 27, 2018. I then will travel to Minneapolis, MN, to attend and participate in the 100th Annual Convention of the American Legion.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER Paula R. Stephenson, Utah

The scope of our Western Region consists of fifteen Departments, including thirteen western states and two foreign Departments of Philippines and Mexico, with posts in Canada, Mexico, Central America, South America, Australia, Guam, Taiwan, the Philippines, Okinawa-Japan, and Kwajalein. There are many cultural differences and climates, all having potential impacts on membership and programs of The American Legion, but all fully support the four pillars of The American Legion.

The National Commander provided guidance in August, 2017 at The American Legion National Convention in Reno, Nevada, to assist the Departments with programs and membership, and setting goals. I was able to visit eleven of fifteen Departments. Due to distance and funding, I did not physically visit the Departments of Mexico, Philippines, Alaska and Hawaii, but maintained communication with all.

Below are the Western Region accomplishments for 2017-2018, along with my observations and recommendations:

1. Monthly conference calls were conducted with groups of all Western Departments’ leadership, a National Membership representative, and Membership & Post Activities Committee representatives for each of the Departments. Ideas were shared on proven Department accomplishments and current activities. Conference calls were a beneficial communication tool between National meetings. Results: the West had three Departments exceeding 100 percent membership goals (Mexico, Montana, and Idaho) of the nine Departments accomplishing this goal. The 2017 vs. 2018 membership totals showed the Western Region had twelve (57%) of the top twenty-one performing Departments.

2. The Reconnect Program is a Department Of Defense initiative meant to “reconnect” our country with its military. I observed all Departments are reconnecting. Three of the Western Departments (Idaho, Montana, and Utah) received the highest point range for their submitted reports. Overall, I noticed what they are doing is more important to the membership and communities than the time it takes or understanding of submitting the documentation for points. The military units contacted were usually unaware of what the Reconnect Program is, thus missing goodwill public relations and recruiting opportunities. This program needs to continue and be encouraged through training by The American Legion and Department of Defense.

3. New members: The Western Region recruited 36,702 new American Legion members (traditional and Direct Mail Solicitation) during membership year 2018. The Western Region membership submitted 457 applications (three new family members per pin) for the National Commander’s Membership Incentive Pins, recruiting 1,401 new American Legion Family members. I received many comments about the “Family First”

theme and ease of recruiting Legion Family members during the same recruiting contact. When asked, it always appeared that membership had all family recruiting applications in their wallets or readily available.

4. Renewing memberships: The “personal touch”, championed by the late Montana National Executive Committeeman Merv Gunderson, was pushed all year, which included welfare visits, telephone calls, dinners, etc. Post and District revitalization events impacted renewals tremendously, and taught Post/District leaders about communicating with nonparticipating members. With each event observed and through reports, the impact was always positive. The Revitalization Program needs to be expanded and experienced at every Post, with all leaders involved.

5. American Legion Education Institute - Basic Training: Eleven of fifteen Western Departments met the 10 percent goal to increase Basic Training graduates, with the Department of Colorado reaching 39.13 percent (number four of fifty-five Departments). As noted by National Commander Rohan, there is a high correlation of education/training with improvement in membership and program participation within The American Legion. I definitely observed this throughout the West, and the excitement that went along with it. I would recommend training and marketing on a regular basis through the “Legion Magazine” and other venues (printed and electronic).

6. National American Legion Press Association (NALPA): Several Departments established their own Department American Legion Press Association committees this year, supported by social media. Their programs touch the lives of all generations of veterans, the military and their families. Everyone in the nation relates to what they see through the printed and electronic media. The National American Legion Press Association should continue to support these efforts as part of the training and advertising efforts.

7. Consolidated Post Reports (CPR) to the National Commander remain a challenge. The Western Departments reached a sixty-nine percent submission rate as of August 3, 2018, with six Departments over seventy-seven percent, with the Department of Montana reaching the 100 percent goal. Long term observations show Posts with many volunteer hours, programs, and dollars supporting their veterans, military, and communities are being accomplished, but they fail to complete the paperwork that documents and tells these good stories. Departments need to put together a “CPR Strike Force” in the spring each year to help Posts with documentation/reporting efforts, for the good of the American Legion.

8. The “Family First” theme has been great this year, and easily understood and embraced at all levels, especially at the Post/Unit/Squadron/Chapter levels. What I saw with most Departments are a dramatic cultural change, improved respectful communication with all generations, and improved numbers of women, minorities, and younger veterans in leadership positions at all levels. In those Departments where the Legion Family truly worked together, there was absolute synergy and success with their programs that supported veterans, the military, their communities, and their families. This has also lead to thinking “outside the box” and trying activities and programs that support the four pillars of The American Legion. Observations during conference calls and visits were encouraging and exciting to see. Leadership at all levels of the organization must support this respectful and all-inclusive culture.

9. During this past year, I represented the National Commander at the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Women in Military Service for America (WIMSA) Memorial, at Arlington National Cemetery, Washington, D.C., and presented an American Legion award to a graduating Army cadet at the U.S. Military Academy-West Point, New York.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity this year to represent and support our National Commander Denise Rohan, The American Legion Family, and all of the great Departments in the Western Region, and the Department of Utah and The American Legion 2017 National Convention for electing me to this position.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN
Robert A. Vick, Florida

My appointment to the National Chaplains position in the American Legion was in Reno Nevada, on. August 21-24, 2017.

I immediately set myself a schedule for functions to be involved in during my tenure 2017-2018.

My first function was to attend Fall Conference in Indianapolis, National Headquarters. I held a Chaplains training class, I spoke on Chaplains as recruiters for membership, use of the media, and Chaplains mission. This was well attended and successful. I also spoke on the subject "Don't give up". I did a memorial service and a Post Everlasting service. I then visited four (4) Indiana Posts – numbers 64, 233, 252 and 145.

I next attended Fall Conference for the Department of Florida on November 3-5, 2017. I then went to Fern Park, FL. post 185 to sign up a new member. I was invited several times to speak on Veterans suicide in Florida at Post 63,125 and 69. My subject was "Be proactive not reactive to Veterans suicide" and "How to recognize signs of potential suicide" and "How to listen not just with your ears but your heart",

As National Chaplain, I attended several Veterans Day ceremonies and dinners at Florida Posts. I also did several Nursing Homes/Assisted Living facilities visits.

I attended a Christmas party at Eustice, FL post 41. Participated, along with NEC Bobby Bryant, in a Pearl Harbor Memorial service at Madeira Beach, FL post 273. I attended Florida District 16's meeting at Post 7, Clearwater, FL. Post 79, New Port Richey, FL held a Christmas party for needy children, Santa presented gifts to each child. I enjoyed attending this function.

Next on December 22, 2017 I received a new Electronic Wheel Chair from Post 125, John Sloat Commander, in Gulfport, FL. and I presented this to Herman Spera (USAF vet of 1953-57) this was a great help to Mr. Spera.

Several trips to Post 252, Seminole, FL to plan and participate in their Four Chaplain Service. This was the first time Post 252 had held a Four Chaplain Service. I held a training program for the Legion, Auxiliary, SAL and Riders to learn about this service and then to participate in same. We held the Four Chaplains service at Post 252 on 2/3/2018. Very well attended by the Legion Family as well as many from the public sector.

Post 79, New Port Richey, FL. had their Oratorical Contest which I attended and had prayer for the contestants.

North Bay Hospital visit for Bro. Jerry Clark (Mr. Clark has held every office in the Legion Post and District).

2/10/2018 Went to Port Charlotte, FL, Post 110 for the Southern Area Ball

2/13/2018, Attended Post 335 in Hudson, FL. for a lunch and recognition for "Women in the Military".

2/23/2018, Counseled with a distraught veteran to find him help, prayed with him. He sought me out.

Went to Washington, D.C. in February, to meet with Honorable Gus Bilirakis, 9th Dist. FL. Representative, Speaker of the House, the Honorable Paul Ryan and Father Pat Conroy the Congressional Chaplain and their staffs.

The Honorable Speaker Paul Ryan presented me with his Challenge Coin. These honored people asked me to accompany them to Washington's Chapel and pray with them, this I did.

During the Washington trip I opened, closed and spoke at several Legion events. I discussed veteran's issues and presented American Legion's stand on potential Congressional actions.

2/28/2018, Attended joint session of Congress welcoming our National Commander, Denice Rohan, who testified.

3/4/2018, Conducted Funeral of Jerry Clark (Commander of Post 173) in Holiday, FL.

3/9/2018, on to Orlando finals of the state Oratorical Contest. Challenged and prayed for these young contestants. Then drove to Seminole, FL. to attend Central Area Ball, Post 252.

3/12/2018, Attended the Florida Department Commanders visit to Post 79, New Port Richey, FL.

3/13/2018, On to Post 238, Safety Harbor, FL. for Department Commanders visit.

3/14/2018, Continued on with Department Commanders visit at Post 7 in Clearwater FL.

3/15/2018, Next I went with Department Commander to visit Post 14 in St. Pete, FL.

3/16/2018, Today we went to St. Pete Beach, FL. Post 305, then to Madeira Beach, Post 273 and last, on to Treasure Island, FL. Post 158. Along with the visit of Department Commander Treasure Island held a St. Patty Day dinner.

3/31/2018, Visit to Post 104 (Pinellas Part, FL.) for District 16 District meeting.

4/4/2018 through 4/15/2018, Drove to Branson, Missouri. We stayed a week; we were invited to Baptist Bible College and Graduate School to speak. This is the Alma Mater of my wife and me. Spent two days on the Campus and spoke to the student body. After the assembly I met with the young people who wanted information on becoming a Chaplain. Several of these young students were veterans and I promoted the American Legion. I was well received.

While in Missouri we visited the Church in Galena, MO. where I Pastored in 1958, again I was ask to speak at church on Sunday morning and explained my position as the American Legion Chaplain, who the American Legion is and who can become members. We returned home on 4/15 after 2,434 miles.

4/21/2018, Was invited and went to Palm Bay, Fl. to speak again of suicide prevention.

5/8/2018, In Indianapolis for Spring Conference

5/27/2018, Performed a Memorial Day service at Post 79, New Port Richey, FL. I spoke at this service.

6/15/2018, Attended a function to recognize the #1 and #3 Florida JROTC cadets. The #1 cadet is Connor Bergman; he is being recruited by all the Military Academies. Connor has chosen West Point.

6/16/2018, Attended the 16th District Constitution Conference and election of 2018/19 District Officers.

Wrote articles for the National Chaplain's web site

Trips yet to be made:

Boys Nation, July 20, 2018 through July 24th 2018 at Marymount University in Virginia.

Philadelphia 4 Chaplains Chapel

100th National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota

Total miles driven 8925.

Total letters of Sympathy, Congratulations, Condolences, etc.. written 40

Posts Visited is 36.

Thank God for Blessing me to represent Him to the American Legion Family my brothers and sisters. Remember "we are our brothers' keeper".

God Bless America and God Bless the American Legion

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIAN

Richard T. Dubay, Michigan

It has been a great honor and privilege to serve National Commander Denise Rohan as her National Historian during the 2017-2018 American Legion year. I was able to join her during her visit to the Department of Michigan in November where she participated in a Thanksgiving Dinner for over 100 veterans and their caregivers from the John Dingell VA Hospital and, Piquette Square, a transitional housing facility for homeless veterans.

One of the first duties of the National Historian is the overseeing of the annual National History book contest. I would like to thank the American Legion Library and Museum Director Howard Trace, and Ms. Lynda Lydick, the National Historian's point of contact for their invaluable assistance.

With the implementation of a new judging procedure and tabulating process, started by Past National Historian Paul Bennett in 2016-2017, we are being able to get feedback to the contestants so that they might improve their entries. We also have requested feedback from the judges so that we can improve on the scoring procedure. This year only 35 books were entered, of which there were 6 Department Yearbooks, 3 Department Narratives, 21 Post Yearbooks, and 5 Post Narratives. The number of submissions seem to be getting smaller and smaller each year. With the upcoming 100th Centennial Anniversary, we are hoping that many more departments and posts will submit their histories.

This year's winners by category are:

One-Year Department Narrative: Department of North Carolina

One-Year Department Yearbook: Department of Nebraska

One-Year Post Narrative: Pony Express Post 359, St. Joseph, MO

One-Year Post Yearbook: Mukwonago Community Post 375, Mukwonago, WI

I would like to give a special thanks Past National Vice Commander and Past National Historian Fae Casper for the training of the new department historians on the do's and don'ts of history book judging and the conduct of their department contest. I would also like to thank the members of the National Association of Historians of The American Legion, NADHAL, for their assistance with the judging of these books.

As is the normal procedures, I communicated with all Department Historians, stressing the importance of paying attention to detail and to follow the guide available in the National Officers Guide.

During this year it has been my honor to attend National Fall and Spring meetings and report to the National Executive Committee, as well as attending the Washington Conference and participate in the National Commanders testimony before Congress.

The National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota is fast approaching, and I find myself devoting time to the National Historian luncheon, while continuing to be available to provide answers and offer advice to those who are responsible for recording our history. At the luncheon, we will hear from Past National Commander David Rehbein who will speak to us about the activities planned for the Centennial year, and Mr. Al Zdon, from the Department of Minnesota, who will speak to us about the first American Legion convention and the beginning years of the American Legion.

As the 100th anniversary of the American Legion approaches, I have challenged all Department and Posts of the American Legion to enroll in the American Legion's website, centennial.legion.org. It is vital to remember our past and to preserve and commemorate our history.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL JUDGE AVOCATE **Kevin J. Bartlett, Michigan**

Employee Salary Savings Plan – 401(k)

There has been no change.

The American Legion Retirement Plan

There has been no change.

Current Litigation

- United States Court of Appeals – 4th Circuit – From US D/Ct. for Maryland (#cv-14-550)

American Humanist Association (Plaintiffs/Appellants) vs. Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Com. (Defendant/Appellee) & The American Legion et al (Defendants/Appellees) – Michael Carvin (Pro Bono) Jones Day - Washington, DC

The American Humanist Association sued to compel destruction of the “Bladensburg Cross” which is on Maryland State land. It was erected on private property that was taken to enlarge a road intersection. It was erected by The American Legion in 1925 as a veteran’s memorial. One of the plaintiffs is “upset” to see it. National, the Department of Maryland and the Bladensburg post are amici and filed to protect the cross.

Our brief has been filed to seek Summary Judgement. Summary Judgement was granted.

The plaintiffs appealed to the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals and we lost 1-2.

Our brief was filed for a re-hearing before all members of the 4th Circuit and we lost. Petitions for sending this to the U.S. Supreme Court were filed by our attorneys on June 25, 2018. The American Humanist Association filed their brief July 30, 2018. Upon review with our Counsel we noticed that they misconstrued numerous facts within their brief. A response brief will be forthcoming from our Counsel.

Additionally 16 different groups have filed friend-of-the-court briefs (amici) in support of our appeal. These groups include the VFW, the National WW1 Museum, 109 Members of Congress, 28 States, several Medal of Honor recipients, 25 retired General/Flag Officers, a Jewish group, a Muslim group and several Maryland elected officials.

The U.S. Supreme Court still has not determined if they will hear the case.

- Philadelphia County Ct. of Common Pleas (#17-11060643)

Estate of Ellington vs. TAL, et al – Francis Deasey, Philadelphia (Insurance Atty.)

Another Philadelphia post lawsuit that dragged TAL into the fray. We filed an insurance claim for our defense. I requested, and received, the same attorney as in the Silva matter above.

The family representative of Mr. Ellington, who was shot outside a local Post, filed this matter against everyone that they could file against. We filed numerous preliminary objections to Plaintiff’s original complaint on the basis that Plaintiff did not plead sufficient facts against The American Legion. In response the Court granted our Preliminary Objections and gave Plaintiff twenty days to file an Amended Complaint. The Plaintiff filed an Amended Complaint. Unfortunately, this Amended Complaint contains no material differences with respect to the allegations against the American Legion as contained in the initial Complaint. As a result, we have filed an Answer and Preliminary Objections to the Amended Complaint seeking dismissal of several allegations against TAL. We are still awaiting the disposition by the Court.

At the same time, the Court has scheduled a Case Management Conference at which time the Court will establish discovery deadlines; deadlines for production of expert reports, date for settlement and pretrial conference and estimated trial date. Given the number of parties in this case, I do not believe the case will be considered trial ready until sometime in 2019.

- Texas matter regarding Sally Kraynick and Post #490.

We received notice that a firm has been retained to represent the estate and family of Sally A. Kraynick in their alleged claim that Ms. Kraynick was overserved at Texas Post 490 and then “let her drive away while intoxicated causing a motor vehicle accident” in which she lost her life. Their demand is for Ten Million dollars

(\$10,000,000.00). Our insurance carrier has been notified, counsel was assigned and discussions have started.

- Dusso, Kathryn vs. A/L and Legionnaires Insurance Trust – Minnesota, Ramsey County

This matter came about because LIT did not pay on an accidental death matter. Life Insurance Company of North American has assumed defense and indemnification for The American Legion. The answer is filed.

- Massachusetts matter regarding Dawn Fanning, former A/L Post 331 member.

A demand letter pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 93A, Section 9 was received. Ms. Fanning was involved in a situation at Post 331 with a guest. Our attorney has responded to the demand letter with an explanation of TAL organization, a full denial of any involvement and a request to remove TAL from any further involvement.

- Estate of Eli Samuel Battistini-Mercado v. Guy E. Shelley, Jr., Post #974

PA matter that occurred on, or about, April 2, 2017 at PA Post 974. The attorney for the Estate is asking for video surveillance – which of course we do not have. After we responded to the plaintiff's demands our insurance carrier was notified. Nevertheless the plaintiff's moved forward with filing a cause of action. Our claims representative has made several attempts to speak with the plaintiff's counsel to educate counsel on TAL organization.

- Roxanne Flores vs. American Legion – Post #241

This claim relates to a Ms. R. Flores that appears to have fallen down in the parking lot of A/L Post #241 in Baldwin Park, CA. Plaintiff's counsel is requesting that "we" (at National HQ) save any evidence relating to the incident be saved and there be no spoliation of evidence. We responded that we do not have any evidence, informed them of TAL organization and contacted our insurance carrier.

- Thompson v. C. Baker, Texas Post 629 (#D-1-GN-18-001965) Travis County, Texas

Mr. Thompson was stabbed while in Texas Post 629 and his attorney has blamed everyone for his injuries. Our insurance carrier was notified and an attorney was appointed. She has answered the complaint and sent the plaintiff our first set of interrogatories, requests for production and rule 194 request for disclosure.

- TAL Post 1833, New York

A matter in which we received notice of NY Post 1833 is an alleged trespasser at some property in Brooklyn, NY. We sent a letter denying our involvement.

National Headquarters Activities

We have completed the HQ voluntary separation and reorganization. I have been named TAL Chief Compliance Officer. This additional title comes with the additional management responsibilities over the Internal Affairs division, Membership division, Library/Museum and Risk Management.

All legal documents, contracts and TAL books/brochures are continually being reviewed and updated as needed.

Additionally attached to this report is the 2018 Fall Library Discard List and the 2018 Fall Museum Discard List.

Additional Duties

Since January 1, 2018 through September 30, 2018 the following events have taken place through the office of Judge Advocate: 1,068 media articles were read and reviewed prior to publishing; 574 U.S. Memorial website submissions were reviewed; watched and reviewed 42 on-line videos; read, reviewed and worked on 77 contracts; issued 111 oral opinions; issued 180 written opinions; been consulted on 8 Resolutions; wrote 6 Resolutions; issued 60 Department/Post correspondence opinions; reviewed and issued 28 List Protection Agreements; received and given 27 litigation updates; researched and

issued 34 TAL Emblem violation “Cease and Desist” letters; researched and issued 169 Post tax letters; reviewed 112 DD-214’s; attended 6 TAL Divisional meetings; attended 12 Special Committee meetings; participated in 8 various trademark activities; assisted the Ladies Auxiliary on 3 contracts and 18 opinions; attended 3 Ladies Auxiliary meetings (including their National Convention); performed 42.50 hours of Ladies Auxiliary work; attended 3 Retirement committee events; attended 1 Citizens Flag Amendment meetings; visited 5 Districts and/or Posts; and attended, taught classes at and spoke at 2 Department Conventions amongst varies other duties as your National Judge Advocate.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Louis J. Celli Jr., Massachusetts

Executive Director of Government and Veterans Affairs

James Baca, New Mexico

Executive Director of Marketing and Communications

Executive Director Louis Celli is the liaison with all government agencies, in particular those associated with veterans affairs and benefits.

Executive Director James Baca is responsible for corporate development, marketing and media outreach.

MAIL

June 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018

Incoming Letters and Parcels (distributed to Divisions for processing).....	858,340
Incoming Parcels.....	3,415
Outgoing Letters/Parcels (Exclusive of National Emblem Sales).....	8,188,192

FREIGHT AND EXPRESS

June 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018

Out – Cartons.....	4,374
Out – Pounds.....	41,253
UPS – In.....	1,602
UPS – Out.....	6,076

LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Howard Trace, Director

The mission of The American Legion Library is to provide an information storage and retrieval system for The American Legion. Indexing of documents continues, and internal and external materials are added to the collection regularly.

The Digital Archive continues to grow at a rapid pace and includes more than 8,200 items. Sixty-two cubic feet of archival records were transferred from other divisions to the archives. Three exhibit cases were replaced and two new exhibits, on chaplains and WWII resource conservation, were placed in the museum. Work continues on the photo collection, with over 10,000 photos reviewed, to provide better accessibility and protection of these highly requested materials.

A number of researchers made extensive visits to the library. Areas of research involved American Legion Baseball, foreign relations, and department activities.

Books and Pamphlets cataloged	375
Museum Collection Items Added or Assessed	789
Items added to Digital Archive.....	2,979

Rolls of Microfilm Duplicated.....	368
Correspondence Written by National Historian.....	485
Correspondence Written by Staff.....	879
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Sent.....	862
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Received.....	264

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Library and Museum

Donated by Dr. Robert Thune: Commemorative coin – 1981 Korean War proof silver dollar; Book, *This Republic of Suffering*; Book, *McClellan's War*; Book, *Winfield Scott and the Profession of Arms*; Book, *How They Won the War in the Pacific*; Fort McHenry War of 1812, set of 20 stamps; New Orleans, War of 1812, set of 20 stamps; 1936-37 Army & Navy postage stamps; Civil War 1863 First day of issue – Vicksburg Postage Stamps; Genius paper clip holder; George Rogers Clark National Historical Park commemorative coin; Oglala Sioux Tribe Code Talker commemorative coin; Reissue of 1898 Trans-Mississippi exposition sheet of 9 postage stamps; Book, *The Heart of Everything That Is*; Book, *Sequoyah's Gift*; Book, *Geronimo*; Book, *Little Phil*; Book, *Sherman's March*; Book, *Surgeon in Blue*; Book, *The Navajo Code Talkers*; Sequoyah plate of 8 stamps, 1980.

Donated by Douglas C. Haggan: Physical and electronic version of The American Legion, Department of France history 1920 to 2018, 1 bound volume and 2 digital files; History of Paris Post 1 Mausoleum, 1 digital file; FODPAL records; Vanity plate from Post No. 123, Department of the Philippines.

Donated by John Cook: Sons of The American Legion cap from Tommy Wingate.

Donated by Deborah A. Davis: Registration coupon book from 1933 National Convention.

Donated by Bonnie Reno: Memorabilia of Legionnaire Frank A. Griffin.

Donated by MacKay, Idaho Post 16: 1919 copy of the constitution of The American Legion.

Donated by Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.: First and last pages of and the pen used to sign the Court of Veterans Appeals Act.

Donated by Gunnar M. Berg: 1928 National Convention program.

Donated by Colleen Wahlgren: 1963 Oratory Award medal.

Donated by Douglas and Rachael Lowe: 1919-1935 American Legion material from the papers of Lt. Colonel Frank W. Smith.

Donated by Pat Evans: *Let's Be Right on Flag Etiquette*, 1943 American Legion pamphlet.

Donated by Capt. Geoff Lee: 1954 National Convention souvenir cigar.

Donated by Timothy L. Sheaf: Medal of Honor booklet published by The American Legion in the 1940s.

Donated by Brad Mitsch: 6 film reels of American Legion Parades.

Donated by Roberta (Robbie) Purner: Material from Wallace Seth Beden's 1937 trip to Europe with The American Legion.

Donated by the family of Mary Vader McNamara: papers, awards, and memorabilia, including a baton, related to American Legion Drum & Bugle Corps competition.

Donated by the Genealogical Society of Marion County: History of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

Donated by Susan Ashcraft: American Legion School Award Medal.

Donated by David L. Taber: American Legion Rehabilitation Program stamps, 1952.

Donated by John F. Moran in memory of Joseph Hedges: October 4, 1937 issue of *Life* magazine featuring The American Legion.

Donated by Commander Steve Fosness for Lee C. Prentice American Legion Post #36 (Fairmont, MN): gavel used at The American Legion Caucus in St. Louis, MO, May 8-10, 1919.

AMERICANISM COMMISSION

Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut, Chairman

Jill Druskis, Nebraska, Director

The Americanism Commission of The American Legion was created by a recommendation adopted by the National Convention of The American Legion held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1919. It read: "We recommend the establishment of a National Americanism Commission of The American Legion whose duty it shall be to endeavor to realize in the United States the basic ideal of this Legion of 100 percent Americanism through the planning, establishment and conduct of a continuous, constructive educational system."

It is the objective of the Americanism Commission to translate Americanism precepts, principles and ideals in a clear and practical manner to Legion posts and other groups and individuals, including young Americans.

While the Americanism program consists of a broad, objective, general plan that features wide-range community service, and sound citizenship and youth development, the efforts of the Americanism Commission are educational in nature and embrace these specific objectives:

- Promote understanding of the principles of democratic governmental problems, and bringing more citizens to think seriously of the duties of citizenship;
- Give sound, practical service in our communities, working to make these communities better and safer places in which to live;
- Emphasize religion, encouraging its continuation in the life of every citizen;
- Encourage education in every possible manner, presenting school awards and scholarships, sponsoring and conducting oratorical contests, cooperating with education and citizenship groups, promoting proper flag etiquette and display, and sponsoring objective youth development programs;
- Do important work for the youth of America, sponsoring American Legion Baseball, American Legion High School Oratorical Contest, American Legion Boys State, American Legion Boys Nation, American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program, American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement, Boy Scouts of America activities, and many other citizenship and objective training activities;
- Work for the assimilation of immigrants through schools of citizenship and other agencies and stand for the regulation of immigration so that this assimilation may approach perfection.

Additionally, the Americanism Commission has continued to be actively involved in legislative matters affecting our way of life. Among our legislative priorities are voluntary prayer in public buildings and establishing English as the official language of the United States. Two current legislative initiatives of The American Legion are: (1) the continuing efforts to effect a constitutional amendment that would give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws, and (2) coordinating a nationwide effort to combat the secular cleansing of our American heritage through Establishment Clause lawsuits.

This commission has the responsibility for supervision and coordination of four standing committees: Baseball Committee, Committee on Children & Youth, Committee on Youth Education and Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Committee.

The following is a summary of several programs, which are the responsibility of the Americanism Commission and have been conducted during the 2017-2018 American Legion program year.

American Legion Boys State/Boys Nation

The American Legion believes that if the United States is to maintain its form of government, it must have a citizenry that has a fundamental understanding and interest in its operation. This is what The American Legion Boys State program does for the young men of our nation. It teaches the fundamentals of American government through the state level.

It was 83 years ago that Legionnaires in the state of Illinois first recognized the need for a program that would help high school boys understand and appreciate the government they were learning about in the classroom. It was a time in the history of this nation when un-American ideas seriously threatened its future. Established in 1935, the whole idea of American Legion Boys State, then and now, is to show young people that beyond a doubt, our form of government is good; however, its preservation depends upon intelligent, informed and loyal citizens, in combination with an honest and impartial administration of government activities.

Ten years after the inception of Boys State as a program of The American Legion, the National Organization recognized the need for a similar program at the national level and in 1946, established American Legion Boys Nation. This year, it celebrated its 72st anniversary session.

Both Boys State and Boys Nation are unique programs of The American Legion that emphasize participation and personal experience in a respective model “state” and “nation” that is complete with its governing bodies and elected officials.

Each year, nearly 20,000 young Americans take part in American Legion Boys State, and throughout its over 80-year history, the program has graduated well over 1,900,000 young men.

Every year, each Boys State selects two outstanding graduates to represent them at American Legion Boys Nation. In 2018, the program was, again, held in Washington, D.C., July 20-27, and it introduced delegates to the structure and function of the federal government first-hand.

The week of government training in the nation’s capital combines lectures and forums with visitations to federal agencies and institutions, shrines and historical points in and about Washington, D.C. Actual participation in the political process is highlighted through the week to include the organization of party conventions and the nomination and election of an American Legion Boys Nation president and vice president. In addition to federal legislators and representatives of federal agencies, American Legion officials and other leaders of national distinction participate in American Legion Boys Nation. Joshua Cheadle, of California was elected President and Aabid Alikhan Razvi of Texas was elected Vice President of the 2018 session of American Legion Boys Nation.

Boy Scouts of America

The American Legion chartered more than 2,400 Scout units in communities across the country involving over 63,000 young people in the past year. Its commitment to the principles of Scouting dates back to the Legion's first National Convention in 1919.

The American Legion continues to support the Boy Scouts of America because of its unique ability to provide opportunities to young people for leadership training, peer fellowship, life skills development and community service.

The American Legion selected Michael Anker from Colorado, as its 2018 Eagle Scout of the Year. Selection was based on his outstanding religious, school, community and scouting achievements. He will receive a \$10,000 scholarship from The American Legion.

The three runners-up are Benjamin Kelley of Wisconsin; Koen Weaver of New York; and Jacob Sykora of Nebraska. Each will receive a \$2,500 scholarship.

In addition, an estimated 8,000 certificates honoring new Eagle Scout recipients are distributed annually.

Since its inception in 2003, there have been 631 American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion members who have received the Scouting

“Square Knot” award to recognize their dedication and work to assist in furthering the Scouting programs of The American Legion.

Citizenship and Naturalization

Citizenship & Naturalization efforts of Americanism include: (1) promoting grassroots involvement at the post level in understanding, appreciating and actively participating in the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship and American government; (2) developing new ideas and initiatives aimed at promoting grassroots involvement at the post level in assimilating prospective citizens/legal immigrants into local communities and American society; and (3) monitoring and maintaining a portfolio of resolutions specific to the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship and the assimilation and naturalization of prospective citizens/legal immigrants.

The Americanism Commission strongly urges American Legion posts, districts and departments (states) to undertake activities and collaborate with the U.S. Office of Citizenship and Immigration Services to help newly arriving legal immigrants and legal residents become assimilated and seek citizenship. To assist with this effort, The American Legion has produced a booklet entitled *Citizenship Outreach Guide* that is available online at www.legion.org/publications.

Flag Education

The American Legion is a nationally recognized authority on the proper display of the United States Flag. Each year, thousands of letters, phone calls and electronic mail messages are routinely answered giving factual information on the display, use of and respect for the American Flag.

The American Legion continues distribution and sale of *For Which It Stands*, a multimedia instructional resource about the history of the flag of the United States, the significance and meaning of our flag and respecting and caring for our flag. It is intended primarily for use with students in the upper elementary and middle/junior high school grades.

Additionally, the publication *Let's Be Right on Flag Etiquette* and the pamphlet, *Flag of the United States -- How to Display It, How to Respect It* are distributed annually to schools, organizations and individuals. This information is provided at little cost to those requesting it.

The American Legion continues publication of *Our Country's Flag*, an educational comic book for use in elementary schools. Well over one million copies have been distributed since the booklet was introduced in 1988. The educational booklet, *I Pledge Allegiance*, published in May 1995, is also for use in elementary schools. *Our Country's Veterans* was added to The American Legion's list of educational publications in 2005.

Over 48,000 individuals and organizations are subscribed to The American Legion Flag Alert, which provides an e-mail notification when the flag of the United States is to be displayed throughout the entire country at half-staff.

The American Legion continues its campaign to protect the United States flag from physical desecration. All 50 state legislatures have passed memorializing resolutions in support of a constitutional amendment to give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws. Working with other organizations of the American Legion-founded Citizens Flag Alliance, The American Legion shepherded a flag protection Constitutional amendment through the House of Representatives six times in the past seven Congresses. In June of 2006, The American Legion spearheaded the drive for the amendment in the U.S. Senate, coming within one vote of passage there. The legislation was introduced, again, in the 115th Congress.

High School Oratorical Contest

The American Legion has awarded over three million dollars in college scholarships since 1938 to high school students participating in its annual High School Oratorical Contest.

Each contestant must give a prepared oration on some phase of the United States Constitution, giving emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government. The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant, taking not less than eight nor more than ten minutes for delivery. Each contestant must also give an assigned topic presentation on a constitutional topic (randomly selected during the contest from the four topics for the contest year) taking not less than three or more than five minutes for delivery.

Funds totaling \$138,000 in college scholarships are available to national level contestants from each department, with the top winner receiving an \$18,000 scholarship. Funds for these awards are provided by The American Legion. In addition to the scholarships awarded by the National Organization, there are scholarships awarded by intermediate organizations of The American Legion to participants in local levels of competition.

The 81st Annual National Oratorical Finals Contest was held at Indianapolis, Indiana, in April 2018 with 53 department finalists competing. The three finalists were: First place – Carlissa Frederich of Kentucky, sponsored by American Legion Post 73; second place – Emily Parker of Minnesota, who was sponsored by American Legion Post 566; and third place – Nathan York of California, sponsored by American Legion Post 255. The American Legion continues to enjoy a mutually-beneficial relationship with the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA). The American Legion exhibited during the NSDA National Tournament in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in June 2018. Nearly 200 elite speech and debate students and coaches provided contact information to The American Legion seeking information about the 2018-2019 Oratorical Contest.

Junior Shooting Sports Program

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program is a national Americanism program administered through post-sponsored Junior Shooting Clubs. The purpose of the program is to provide rifle safety and marksmanship training for young people and to offer a wholesome recreational activity through organized competition. The Junior Shooting Sports program has more than 1,550 active clubs with almost 15,000 young people participating annually.

The 28th Annual Junior Three Position Air Rifle National Championship was conducted July 24 – 28, 2018, at the USA Shooting range facility on the campus of the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The tournament climaxed two rounds of postal matches which began in November 2017 and involved nearly 1,400 entrants.

The competition was divided into two categories: precision three position air rifle and sporter three position air rifle. Medals and plaques were awarded in both categories, as well as in each of the prone, kneeling and standing positions.

The two marksmen to win national titles for the 2018 The American Legion's Junior 3-Position Air Rifle National Championship were Jared Eddy of Georgia (precision) and Bailey Hoenig of Illinois (sporter). Each received scholarships totaling \$5,000 from The American Legion and the Sons of The American Legion.

Service to God and Country

A program of fundamental Americanism, "Service to God and Country," seeks to prevent the spiritual decay of America by charging the electorate with a spirit of unquestionable Americanism, respect for law, reverence for authority and awareness of our human rights and freedoms.

“Service to God” emphasizes regular public worship, daily family prayer and the religious education of children, while “Service to Country” attempts to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation. These objectives are aimed at preparing young Americans to take up tomorrow’s responsibilities by teaching them moral and spiritual values, renewed interest in our Country’s history, self-discipline, self-reliance, ideals of loyalty and honesty.

Each year, a conference for the department chaplains of The American Legion is held under the direction of its National Chaplain. Program information is provided for further dissemination to district and post chaplains who coordinate the program at the local level.

Troop and Family Support

The American Legion Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) program was established to support wounded, injured, and ill service members and their families during times of recovery and transition, and time of need. The program fills in the voids of comfort and recreational items that do not show up as a line item on any military or hospital budget spreadsheet. While the care in our military hospitals and transitional units is second to none, the little things can make a big difference. OCW may provide things such as loose fitting clothing to ease the pressure on a wound or pool tables and electronic dart boards to offer some distractions and camaraderie building.

Much of the equipment granted is to empower our service members to engage in positive activities that will enhance and expedite their recovery and return to their original duty stations or to transition home better prepared. Some of the equipment given has included, fishing gear, paddle boards, baseball and softball equipment, weights and resistance bands, as well as 2-person kayaks and a new organ for the chapel at a medical facility. OCW also helped provide new baby wellness kits to women veterans in 50 VA medical hospitals across the country. Our goal is to support our nation’s wounded, injured or ill service members and veterans in a manner that will help enhance their progress and increase their likelihood of better outcomes.

Operation Comfort Warriors staff have provided support to service members and Department of Defense medical facilities at; Brooke Army Navy Medical Hospital (TX), Walter Reed National Medical Center at Bethesda (MD) and the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (Germany) .

Additional support has been provided at multiple Veterans Affairs Medical Centers across the nation including New York City, San Diego, Anchorage, Minneapolis, Albuquerque, and Washington D.C., to highlight several of the locations. This is not an all-inclusive list, but rather a sampling to demonstrate the outreach efforts of the program.

Family is an enormous part of the process for our wounded, injured, and ill service members. OCW provides outings to amusement parks such as Six Flags Fiesta Texas where the service member is encouraged to bring their spouse and children or significant other to the outing and enjoy the day away from the hospital and recharge themselves with some fresh air and fun activities. OCW also hosts quarterly dinners in Washington DC in which approximately 25 patients and their families are hosted to a steak dinner typically held at the National Press Club. Along with the steak dinner there are door prizes for the patients and their family members accompanying them to show appreciation for their service and sacrifices.

The most important detail about Operation Comfort Warriors is that 100% of all donations go to the fund supporting the wounded, injured, and ill service members. Donations are not used to pay for program administration, staffing, salaries, marketing, or travel expenses.

The planning for purchases and outings based upon information from a medical facility or unit administrators and medical professionals. OCW does not simply show up with a bunch of random items. OCW staff completes extensive outreach efforts with the facilities and installations to find how the OCW program can specifically help them in their missions and how we can support their patients. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions for

our wounded, injured, and ill service members, and there should not be a one-size-fits-all approach in our support of their service and sacrifices.

Family support network (FSN): Since September 11, 2001, active duty, National Guard and Reserve units have been activated in record numbers. As a result, the families of these service men and women often find themselves unable to meet normal monthly household obligations. Assistance is needed for a variety of everyday tasks and expenses. These needs range from routine household chores, grocery shopping, and childcare, to ensuring that the grass is mowed for the expecting mother whose husband is serving abroad.

To actively address these issues, The American Legion created the Family Support Network. Military families can request assistance by calling a nationwide toll-free telephone number, 1-800-504-4098, for service personnel and their families to call for assistance. Families can also request assistance electronically through the Legion's web site at www.legion.org/familysupport. All requests are referred to The American Legion department, or state, in which the call originated. Departments relay the collected information to a local American Legion post. The post then contacts the service member or family to see how assistance can be provided locally. Since the creation of the Family Support Network in 1990, countless posts have responded to meet these families' needs. Last year there were over 2,200 requests received just at the national level for family support network assistance, with untold others having been received at local post and state levels.

As our forces pursue the enemies of freedom around the globe, The American Legion supports our men and women in uniform and their families with the Family Support Network. Those of us in The American Legion, who served our nation in times of adversity, remember how it felt to be separated from those we love. The Family Support Network is successful as a direct result of Legionnaires, at the post level in communities, responding to the needs of our comrades and their families. As the nation's largest veteran's service organization, our commitment to the men and women of our armed forces and their families is absolute. As a grateful nation, we must ensure that no family endures hardships caused by military service that protects American ideals and freedom.

BASEBALL COMMITTEE.

Gary Stone, Missouri, Chairman
Steve Cloud, Indiana, Program Manager

American Legion Baseball's 92nd World Series tournament took place August 16-21, in Shelby, North Carolina, on Veterans Field at Keeter Stadium and was hosted by American Legion Post 82. After having experienced a tremendously successful year in 2016, ESPNU subsequently agreed to expand the live television coverage of the weekend events to now also include Saturday's Military Appreciation Day in addition to the previously broadcasted semifinals and championship. The remaining six games were webcast live on ESPN3.

The 93rd season of American Legion Baseball saw 3,486 teams registered to play American Legion Baseball. Approximately 60,000 players, representing 49 states and Canada, wore a Legion baseball uniform this year.

More than \$7 million in sponsorship fees are spent on American Legion Baseball teams by the local posts. One million dollars is appropriated by The American Legion National Organization to conduct eight regional tournaments and the World Series of American Legion Baseball.

The 2017 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year was Shane Spencer, of the 2017 American Legion World Series championship team from Henderson, Nevada, American Legion Post 40.

Many American Legion players have gone on to distinguish themselves in Major League Baseball and have been honored with election to the Hall of Fame. Seventy-seven

Hall of Fame members played American Legion Baseball, including the 2018 inductees Trevor Hoffman, Chipper Jones, Jack Morris, Jim Thome and Alan Trammell. Other American Legion Alumni inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame include Tony Gwynn, Tom Seaver, Johnny Bench, Carl Yastrzemski, Brooks Robinson, and Paul Molitor.

American Legion Baseball became fully Pitch Smart compliant, following an initiative supported by Major League Baseball and USA Baseball. Pitch Smart features a series of practical, age-appropriate guidelines to help parents, players and coaches avoid overuse injuries and foster long, healthy careers for youth pitchers. In addition, American Legion Baseball participated in three “Play Ball” events, part of a Major League Baseball initiative focused on engaging youth players.

A total of 34 states have joined the American Legion Baseball department website network, using the powerful web presence of SportsEngine, an NBC Sports company, to create department-specific websites. This will help departments promote their programs, share information and fundraise. Coverage of the regional tournaments and American Legion World Series have also migrated to that platform to allow for user-friendly following of the events.

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & YOUTH
Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Louisiana, Chairman
Meagen L. Sweet, Indiana, Program Manager

The American Legion has been a staunch supporter of America’s children and youth since the organization’s founding in 1919. The young people of our nation continue to be of paramount concern to the Committee on Children & Youth, as its commitment strengthens and it seeks ways to improve the well-being of all children.

Through the decades that followed our founding, The American Legion became a strong advocate for children's rights and has remained at the forefront of the child welfare movement. The early years were devoted to progressive childcare and protection programs. Through the efforts of The American Legion and its affiliated organizations – the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion, as well as supporting independent organizations such as the Eight & Forty – many states and communities improved their own child welfare provisions.

The development of new and expanded public programs designed to provide economic security for children made it possible for our organization to turn its attention to other problems affecting young people. To date there is no area of child welfare that has gone untouched by the collective hand of The American Legion. The very program of Children & Youth itself is unique from any agency – private or governmental – in its ability to expand into every area of concern for child welfare and child health.

As stated in a 1924 resolution adopted by the National Executive Committee, The American Legion "has and will do everything possible to perpetuate 'A SQUARE DEAL FOR EVERY CHILD'". This remains our ultimate goal and the definitive challenge for the years ahead.

To attain this goal, The American Legion, in 1925, adopted the "Whole Child" plan, which states: "every child should have a home, health, education, character and opportunity". Its foundation is based on three guiding principles:

1. To strengthen the family unit against the forces of today's complex society, recognizing that the most normal environment for children is a home with their own parents;
2. To commend sound organizations and facilities that provide services for children and youth;
3. To maintain a well-rounded program that meets the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs of today's young people. Stated certainly for

future endeavors, this third principle has provided the flexibility to address all matters of child health and child welfare.

While these principles represent the heart of the "Whole Child" plan, the muscle depends on our four Guidelines for Action, working together:

1. PREVENTION – Finding solutions to obstacles before they become long-lasting problems;
2. EDUCATION – Providing information to our members and the general public on timely issues involving children and youth;
3. LEGISLATION – Maintaining knowledge of new and existing laws, needed amendments, and the administration of laws that affect young people at the national, state and local levels;
4. MATERIAL AID – Providing direct assistance in the form of cash, clothing, food and time.

During the past 99 years, The American Legion's Children & Youth Programs have contributed to significant advancements in the area of child welfare. While our list of achievements is extensive, it is by no means complete. The American Legion has and will maintain a deep, community-centered interest in children in order to find new, and perhaps presently unknown, approaches to child welfare problems. There is no way of knowing what issues will face our youth tomorrow. Our survival may well depend upon the quality of care, education and training that we, as parents and citizens, provide for all children today.

The American Legion is proud of its Legionnaires, and the members of its affiliated and supporting organizations, as well as their achievements on behalf of our nation's youth. Their efforts in the area of child welfare are a living testament to the ability of an organization of free men and women to adapt itself to evolving needs, while maintaining high principles and taking on increased responsibilities under those principles.

2017-2018 Programs

The American Legion has demonstrated a strong concern for the safety of this nation's young people since the early 1920s. In 1992, the Committee on Children & Youth designated the Child Safety program as one of its annual programs. Legion volunteers regularly disseminate information to parents, children and community leaders regarding the issue of safety. Making children safety conscious, in the home and outside, is necessary to assure that they have an opportunity to play and grow into useful adults and citizens.

As long as Halloween activities are sponsored and promoted in our various communities by duly appointed and elected officials, the Committee on Children & Youth of The American Legion believes that children and parents should know how to make this observance as safe as possible. To assist in this effort, the Committee on Children & Youth produces and distributes a brochure, "Make Halloween a Fun and Safe Night," to educate children and parents about trick-or-treat safety.

Accidents are the leading cause of death and disability among our nation's youth. Annually, nearly 20,000 children under the age of 19 die in automobile crashes, fires, through the improper use of firearms and drowning. In homes, playgrounds and parks, the potential for serious injury is always present. To help educate the public, the Committee on Children & Youth produces and distributes "Play it Safe", a brochure to inform parents about the six most common causes of death among children and prevention strategies.

As a major threat to the welfare of our nation's youth, The American Legion is very concerned about youth suicide. It continues to be the third largest cause of death among 15- to 24-year-olds. The suicide rate among adolescents has grown steadily over the last four decades, quadrupling since 1960, and over 4,000 young people take their own lives every year. Suicide is a senseless tragedy but may be preventable. The Committee on Children & Youth produces and distributes a brochure entitled "Know the Warning Signs of Youth Suicide", designed to assist youth and adults in understanding some of the warning signs and facts about suicide.

The American Legion is also mindful of the pressures facing young people today, as well as the destructive consequences of drug use. Alcohol, tobacco, inhalants and marijuana are often readily available and considered to be the entryway to a life of drug dependency and delinquency. Gateway drugs are so-called because the use of these drugs often leads to drug abuse, addiction and to the use of other drugs such as heroin, cocaine and LSD. The teenage years are challenging and pressure from peers to use drugs can be extremely intense; however, individuals are ultimately responsible for their own behavior. Decisions made today can have far-reaching effects on one's life for years to come. To help combat this problem and educate our nation's youth about the dangers of gateway drugs, the Committee produces and distributes a brochure titled "Gateway Drugs...Choose not to Use". This tool can equip parents and children with the facts of gateway drugs and help children lead a healthy lifestyle.

As sure as The American Legion is the largest veterans' organization in the world, there are veterans' families who require assistance. Possibly the rent is overdue or the children are hungry because a parent is sick, disabled, deceased or has deserted the family. Whatever the reason, these children become the concern of The American Legion, and the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program is the vital tool our organization uses to help meet the maintenance and health needs of veterans' children.

Begun in 1925 as a form of direct aid to veteran's children, TFA remains unique in the social-work field even today and is still a very active program. During the 2017-2018 program year, in fact, the program aided 933 children with over \$588,434 in grants.

Made possible by the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation, the TFA program is used to assist families in meeting the costs of shelter, food, utilities and medical needs when the parents are unable to do so, thereby helping to keep the child(ren) in a more stable home environment. Through TFA, an American Legion post may call upon the The American Legion for cash assistance to help meet the basic needs of veterans' children. Funds can be granted over a temporary period to eligible children when it has been determined by investigation that the child is in need and that no other sources are available, or those that are available are inadequate.

The minor child must not be older than 17, or 20 if still enrolled in high school or is physically handicapped. The minor child must be the biological child, stepchild, or in the legal custody of, a qualifying veteran. A qualifying veteran is defined as a member of the United States Armed Forces serving on federal orders current under Title 10 of the United States Code, inclusive of all components, OR any veteran possessing an up-to-date membership in The American Legion. Active duty applicants can be considered without being a member of The American Legion. A single onetime non-repayable Temporary Financial Assistance grant of up to \$1,500 is permitted for the minor child(ren) of a qualifying veteran.

Legislative Efforts

The initiation and support of worthwhile Children & Youth legislation is one means by which the Committee on Children & Youth has attempted to accomplish its goals during the 2017-2018 program year. The following summarized resolutions are a sampling of the children & youth resolutions previously approved during the 2016 National Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, as part of the legislative program of The American Legion for the 115th Congress:

Financially Assist Families Faced By Catastrophic Illness Of Their Children: Res. 278. It has long been our position that all children should have adequate health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well-being. Unfortunately, many of our nation's children are not receiving the necessary medical care due to the extreme requirements placed on the financial abilities of the average family. Consequently, children with severe catastrophic illnesses are not receiving the needed medical care. The rising cost of medical care in such cases is not covered by even the best medical policies. The American Legion believes that the state and federal governments should enact legislation

to financially assist those families faced by catastrophic illness to the end that the family will not be financially devastated.

Support Funding Comprehensive Health Care for Children & Youth Programs: Res. 279. Many of our nation's children continue to face health needs that are not properly addressed due to the high cost of our health care delivery system. The American Legion continues to support and endorse the programs as outlined by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau as authorized under Title V of the Social Security Act and urges the Congress of the United States to continue its support by adequately funding these programs, including the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant, the Healthy Start Initiative, Emergency Medical Services for Children Program and the Abstinence Education Program.

Support Funding For All Drug Trafficking Prevention Programs: Res. 280. We realize that one of the best methods to attack the drug problem is from the demand side, but this resolution urges funding for all necessary areas and agencies that can help reduce the quantity of the substances that are being made available in this country. By working at both ends of the problem, we can make a difference in the number of users and decrease demand.

Oppose Any Attempt to Weaken Present Laws Governing Penalties for the Production, Sale and Distribution of Pornographic or Obscene Materials to Minors: Res. 282. As there have been attempts to eliminate protective laws from the criminal code regarding the production, distribution and sale of pornographic and obscene literature, The American Legion is strongly opposed to any attempt to weaken existing laws.

Urge The President and Congress To Establish "National Family Week": Res. 283. One of the basic principles of the children and youth program is to maintain the integrity of the family home. In today's fast-paced society, it is critical that we seek to recognize the importance of strengthening the basic unit of our country: the family. No institution can take the place of the family in giving meaning to human life and stability to our society. We urge the President and the Congress to establish National Family Week on a permanent basis during the Thanksgiving holiday week.

Urge Congress To Appropriate Sufficient Funds For School Nutrition Program: Res. 285. The American Legion again reaffirms its position that the Congress of the United States and the various state legislatures be urged to appropriate sufficient funds for school nutrition programs. This is necessary to reflect the increased cost of food and to provide for needed facilities and trained personnel for the purpose of conducting an adequate school lunch program.

These are the highlights of our 2017-2018 Children & Youth legislative program. The American Legion's Committee on Children & Youth continually urges departments to support Children & Youth legislation as it relates to our national objectives. Local posts are also encouraged to support city ordinances that deal with the community's efforts to improve conditions for children and youth. The Children & Youth legislative program is a never-ending struggle, which we eagerly accept for the sake of all children.

Children & Youth Expenditures

Annually, as it has for the past 95 years, the Committee on Children & Youth records activities from The American Legion Family – nearly 13,000 posts of The American Legion, over 6,000 squadrons of The Sons of The American Legion, over 4,000 units of the American Legion Auxiliary, and hundreds of salons of the Eight and Forty. In addition, the expenditures of departments and of the National Organization are obtained for the 12-month period of June 1, 2017 through May 31, 2018, and combined with these reports (see Table No. 1).

During the reporting period, the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation recorded \$562,053 in donations from members of The American Legion Family and individuals across the country. During the same period, our Temporary Financial Assistance program expended over \$588,434 in grants (see Table No. 2) to 933 children of 433 veterans. For the 2017-2018 Children & Youth programs year, including contributions

to the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, posts, squadrons, units and departments of The American Legion and its affiliated and supporting organizations reported a grand total of \$13,734,032 in expenditures and contributions to benefit the children of America.

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH EDUCATION

Mike Bredeck, Minnesota, Chairman

Tyler Mitchell, Indiana, Assistant Director

In 2016, The American Legion added an additional class of recipients to The American Legion Legacy Scholarship; the children of Post-9/11 veterans assigned a disability rating of 50% or greater by the Department of Veterans Affairs. With children of fallen Post-9/11 service members remaining the top priority, the goal of the scholarship was to fill financial aid gaps in education.

More money was awarded in 2018 than any other year. This is credited in part by a modified application system that gave applicants examples of what was required to apply and a more streamlined process. For 2018, \$744,436 was made available for awards. All but \$482 was awarded to applicants. A total of 41 applicants were awarded a scholarship.

These awards may be used for undergraduate or graduate-level education at a nonprofit and regionally-accredited institution of higher learning. In addition to the American Legion Legacy Scholarship, our scholarship programs include the American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship, Boys Nation Scholarship, Junior Shooting Sports Scholarship, Eagle Scout of the Year Scholarship, American Legion Baseball Leadership and All-Academic Team Scholarships and the Samsung American Legion Scholarship.

In 2016, The American Legion's Alliance with Samsung Electronics was enhanced when Samsung provided a 3-year grant to The American Legion, which during 2016-2017 has allowed expansion of recognition for Samsung American Legion Scholarship Alumni and continued development of a Samsung American Legion alumni association. Samsung gifted The American Legion with a \$5 million endowment in 1996 to fund scholarships for decedents of Korean War Veterans. Samsung continues to believe in The American Legion's visionary leadership for educating and growing patriotism in the youth of America.

The American Legion continues to believe that education is key to a united and informed citizenry. As such, we strive to improve our scholarships, education programs and youth development programs in a manner showing our dedication to the education of America's youth. The promotion of Americanism to our future leaders threads throughout every American Legion scholarship and program. The resources that we provide to our Legion Family and communities at-large are specifically developed to aid in the expansion and culturing of such values among 21st-century youth.

YOUTH CADET LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE

Larry L. Price, South Dakota Chairman

Shayne Abrahams, Sr., Indiana, Assistant Director

The American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement (YCLE) program is an excellent vehicle through which young people may be empowered to realize early on that peace officers stand as staunch supporters for moral and legal rights, and that the dedication and impact they have within local our communities, states, and nation should be regarded with respect and appreciation. The YCLE program serves as an influential stepping stone for those high school students considering a career in law enforcement as they become familiar first-hand with professional practices and concepts of policing during a week-long program conducted at a law enforcement training academy.

There are currently twenty-one departments that offer an YCLE program: Arizona; Connecticut; Delaware; Florida; Illinois; Indiana; Kansas; Massachusetts; Michigan;

Minnesota; Missouri; Oregon; Nebraska; North Carolina; Ohio; Pennsylvania; South Carolina; South Dakota; Vermont; Virginia; and Wisconsin. The American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Committee was formed in order to develop strategies and methodologies for promoting the YCLE program and its growth throughout the nation, as well as working toward an ultimate goal of pursuing the development of a national capstone program – the vision is that this national capstone program would be analogous of what The American Legion Boys Nation program is to The American Legion Boys State program. Materials are available on The American Legion website at www.legion.org/youthlaw providing information for American Legion departments working with law enforcement agencies to adopt and further promote the program.

AMERICANISM COMMISSION EXECUTIVE SECTION

Richard W. Anderson, Cromwell, Connecticut – Chairman
 Joseph E. Caouette, Rollinsford, New Hampshire – Chairman Emeritus
 Larry L. Price, Gettysburg, South Dakota – Vice-Chairman
 Douglas Boldt, Callaway, Nebraska – National Commander’s Representative
 Eugene Thompson, Marseilles, Illinois – Consultant
 Steve M. Tatro, Dunkirk, Maryland – Consultant
 Gary Stone, Independence, MO – Chairman, American Legion Baseball Committee
 Herbert J. Petit, Kenner, Louisiana – Chairman, Committee on Children & Youth
 Mike Bredeck, Madison, Minnesota – Chairman, Committee on Youth Education
 Larry L. Price, Gettysburg, South Dakota – Chairman, Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Committee

AMERICAN LEGION CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION, INC.

Dennis R. Boland, Florida, President
Meagen Sweet, Indiana, Executive Secretary

In 1954 The American Legion endorsed the separate incorporation of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Since then, the foundation has granted over \$15 million dollars to other non-profit youth-serving organizations. The foundation exists to contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth and to add to progress in the child welfare field through research, studies, surveys, projects or in other ways, including but not limited to all, youth activities now or hereafter sponsored by The American Legion.

At its annual meeting in October 2017, the board of directors approved \$636,467 in grants to 28 nonprofit organizations for projects to be completed in calendar year 2018. These grants were awarded to support youth-serving projects that seek to enhance the lives of children by addressing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of children. The following is a brief summary of the grants awarded:

Adoption Exchange Association of Linthicum, Maryland, was awarded \$9,192 for their project, “Every Child Deserves a Family”. This grant will provide a website to share useful information with other agencies to facilitate adoptions.

Angel Flight Soar, Inc. of Atlanta, Georgia, was awarded \$45,000 for their project; “Angel Flight Soars Website Revitalization and Native Pilot App” This grant will help redesign their website into a more patiently friendly website. A mobile app for the pilots will also be designed so that pilots may manage their flights better.

Art with Heart of Seattle, Washington, was awarded \$30,000 for their project, “Art with Heart as Partners in Possibility”. This project will provide therapeutic intervention to children that have suffered the loss of a parent, drug use or economic challenges. The American Legion Auxiliary supports this grant.

Arthritis Foundation, Inc. of Atlanta, Georgia, was awarded \$37,464 for their project, “JA Child Wellness Book”. This book will help children that have recently been diagnosed with Juvenile Arthritis to better understand their disease.

Association of Birth Defects Children of Orlando, Florida, was awarded \$15,140 for their project, "Community Resource Center" This project will create a section on their website that will be the contact point for other communities to learn how to investigate concerns and collect data about children with birth defects.

Autism Speaks of New York, New York, was awarded \$31,000 for their project, "Interactive Guide to Individual Education Programs for Children on the Autism Spectrum". This project will revamp the current Autism Speaks Guide and to include a video series highlighting experts on autism as well as adding interactive tools.

Camp Taylor, Inc. of Modesto, California, was awarded \$10,000 for their project, "2017 Youth and Teen Camp Program". This is free, three to five day, medically supervised camp for children with congenital heart defects. The camp uses 3D technology to help kids better understand their heart condition.

Children's Craniofacial Association of Dallas, Texas, was awarded \$32,000 for their project, "Wonder/Choose Kind". This project will publish and print 5,000 of their "Wonder" books. The book help teach children value, empathy, and tolerance for people who are different from themselves.

CJ First Candle of New Canaan, Connecticut, was awarded \$16,440 for their project, "Safe Infant Sleep in Childcare Settings" This project will update current brochure to include new recommendations on AAP safe sleep recommendations. The Sons of The American Legion support this grant.

Gratitude Initiative of Bryan, Texas, was awarded \$21,000 for their project, "Gratitude Initiative Promotional Video". This project will provide resources to high school students that are military dependents, about how to apply for college. The American Legion Auxiliary supports this grant.

Greater Washington Educational Telecommunications Association of Arlington, Virginia, was awarded \$25,000 for their project, "Helping Families Cope Successfully with Brain Injury". This project will create a Facebook ad campaign to provide comprehensive information and resources for those parents and or children who have suffered a traumatic brain injury.

Hope Flight Foundation- of Castro Valley, California, was awarded \$8,000 for their project, "Free Medical Flights for children with cancer and other life threatening illnesses..." This project will transport children with serious illnesses, and their families, from remote areas and fly them to the inner city hospitals for treatments. The Sons of the American Legion, Eight and Forty and the American Legion Auxiliary support this grant.

Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund of Oceanside, California, was awarded \$20,000 for their project, "2017 Semper Fi Fund Kids Camp" This project will send military kids to camp whose parent/s suffer from PTSD. The camp will have fun activities along with the emotional support for the children. The Sons of the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary support this grant.

Kansas Braille Transcription Institute of Wichita, Kansas, was awarded \$11,919 for their project, "Red Sight and Blue, I can SEE her too." This project will provide 2,550 blind students the opportunity to learn about the American flag and the patriotic ideas behind our great nation. The Sons of the American Legion support this grant.

Kids in Danger of Chicago, Illinois, was awarded \$5,000 for their project, "New Material to Reach New Audiences". This project will provide funding to update their KID Brochure, Sleep Safe Checklist and Step to Safety Magnet.

National Braille Press of Boston, Massachusetts, was awarded \$10,370 for their project, "Free Materials to Blind Children". This project will expose blind children to the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

PAB's Packs of Minneapolis, Minnesota, was awarded \$15,000 for their project, "Packs of Comfort for Chronically Ill Teens." This project will provide custom designed backpacks, filled with special comfort items, to chronically ill teens in the hospital. The Sons of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Eight and Forty support this grant.

Partnership for Food Safety Education of Arlington, VA, was awarded \$10,000 for their project, "Keeping Children Safe from Foodborne Illness". This grant will provide webinars that will bring attention to food borne illnesses, while also providing helpful resources to reduce the rate of foodborne illness among children.

Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps of Boston, Massachusetts, was awarded \$6,250 for their project, "Raising Awareness of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children." This grant will raise awareness of sexually exploited children and provide children with tools for prevention and intervention.

Saint Francis Community Services, Inc. of Salina, Kansas, was awarded \$20,000 for their project, "Awareness of Child Sexual Human Trafficking in the Heartland". This grant will create a video on human trafficking that will show individual stories of children and how they are coerced in to that lifestyle. The Sons of the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary both support this grant.

Songs of Love Foundation of Forest Hills, New York, was awarded \$25,000 for their project, "Songs of Love Outreach Project". This grant will provide personalized songs to seriously ill children up to the age of 21 at no charge to them. The Eight and Forty support this grant.

Talking about Curing Autism of Irvine, California, was awarded \$22,070 for their project "Autism Journey Guides and Educational Materials". This grant will offer educational support to families that have children with Autism. The education materials will give insight on life changing therapies, current research and statistics, and references for support networks to improve the long-term outcome.

The American Legion National Headquarters of Indianapolis, Indiana, was awarded \$55,500 for their project "2018 American Legion National Youth Programs Scholarships". This grant will provide academic scholarships to the following youth programs: Boys Nation, Junior Shooting Sports, Baseball and Eagle Scout of the Year. The Sons of the American Legion support this grant.

The American Legion National Headquarters of Indianapolis, Indiana was awarded \$75,000 for their project "The American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance Program-2018". This grant will provide temporary financial assistance to children of veteran's in need of shelter, food, utilities and clothing. The Sons of the American Legion support this grant.

The JAYC Foundation of Los Angeles, California, was awarded \$50,000 for their project "Communication and Mental Health Disorders in Children involved with Law Enforcement." This grant will help bridge the gap between law enforcement and children with mental disabilities. The educational materials will teach law enforcement officers what signs to look for in mentally ill children and provide them with information on how to interact with those children.

The National Children's Cancer Society of St. Louis, Missouri, was awarded \$6,715 for their project "Beyond the Cure: Preparing for life after Cancer." This grant will help children who have survived cancer and provide them with insight as to what happens next. It will also help prepare families for the long-term effects and survivorship and cancer.

The Progeria Research Foundation of Peabody, Massachusetts, was awarded \$18,331 for their project "Progeria Treatment Guidelines Handbook – 2nd Edition." This grant will update the book from the 2010 version. The book will contain the most recent research and findings along with the latest recommendations of children with progeria.

The Sage Hawk Foundation of Coffeyville, Kansas was awarded \$5,076 for their project "Sage Hawk Computer Literacy Program". This grant will provide a junior scholarship to a student with the highest GPA and a laptop computer to the student with the second highest GPA.

During program year 2017, donations exceeded \$562,053, with over \$327,594 coming from the Sons of The American Legion. Members of The American Legion family are the primary contributors to the success and growth of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Each member and local organization is encouraged to make an annual

contribution in support of the foundation. Financial support allows the foundation to continue funding projects that improve the quality of life for our nation's children. Every dollar given to the foundation is used for grants that assist young people.

At a board of directors meeting in Indianapolis on May 6, 2018, the following officers were elected: Dennis R. Boland of Florida, president; Peggy Moon of Minnesota, vice president; Joseph J. Frank of Missouri, secretary; and Robert S. Turner of Georgia, treasurer. Administrative personnel appointed by the board were George A. Buskirk Jr., assistant treasurer, and Meagen Sweet, executive secretary.

Under the 1969 Tax Reform Act, the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation retains its tax-exempt status. Gifts, therefore, are deductible for federal income tax purposes to the extent permitted by law, and bequests are deductible for federal inheritance tax purposes to the extent permitted by the Federal Tax Act.

AMERICAN LEGION ENDOWMENT FUND CORPORATION

William M. Detweiler, Louisiana, President

In 1925, World War I veterans, widows and children continued to struggle to return to a regular life. The members of The American Legion, aware of the vital responsibilities entrusted to them by those who had served, knew the time had come to take action. More than 900,000 Legionnaires, American Legion Auxiliary members and other American citizens joined the campaign, raising nearly \$5 million and establishing the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation.

Since those early days, over \$30 million has been distributed to disabled veterans and the children of those who served our great nation. Your gifts and donations are added to a trust that is administered by the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation. The corporation, whose members are selected by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion, takes great care to ensure that these gifts are wisely invested. Income from fund investments is then passed on to The American Legion national organization to administer programs of Children & Youth (C&Y) and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R), that include funding for the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program, Department Service Officer school and Board of Veterans Appeals training.

During calendar year 2017, the American Legion Endowment Fund transferred trust earnings of \$53,640 to The American Legion to support TFA. Donations to the American Legion Endowment Fund Donations during this time totaled \$190,498. It is important to note that due to the structure of the fund as an endowment; only the earnings on the fund are spent, ensuring that donations will continue to support veterans and their children for generations.

At a board of directors meeting in Indianapolis on May 8, 2018, the following officers were elected: William M. Detweiler of Louisiana, president; Hon. Vincent M. Gaughan of Illinois, vice president; and David P. Rook of Indiana, treasurer. Administrative personnel appointed by the board were George A. Buskirk Jr., assistant treasurer and Meagen Sweet, secretary.

Under the 1969 Tax Reform Act, the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation retains its tax-exempt status. Gifts, therefore, are deductible for federal income tax purposes to the extent permitted by law, and bequests are deductible for federal inheritance tax purposes to the extent permitted by the Federal Tax Act.

Table No. 1 Children & Youth Expenditures and Number of Children Served

Region and Department	Percentage of Total Expenditures	Temporary Financial Assistance by National	Contributions to Child Welfare Foundation by Posts and Units	Direct Aid from Posts, Units and Departments	Contributions to Other Child Serving Agencies by Legion and Auxiliary	Other Expenditures for Children by Legion and Auxiliary	Department Administrative Expense by Legion	Total Number of Children Served	Total Aid Legion Lines 3 thru 8
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
REGION 1									
Connecticut	80%	\$3,915.33	\$1,179.31	\$1,133.00	\$21,110.00	\$95,919.00	\$4.00	13,095	\$123,261
Maine	56%	\$0.00	\$125.00	\$30,187.00	\$22,419.00	\$32,118.00	\$1.00	11,243	\$84,850
Massachusetts	95%	\$0.00	\$1,219.00	\$5,749.00	\$61,388.00	\$131,461.00	\$6.00	34,011	\$199,823
New Hampshire	97%	\$1,467.74	\$2,165.72	\$23,960.00	\$18,161.00	\$155,562.00	\$4.00	26,675	\$201,331
Rhode Island	42%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,021.00	\$6,316.00	\$0.00	4,312	\$6,317
Vermont	80%	\$0.00	\$511.00	\$1,342.00	\$18,703.00	\$40,088.00	\$4.00	33,723	\$60,648
TOTAL:	80%	\$5,383.07	\$5,191.03	\$62,371.00	\$144,782.00	\$461,484.00	\$19.00	123,659	\$679,230
REGION 2									
Delaware	100%	\$4,350.94	\$2,130.00	\$150.00	\$11,311.00	\$10,245.00	\$0.00	21,226	\$28,187
D.C.	5%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$210.00	\$0.00	0	\$710
Maryland	77%	\$4,496.17	\$6,822.00	\$8,002.00	\$102,383.00	\$106,789.00	\$11.00	90,212	\$228,503
New Jersey	38%	\$2,500.00	\$1,536.53	\$36.00	\$88,889.00	\$103,488.00	\$14.00	28,981	\$196,464
New York	83%	\$5,625.00	\$3,897.88	\$69,560.00	\$293,183.00	\$937,316.00	\$41.00	137,779	\$1,299,658
Pennsylvania	49%	\$45,755.35	\$4,259.05	\$2,401.00	\$303,115.00	\$31,394.00	\$2.00	157,862	\$386,950
Virginia	95%	\$35,759.89	\$5,594.48	\$14,621.00	\$168,900.00	\$317,666.00	\$26.00	148,523	\$542,567
West Virginia	94%	\$9,550.12	\$808.00	\$5.00	\$42,639.00	\$88,650.00	\$38,803.00	19,045	\$180,455
TOTAL:	87%	\$108,037.47	\$25,047.82	\$94,810.00	\$1,000,920.00	\$1,995,758.00	\$38,921.00	603,228	\$2,863,494
REGION 3									
Alabama	100%	\$5,215.25	\$4,337.45	\$8,871.00	\$73,487.00	\$108,569.00	\$10.00	34,761	\$200,490
Florida	99%	\$69,801.86	\$49,964.00	\$40.00	\$366,401.00	\$178,667.00	\$33.00	211,953	\$664,007
Georgia	98%	\$5,730.45	\$110.00	\$9,897.00	\$997,821.00	\$140,587.00	\$0.00	64,756	\$1,154,085
Kentucky	78%	\$9,061.00	\$3,321.32	\$5,032.00	\$45,037.00	\$127,129.00	\$3.00	33,000	\$189,583
North Carolina	42%	\$34,061.13	\$2,581.00	\$1,006.00	\$87,288.00	\$3,219.00	\$7.00	16,165	\$128,162
South Carolina	54%	\$4,128.20	\$3,716.28	\$899.00	\$27,596.00	\$21,325.00	\$2,693.00	6,452	\$60,359
Tennessee	98%	\$15,167.11	\$1,083.58	\$72,003.00	\$161,811.00	\$50,636.00	\$32,222.00	38,506	\$333,923
TOTAL:	79%	\$143,165.00	\$65,113.61	\$97,658.00	\$1,759,443.00	\$530,131.00	\$25,998.00	405,886	\$2,621,509
REGION 4									
Arkansas	68%	\$0.00	\$600.00	\$241.00	\$17,994.00	\$228,567.00	\$7.00	10,484	\$247,409
Louisiana	8%	\$0.00	\$133.00	\$7.00	\$306.00	\$198.00	\$2,000.00	0	\$2,000
Mississippi	26%	\$3,713.50	\$7,750.00	\$508.00	\$32,636.00	\$8,272.00	\$4.00	12,043	\$52,884
Oklahoma	101%	\$11,913.09	\$230.00	\$450.00	\$94,732.00	\$16,313.00	\$10.00	14,541	\$123,648
Texas	68%	\$20,236.92	\$4,471.96	\$53,439.00	\$296,113.00	\$68,645.00	\$24.00	49,467	\$412,930
TOTAL:	65%	\$35,863.51	\$13,185.46	\$62,138.00	\$413,475.00	\$520,676.00	\$45.00	197,225	\$1,045,363
REGION 5									
Illinois	45%	\$49,844.19	\$3,828.98	\$52,226.00	\$144,803.00	\$192,663.00	\$13,777.00	36,430	\$457,140
Indiana	62%	\$41,597.37	\$325.00	\$15,771.00	\$430,150.00	\$106,713.00	\$12.00	63,343	\$177,637
Michigan	67%	\$10,613.44	\$2,819.92	\$80,133.00	\$140,387.00	\$198,448.00	\$3,608.00	72,026	\$423,510
Missouri	96%	\$573.54	\$1,165.24	\$3,232.00	\$50,888.00	\$65,922.00	\$0.00	52,463	\$161,800
Ohio	77%	\$1,716.67	\$9,740.34	\$61,671.00	\$203,595.00	\$386,303.00	\$40.00	281,401	\$663,906
Wisconsin	66%	\$1,900.00	\$4,806.11	\$10,210.00	\$132,490.00	\$374,183.00	\$27.00	81,005	\$523,589
TOTAL:	66%	\$106,245.21	\$22,483.59	\$223,243.00	\$1,141,983.00	\$1,312,233.00	\$17,483.00	586,668	\$2,823,671
REGION 6									
Iowa	60%	\$7,680.76	\$993.31	\$2,200.00	\$89,928.00	\$37,253.00	\$7.00	28,523	\$138,062
Kansas	60%	\$0.00	\$1,381.25	\$24,190.00	\$78,813.00	\$73,251.00	\$2.00	24,750	\$177,637
Minnesota	63%	\$2,904.40	\$3,354.90	\$304.00	\$104,542.00	\$78,010.00	\$28.00	215,171	\$189,143
Nebraska	100%	\$0.00	\$3,682.04	\$2,025.00	\$74,104.00	\$123,070.00	\$15.00	28,888	\$202,796
North Dakota	57%	\$0.00	\$3,091.55	\$6,068.00	\$41,636.00	\$51,833.00	\$10.00	125,185	\$102,639
South Dakota	61%	\$0.00	\$110.00	\$3,504.00	\$17,107.00	\$84,876.00	\$7.00	17,578	\$85,607
TOTAL:	67%	\$10,585.16	\$12,513.05	\$35,291.00	\$406,130.00	\$428,296.00	\$59.00	436,995	\$895,884
REGION 7									
Arizona	70%	\$32,525.86	\$3,918.04	\$34,687.00	\$106,991.00	\$67,448.00	\$103.00	36,905	\$245,583
California	52%	\$20,448.77	\$3,947.84	\$3,592.00	\$168,719.00	\$396,372.00	\$18.00	77,506	\$595,098
Colorado	80%	\$19,164.45	\$325.00	\$11,936.00	\$46,943.00	\$131,237.00	\$12.00	20,317	\$172,617
Hawaii	14%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$34,448.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	\$34,448
Nevada	71%	\$7,402.95	\$2,924.14	\$620.00	\$14,472.00	\$11,899.00	\$0.00	22,027	\$37,318
New Mexico	96%	\$5,039.00	\$1,432.80	\$1,950.00	\$46,887.00	\$67,421.00	\$4.00	14,082	\$123,434
Utah	40%	\$6,602.16	\$35.00	\$100.00	\$22,265.00	\$154,021.00	\$1.00	5,925	\$182,812
TOTAL:	62%	\$92,083.19	\$12,782.82	\$52,855.00	\$442,314.00	\$830,398.00	\$48.00	174,816	\$1,430,811
REGION 8									
Alaska	91%	\$0.00	\$225.00	\$2,042.00	\$40,648.00	\$27,605.00	\$5.00	21,511	\$70,525
Idaho	78%	\$4,888.00	\$0.00	\$1,800.00	\$25,140.00	\$12,501.00	\$0.00	8,505	\$44,329
Montana	100%	\$5,425.87	\$591.16	\$18,751.00	\$40,104.00	\$148,297.00	\$4.00	39,990	\$213,173
Oregon	74%	\$16,227.24	\$1,025.00	\$1,298.00	\$11,546.00	\$90,482.00	\$9.00	29,758	\$120,587
Washington	51%	\$42,830.51	\$4,408.48	\$5,055.00	\$13,256.00	\$98,353.00	\$3.00	8,424	\$133,909
Wyoming	78%	\$0.00	\$3,355.27	\$2,057.00	\$75,183.00	\$53,299.00	\$3.00	17,218	\$133,697
TOTAL:	78%	\$69,374.62	\$9,604.91	\$31,003.00	\$208,877.00	\$406,537.00	\$24.00	125,468	\$716,418
REGION TOTALS:									
66%	\$570,734.23	\$165,922.39	\$662,399.00	\$5,614,924.00	\$6,079,513.00	\$82,607.00	2,654,583	\$13,076,100	
FOREIGN									
France	21%	\$0.00	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$17,901.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	\$18,101
Mexico	16%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$121.00	\$12.00	\$2.00	5,681	\$135
Philippines	29%	\$0.00	\$5.00	\$500.00	\$9,102.00	\$6,819.00	\$3.00	4,990	\$16,429
Puerto Rico	36%	\$2,200.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$29,925.00	\$43.00	\$5.00	10,751	\$31,173
TOTAL:	29%	\$2,200.00	\$205.00	\$31,666.00	\$10,180.00	\$67,917.00	\$3,712.00	5,114	\$95,860
GRAND TOTALS:	66%	\$572,934.23	\$166,127.39	\$694,065.00	\$5,625,104.00	\$6,127,430.00	\$86,319.00	2,659,697	\$13,171,979.62

TABLE #1 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2017 - MAY 31, 2018

Child Welfare Foundation by National Legion
 Child Welfare Foundation by National Auxiliary
 Child Welfare Foundation by B40
 Child Welfare Foundation by Individuals
 Requests to Child Welfare Foundation
 C.W.F. by Sons of The American Legion
 CFC/United Way

\$122,249.76

\$71,721.34

\$9,933.78

\$26,716.76

\$515.51

\$327,594.07

\$1,319.37

Total

\$662,052.59

TABLE NO. 2
EXPENDITURES FROM NATIONAL TEMPORARY AID FUNDS TO DEPARTMENTS ACCORDING TO YEARS

	1926-45	1946-65	1966-85	1986-95	1996-2005	2006-2015*	2016 - May 2018	Grand Total
Alabama	\$26,181.33	\$51,167.06	\$76,790.45	\$152,617.32	\$137,824.69	\$110,931.35	\$1,500.00	\$560,012.20
Alaska	\$0.00	\$1,827.56	\$1,555.00	\$0.00	\$3,500.00	\$2,165.98	\$0.00	\$8,843.54
Arizona	\$26,061.70	\$8,752.00	\$21,360.31	\$192,830.21	\$289,526.72	\$462,326.53	\$7,544.78	\$1,038,425.26
Arkansas	\$33,873.20	\$25,962.22	\$2,881.07	\$55,004.98	\$16,181.61	\$26,669.04	\$0.00	\$160,862.12
California	\$30,196.15	\$16,026.45	\$1,550.00	\$7,559.00	\$30,034.44	\$194,533.72	\$0.00	\$279,809.76
Colorado	\$41,621.11	\$22,618.11	\$1,365.00	\$12,205.83	\$17,592.15	\$172,131.52	\$0.00	\$267,564.12
Connecticut	\$1,854.00	\$440.00	\$450.00	\$1,192.00	\$7,971.56	\$32,258.56	\$0.00	\$44,166.12
Delaware	\$2,035.00	\$1,000.00	\$475.00	\$2,635.00	\$8,497.64	\$12,491.00	\$0.00	\$27,133.64
DC	\$2,570.00	\$1,203.50	\$600.00	\$26,136.75	\$2,319.00	\$6,375.63	\$0.00	\$39,204.88
Florida	\$33,241.28	\$25,520.50	\$2,530.00	\$27,060.88	\$64,469.81	\$457,310.37	\$3,368.78	\$613,628.62
Georgia	\$69,894.07	\$86,084.42	\$4,865.00	\$8,498.51	\$12,861.80	\$64,841.92	\$0.00	\$227,145.72
Hawaii	\$870.00	\$0.00	\$900.00	\$0.00	\$6,168.40	\$2,767.97	\$0.00	\$10,706.37
Idaho	\$7,593.50	\$5,771.85	\$7,366.39	\$20,228.20	\$195,485.15	\$244,319.48	\$0.00	\$460,764.57
Illinois	\$30,220.79	\$4,343.53	\$10,525.73	\$92,128.56	\$276,545.19	\$294,619.85	\$4,179.53	\$712,563.18
Indiana	\$31,850.08	\$9,066.40	\$2,920.00	\$126,545.18	\$173,400.66	\$511,401.98	\$8,807.97	\$864,092.27
Iowa	\$17,493.08	\$507.00	\$3,926.45	\$13,782.47	\$227,865.82	\$166,627.05	\$0.00	\$430,263.87
Kansas	\$20,786.80	\$42,664.35	\$8,920.00	\$9,241.54	\$16,291.00	\$61,187.11	\$1,459.61	\$169,934.01
Kentucky	\$23,843.50	\$45,527.90	\$64,854.96	\$44,238.66	\$12,445.22	\$163,862.00	\$935.00	\$355,707.24
Louisiana	\$23,400.50	\$38,454.30	\$3,395.00	\$7,340.45	\$33,897.24	\$15,051.72	\$0.00	\$121,539.21
Maine	\$3,618.94	\$1,910.26	\$2,676.55	\$15,912.00	\$22,305.05	\$15,827.26	\$0.00	\$62,050.06
Maryland	\$5,887.00	\$3,390.57	\$3,363.00	\$4,770.00	\$31,620.94	\$50,066.67	\$0.00	\$99,148.18
Massachusetts	\$2,754.50	\$455.00	\$150.00	\$4,650.00	\$18,888.67	\$22,670.48	\$0.00	\$49,568.65
Michigan	\$23,895.33	\$33,281.24	\$15,346.82	\$14,012.24	\$52,676.66	\$80,139.96	\$0.00	\$219,352.25
Minnesota	\$6,610.77	\$23,322.79	\$11,840.33	\$137,579.21	\$89,538.19	\$41,094.06	\$0.00	\$311,985.35
Mississippi	\$40,263.63	\$63,254.14	\$117,892.56	\$51,214.88	\$84,261.79	\$59,465.38	\$0.00	\$416,382.38
Missouri	\$53,073.08	\$47,799.64	\$11,056.00	\$17,669.51	\$38,984.13	\$149,530.46	\$0.00	\$318,412.82
Montana	\$5,414.25	\$1,668.85	\$1,575.30	\$38,571.40	\$67,913.91	\$67,516.22	\$3,926.41	\$206,589.34
Nebraska	\$18,470.10	\$17,795.68	\$17,531.06	\$3,373.25	\$759.49	\$19,801.41	\$0.00	\$77,730.99
Nevada	\$585.00	\$766.00	\$7,272.00	\$995.00	\$16,818.94	\$81,164.64	\$0.00	\$107,601.58
New Hampshire	\$4,250.50	\$4,941.50	\$0.00	\$53,567.79	\$12,610.00	\$23,124.23	\$0.00	\$98,484.02
New Jersey	\$8,995.53	\$1,946.00	\$4,478.00	\$55,576.20	\$53,194.60	\$48,721.88	\$3,000.00	\$175,912.21
New Mexico	\$20,074.30	\$53,098.74	\$58,723.89	\$111,071.87	\$49,262.39	\$40,257.73	\$0.00	\$332,488.92
New York	\$7,887.54	\$4,803.00	\$1,150.00	\$33,784.24	\$83,432.27	\$47,378.53	\$1,464.82	\$179,898.40
North Carolina	\$46,597.50	\$61,019.50	\$6,740.00	\$20,750.18	\$68,774.55	\$278,311.46	\$3,537.49	\$508,730.78
North Dakota	\$26,017.45	\$11,788.21	\$5,771.32	\$6,496.40	\$11,426.94	\$13,983.32	\$0.00	\$74,466.64
Ohio	\$23,930.43	\$5,116.25	\$11,613.89	\$11,357.65	\$13,289.44	\$108,007.84	\$1,085.46	\$174,400.96
Oklahoma	\$40,456.05	\$60,406.47	\$88,956.03	\$156,914.96	\$203,764.51	\$483,767.24	\$0.00	\$1,039,267.26
Oregon	\$1,250.50	\$13,750.15	\$24,595.95	\$42,465.83	\$14,795.00	\$252,633.02	\$8,102.35	\$357,893.80
Panama	\$675.00	\$534.00	\$600.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,809.00
Pennsylvania	\$22,847.41	\$651.00	\$19,204.85	\$38,183.37	\$29,380.12	\$169,089.68	\$0.00	\$279,356.43
Puerto Rico	\$17,057.00	\$57,754.00	\$56,499.50	\$43,420.00	\$11,100.00	\$16,844.64	\$4,100.00	\$205,775.14
Rhode Island	\$1,562.00	\$1,641.00	\$1,060.00	\$18,469.38	\$16,182.72	\$5,049.90	\$0.00	\$43,995.00
South Carolina	\$68,453.05	\$26,693.34	\$5,339.00	\$500.00	\$13,610.16	\$86,664.71	\$0.00	\$201,560.26
South Dakota	\$42,430.27	\$16,362.05	\$725.00	\$30,686.38	\$5,358.30	\$1,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$98,062.00
Tennessee	\$31,144.77	\$54,613.20	\$20,604.30	\$56,068.79	\$36,561.35	\$64,079.68	\$7,425.00	\$320,497.09
Texas	\$35,373.50	\$47,392.43	\$26,714.50	\$7,884.74	\$31,484.75	\$236,342.07	\$0.00	\$385,191.99
Utah	\$11,125.48	\$3,248.00	\$3,966.00	\$12,014.42	\$14,034.34	\$13,707.44	\$1,500.00	\$77,025.94
Vermont	\$1,824.50	\$9,251.50	\$0.00	\$4,925.00	\$6,004.26	\$7,701.44	\$0.00	\$29,706.70
Virginia	\$45,310.31	\$28,037.78	\$17,838.00	\$31,930.40	\$66,509.94	\$377,640.08	\$0.00	\$607,264.51
Washington	\$3,378.00	\$427.50	\$625.00	\$66,884.89	\$511,131.69	\$742,910.02	\$1,500.00	\$1,326,857.10
West Virginia	\$27,628.98	\$11,395.94	\$3,460.00	\$17,750.68	\$40,628.59	\$113,016.71	\$2,241.11	\$216,123.01
Wisconsin	\$15,881.98	\$9,667.25	\$9,876.00	\$16,242.78	\$74,327.21	\$95,656.52	\$0.00	\$220,253.74
Wyoming	\$8,180.00	\$1,963.00	\$1,350.00	\$978.00	\$13,746.91	\$34,232.42	\$0.00	\$60,481.33
Other Depts	\$560.00	\$173.50						\$733.50
Miscellaneous**	\$19,499.21							\$19,499.21
TOTAL	\$1,121,572.95	\$1,089,976.73	\$777,325.21	\$1,926,240.98	\$3,327,257.51	\$6,958,291.54	\$	1,470,393.38

**For the year 1926—Department totals not available

CONVENTION COMMISSION

Michael E. Walton, Illinois, Chairman
Bridget A. Robinson, CMP, Georgia, Director

The 99th annual National Convention of The American Legion convened in Reno, Nevada, August 18 – 24, 2017. National Commander, Charles Schmidt of Oregon called the National Convention to order at 8:30AM on Tuesday, August 22, 2017, welcoming Legionnaires to Reno and thanking them for their continuing service to our Country and to our veterans. The 99th National Convention began with master of ceremonies, Mr. Neal McCoy, who addressed nearly 6,000 American Legion Family members on Tuesday morning. A special guest to the Convention was The President of The United States, Donald Trump. Later in the day, The Honorable Brian Sandoval, Governor, State of Nevada; The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto, U.S. Senate; The Honorable Mark Amodei, U.S. House of Representatives; 2016–2017 Department Commander of Nevada, Robert J. Terhune and Jeanette Evans, President of the 2017 National Convention Corporation welcomed Legionnaires to the National Convention. Other guest speakers addressing the 99th National Convention of The American Legion were Brigadier General Kevin Vereen Deputy Commanding General Operations United States Army Recruiting Command; Honorable David J. Shulkin, Secretary U.S Department of Veterans Affairs; Honorable R. Alexander Acosta, Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor; and Gregg Pratt, Military Affairs Relationship Director, USAA.

There were many highlights during the 2017 National Convention, but four events conducted at the National Convention deserve special mention. On Friday, August 18 the Color Guard Contest took place. Six color guard units competed in three categories with Newport Beach Harbor Post 291 from Newport Beach, California, being crowned as National Champions. There was no band contest. The Patriotic Memorial Service, featuring the Carson Chamber Singers, and the annual parade, both held on Sunday, August 20, 2017, were attended by nearly 2,000 American Legion Family members. On Tuesday, August 22, 2017, the National Commander’s Banquet for Distinguished Guests was held at the Reno Sparks Convention Center. The banquet featured Neal McCoy as the entertainment and was attended by over 2,000 Legionnaires and guests.

CONVENTION COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

The Convention Commission conducted three regular meetings during the year. Revisions of our request for proposal (RFP) continued in 2017. This process is extremely important as it provides an equal opportunity for all cities to be judged the same way during the site visit process. It is the commission’s desire to continue to attract new cities that desire to host an American Legion National Convention, providing “blue cap” Legionnaires and their families with varied and enjoyable conventions on an annual basis.

For the 2023 National Convention, the Convention Commission reviewed bids from the following cities: Charlotte, North Carolina and New Orleans, Louisiana. Following site visits and after listening to formal presentations from each of these fine cities, the Convention Commission recommended to the National Executive Committee that Charlotte, North Carolina, be awarded the 2023 National Convention for the dates of August 25 – 31, 2023. The National Executive Committee later approved the recommendation. Also, The National Executive committee recommended the 2024, National Convention be awarded to the City of New Orleans, Louisiana. Per the Resolution this will be the year of the 80th Anniversary of D Day.

Future conventions and dates:

Minneapolis, Minnesota.....	Aug. 24 – 30, 2018
Indianapolis, Indiana.....	Aug. 23 – 29, 2019
Louisville, Kentucky.....	Aug. 28 – Sept. 3, 2020
Phoenix, Arizona.....	Aug. 27 – Sept. 2, 2021

Milwaukee, Wisconsin.....Aug. 26 – Sept. 1, 2022
 Charlotte, North Carolina.....Aug. 25 – 31, 2023
 New Orleans, Louisiana.....Aug. 23 – 29, 2024

FINANCE COMMISSION

Gaither M. Keener, Jr., North Carolina, Chairman
George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana, National Treasurer
Shawn T. Long, CPA, Indiana, Director

The primary obligation of the Finance Commission is to prepare a yearly budget for the National Executive Committee, handle funds under that budget, and exercise reasonable oversight to see that the various divisions and departments of the national organization operate within appropriations. The Finance Commission includes seven members, with the national adjutant as ex-officio secretary and the national commander and national treasurer as ex-officio members. Also attending these meetings are the executive directors of the Washington and Indianapolis offices and the finance director and liaison observers from the National Executive Committee.

The national organization had an operating income of \$2,949,679 for 2017. We received \$18.50 dues per member, allocating \$15.50 to the General Fund and \$3 to The American Legion Magazine. Income of the national organization derives from annual membership dues, interest on investments, magazine advertisements, Emblem Sales, contributions and other approved activities.

A full financial statement is incorporated in the auditor's report, found in the 2018 National Convention Program and the 2018 Annual Report.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION

Robert E. Newman, Chairman
John W. Querfeld, Illinois, Director

The National Internal Affairs Commission was established by resolution of the National Executive Committee in 1947. The original charge for this constitutional commission still remains: to formulate and recommend policies and to oversee the implementation of adopted policies relating to activities conducted for organizational purposes.

Among those purposes are all those not properly the responsibility of any other national commission, as well as membership strategies, post formation, clerical and records administration for posts and individual members and special projects. The Commission provides guidance and assistance to the National Adjutant on necessary administrative operations. Under the broad interpretation of those purposes not properly the responsibility of other commissions, Internal Affairs oversees awards, constitutional discipline and commemorative activities. The Commission also monitors legislative and other regulatory activities that potentially affect Legion posts and departments, recommending appropriate courses of action.

The Commission has six standing committees assigned to it for supervision and coordination: 50th Anniversary Vietnam War Commemorative Committee, 75th Anniversary of WWII Commemorative Committee, 100th Anniversary Observance Committee, American Legion Riders Advisory Committee, National Convention Resolutions Assignment, Constitution and By-Laws, and Membership & Post Activities. The latter has separate reporting responsibilities to the national convention and the National Executive Committee.

The Internal Affairs Commission also provides guidance for the following programs:
Sons of The American Legion -- For the 45th consecutive year, the Sons of The American Legion (SAL) are at an "All Time High" in membership. The SAL closed its membership at the end of 2017 with a record 369,861 members. This number represents

.5% increase over the previous year. A total of 31 detachments achieved 100% membership. Membership in the SAL for 2018 is expected to be another record setting year.

The SAL continues its support of several American Legion programs and is heavily involved with support to our nation's veterans in the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services (VAVS) program. In 2017, the SAL provided over 407,971 volunteer hours in VA homes and hospitals. Donations in cash and goods to these veterans exceeded \$1.7 million nationwide. Other projects include Americanism programs of which over \$2.4 million was donated along with 792,121 hours of service. In 2017, the Sons have raised over \$500,000 for the Child Welfare Foundation and provided numerous grants through The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. The Sons of The American Legion have contributed over seven million dollars to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.

The Sons continue to support Legion programs with a major emphasis on VAVS, National Emergency Fund and the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund in addition to other vital programs. As a major program and an integral part of The American Legion family, the Sons continue to serve and provide assistance to posts and their communities.

The American Legion Riders – The National Executive Committee established The American Legion Riders (ALR) as a national program in October 2007 to be supported and administered by posts and departments. The American Legion Riders National Advisory Committee is responsible for advising the national leadership on resolutions before the Internal Affairs Commission and to act as sources of information for departments and posts. This committee also provides significant guidance for the planning and execution of The American Legion Legacy Run each year. Of particular importance to the committee is the establishment of program protocols adhering to federal rules regarding The American Legion's trademarks and proper supervision provided to the ALR programs by the posts.

Members of the American Legion Riders National Advisory Committee also serve as liaisons within six national regions to provide information and support to departments and posts.

The Riders raise money for many charitable causes, most notably for children and youth programs and for wounded or returned servicemen and women. Since 2006, the annual American Legion Legacy Run has conducted ten major cross-country, multi-day motorcycle runs totaling over 17,000 miles and helping our organization raise over \$13M for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship trust program. The scholarship program is administered by the Americanism Commission.

The American Legion Amateur Radio Club - The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC) is a rapidly growing program that has been conducting national nets, special event operations, and membership activities since 2011. Members in local post amateur radio clubs support local emergency management agencies, law enforcement and fire departments, and FEMA in emergency communications "when all else fails."

Over 3,300 American Legion family members with FCC ham radio licenses have joined TALARC. The National Headquarters flagship station K9TAL located in the basement of the American Legion National Headquarters has inspired the formation of sister stations K5TAL (Gautier, Mississippi Post 1992), K6TAL (Palm Springs, California Post 519), W6TAL (Redlands, California Post 106), AA8AL (Belle Valley, Ohio Post 641), KM4MND (Loganville, GA Post 233), WB4TAL (Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina Post 116), KG7TQX (Washougal, Washington Post 122), K7HLR (Clearfield, UT Post 139), and dozens of other posts that operate under supervision of licensed control operators. The Department of California has established KM6HCQ as their department headquarters amateur radio station.

There is a strong interest in developing local post and regional radio clubs and emergency radio teams, and interest in the FEMA ICS (Incident Command System) training available from the Department of Homeland Security. Special emphasis of TALARC is placed on local amateur radio emergency communications in support of the National Emergency Fund (NEF) and American Legion post and department support

operations before, during, and after natural or man-made disasters and terrorist attacks. The American Legion has maintained a standing Statement of Affiliation with the Federal Emergency Management Agency under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) since 2006.

National Emergency Fund -- From January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017, The American Legion provided \$367,375 in grant monies to Legion and SAL members and to American Legion posts. During the same period, the National Emergency Fund received donations totaling over \$1 million. This prepares us to support future natural disasters.

Every dollar contributed to the fund is used for providing financial assistance to members of The American Legion Family. The grants are to be used for immediate needs – lodging, food and clothing – and not as a substitute for insurance. In order to qualify, members must have been displaced or evacuated from their primary place of residence and be a member in good standing at the time of loss. Monies to support the administrative costs of maintaining this fund and to conduct fundraising are absorbed through existing budget areas.

The National Emergency Fund is unique and members know they can turn to The American Legion for immediate financial assistance, without payback. Through the generosity of Legion and Sons of The American Legion members, the National Emergency Fund will continue to meet the needs of our Legion family in the aftermath of local, state and national weather related disasters.

Consolidated Post Reports -- The Consolidated Post Report was established in 1975 in order to assist departments in the documentation of the various activities a specific post has done during the twelve-month reporting period, June 1st through May 31st. During the 2017-2018 reporting year, sixty-six percent of posts reported some activity.

Throughout the reporting year American Legion post members volunteered 764,635 hours in assisting veterans at VA Hospitals; 48,100 Legionnaires gave over 73,952 pints of blood; 95,280 events covered through different media outlets totaled; performed 125,318 funeral honors at a cost of \$2,666,633; sponsored 1,858 American Legion baseball teams at a cost of \$5,146,325; Legion posts sponsored 1,941 Boy Scout units for a cost of \$1,782,128; through various school assisted programs they spent \$1,058,375; presented 23,235 American flags at a cost of \$356,215; performed 3,886,228 community service hours while spending \$3,948,732 in support of those activities; and all other donations to Family Support Network, Cancer Research, United Way, Legion Endowment Fund, Children's Hospitals, National Emergency Fund, Special Olympics, Temporary Financial Assistance, Children & Youth Programs and other various activities totaled \$11,627,759.

The National American Legion College – Each November, the National American Legion College (NALC) hosts many talented young Legionnaires at the National Headquarters in Indianapolis for a week of intensive training. These students return to their departments with enhanced knowledge and appreciation for The American Legion. They are taught the core values and contributions of the organization and are challenged to think critically and creatively about issues confronting The American Legion.

Candidates for the NALC must be veterans who served during the Lebanon/Grenada era or later, with demonstrated potential for higher leadership roles. Student candidates are nominated by their respective departments and rank ordered by a selection committee. In 2017 we had 55 students attend the National American Legion College.

Graduates are making a difference in leadership roles and membership teams across the country. Many have already been appointed to department and national level positions while others are used in various leadership and teaching roles within their respective departments.

Since the National American Legion College was reinstated in 1998, we have graduated 823 Legionnaires ready to assume leadership at various levels.

Basic Training -- This is The American Legion's on-line, self-paced training program free to American Legion members. It is the quickest way for those who want to expand

their knowledge of the nation's largest veteran's service organization. It is a great introductory course to learn the organization and its history. Since August 2017, the BASIC TRAINING course) has been taken by over 2,500 members. More courses will be developed to expand the on-line training available

NATIONAL CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS ASSIGNMENT COMMITTEE

Henry P. Bradley, Massachusetts, Chairman

The National Convention Resolutions Assignment Committee meets at least three days before the convening of the national convention. This committee has the responsibility to receive, consider and transmit all resolutions – with or without recommendation – to the appropriate convention committee for a report to the convention. During an average year, between 200 and 300 resolutions will be assigned.

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS COMMITTEE

Hon. Vincent M. Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman

The National Constitution and By-laws of The American Legion can only be amended by the duly elected delegates at a national convention.

However, the Constitution & By-Laws Committee, established by the authority of the National Executive Committee in 1939, authorizes this committee to study and make proper recommendations concerning all of the matters that pertain to the constitution and by-laws, as well as matters relating to the Uniform Code of Procedure, which provides rules and regulations for the revocation, cancellation or suspension of department and post charters of The American Legion.

MEMBERSHIP & POST ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Randy Goodman, Georgia, Chairman

Membership and programs go hand in hand to making The American Legion an organization able to provide people and resources to serve the needs of veterans and their families. Membership & Post Activities is pleased to report a continuing membership of over 1.7 million members worldwide.

Membership - Final 2016 membership – 2,043,888

Final 2017 membership – 1,964,478

2018 membership as of Aug. 23, 2018 – 1,708,566

55th Annual National Membership Workshop -- The 55th Annual National Membership Workshop convened in Indianapolis on August 9-11, 2018, with more than 300 department and district officers from nearly all 50 departments in attendance.

Many who attended already had a good understanding of The American Legion's membership program, especially as it pertains to their departments and districts. When the workshop concluded, they are prepared to face day-to-day membership challenges with a better understanding of the Legion as it relates to potential members.

The goal of the workshop is to provide these essential membership workers with the tools, knowledge and desire to serve The American Legion's membership. Whether they are involved in recruitment or program implementation, the workshop teaches veterans to help veterans and provide communities the essential programs to maintain a quality of life for which all veterans fought and served to preserve.

New Post Development/Revitalization -- The Membership & Post Activities Committee developed a training program in January 1996 designed to assist posts, districts and departments in developing and revitalizing posts. The program provides training workshops to interested volunteers, along with practical, hands on field application.

The success of the program is evident, based on the revitalization and development of more than 5,000 American Legion posts in the past 22 years. Many departments have

succeeded in revitalizing posts without any direct assistance from National Headquarters staff. Whether departments request field assistance or just send members to the training workshop, positive results follow if they adhere to the guidelines established.

LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION
Paul Dillard, Texas, Chairman
Matthew Shuman, Arizona, Director

This report covers activities of the Legislative Commission from August 16, 2017 through August 15, 2018. During this period, the Commission met two (2) times to review the legislative program and to make recommendations to the National Executive Committee. Reports of these meetings are contained in the published proceedings of the National Executive Committee.

PURPOSE, PERSONNEL AND ORGANIZATION

The Legislative Commission represents The American Legion before the Congress of the United States on all legislative matters in which The American Legion is officially interested. The Commission also assists the National Executive Committee in formulating an appropriate legislative program for each session of Congress. The Commission consists of 35 members and 5 National Executive Committee liaisons.

To further assist the Commission in its work, the National Executive Committee created the National Legislative Council in 1975, composed of Legionnaires whose judgment and advice are respected by their Members of Congress. There is one council member for each Member of Congress. A Council Chairman heads the Council, and is assisted by a Vice Chairman in each Department. The Chairman, Vice Chairmen and general membership of the Council are appointed by the National Commander upon recommendation by the Departments.

The professional staff of the Commission (the Legislative Division) concentrates on implementing the legislative mandates of The American Legion; these mandates are expressed in resolutions adopted at the annual National Convention and by the National Executive Committee at each of its regularly scheduled meetings. The Legislative Division is located in Washington, DC and consists of the director, a deputy director, two assistant directors, an assistant director/grassroots coordinator, two administrative assistants, and a research analyst. The director, deputy director, and assistant directors are registered lobbyists and submit semi-annual lobbying reports to Congress; in addition the Legion submits quarterly reports on legislation which our organization lobbies Congress. Because The American Legion is a federally chartered organization, an annual report is also prepared and submitted to Congress.

115th Congress, 1st Session

The Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) appropriations process ground to a halt, when the deadline for passage of the 12 appropriations bills to fund federal programs – October 1, 2017 – passed. The House had approved 1 of the 12 spending bills, while the Senate had passed none.

Since none of the appropriations bills were enacted by the end of September, continuing resolutions were needed to keep the federal government running. Six continuing resolutions kept the federal government operating from October 1 through the end of the year.

The American Legion participated in thirty (30) congressional hearings during the First Session.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

On October 6, 2017 **Public Law (PL) 115-65**, *The American Legion 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin Act*, was signed into law by President Trump. The measure requires the U.S. Mint to produce a centennial coin in celebration of The American Legion turning 100 and proudly representing and supporting millions of veterans.

The Senate version – **S 1182**, sponsored by Sen. Todd Young (IN) – was introduced with 28 co-sponsors and was acted upon with 75. The Senate measure passed that chamber on August 3 by a voice vote. The House bill – **HR 2519**, sponsored by Rep. Tim Walz (MN) – was introduced with 102 co-sponsors and had 385 prior to passage. On September 25, HR 2519 passed the House by a voice vote. On September 27, the Senate approved HR 2519 by unanimous consent.

On October 12, 2017, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing for a bill authorizing the sale of Pershing Hall, which was established as a World War I memorial by The American Legion in 1928 and transferred to the VA in 1991. The Legion is asking the property remain under ownership of the federal government for posterity. Rep. Mike Coffman (CO), who introduced the measure, said "... it makes no sense that the VA keeps a luxury hotel in Paris on its books, The VA needs to focus its time and resources on its core mission: taking care of our nation's veterans." The legislation, **HR 2773**, authorizes VA to sell the property on the condition that whoever buys it agrees to preserve its architecture. The money from the sale and any historic memorabilia inside would be given to the American Battle Monuments Commission, which is responsible for maintaining American military cemeteries, monuments and memorials.

Legion spokesmen testifying on the bill, said the property has "deeply personal meaning" to the organization. Above the building's entrance is the Legion's wreath and star emblem, in stone and iron. At one time, it was full of fine art, furnishings, plaques and other memorabilia with some tie to the First World War. After VA took over the building, the items were placed in multiple storage areas in the United States and France. The American Legion got its start in Paris in 1919, created by members of the American Expeditionary Force who served in WWI. The Legion purchased the property, which had been a townhouse, to recognize the American Expeditionary Forces and Gen. John Pershing, and maintain the Legion's presence in Paris.

Since management was transferred to the VA, the Legion has been disappointed with what's happened with the building. Our organization thought it would remain a memorial and space for U.S. veterans in Paris to go for VA aid. Instead, the VA signed a 99-year lease in 1998 with a private French firm that operates the building as a hotel and spa. Rep. Coffman criticized the lease, calling it a bad deal that significantly decreases the property's market value.

The Legion asked that the property be kept under federal control until the lease is complete in 2097. Members of the House panel said the VA "should not be in the business of managing hotels." Rep. Phil Roe (TN), chairman of the House committee, said he was uncertain what to do and needed to think about the issue. "I think we need to be sensitive and aware of that history," he said.

On October 25, 2017 a ceremony was conducted in the U.S. Capitol, with Congressional Gold Medals presented to Filipino and Filipino-American veterans, to honor their service and sacrifices during the Second World War. More than 250,000 Filipino soldiers served alongside American servicemembers in the Philippines, with 57,000 killed. After the war, President Truman signed legislation rescinding promises of benefits and U.S. citizenship for these Filipino veterans. In 1990, Congress awarded U.S. citizenship to thousands of Filipino veterans and later extended VA benefits to them. The 2009 stimulus law authorized lump-sum payments, although in some cases missing or poor records blocked the payments from being made.

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

On August 12, the President enacted **PL 115-46**, the *VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017*. This legislation – a compromise created and supported by both sides of the aisle – will provide \$2.1 billion to the Veterans Choice Program, which allows veterans to seek health care outside of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) if the needed care is not available through VA. It will also invest \$1.8 billion into hiring more health-care providers (VA currently has about 49,000 vacancies) and authorizes leases for 28 new VA clinics, many of which are badly needed for local care in rural areas.

Without congressional action, the Choice program was expected to run out of money by mid-August, which VA leaders said would have led to layoffs and interrupted medical care for thousands of veterans.

Another measure, **PL 115-55**, the *Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017*, was signed into law by the President on August 23 at The American Legion's 99th National Convention in Reno, NV. The new law creates three “lanes” for veterans' appeals, including: a) the “Local Higher Level Review Lane” in which an adjudicator reviews the same evidence considered by the original claims processor; b) the “New Evidence Lane,” in which the veteran could submit new evidence for review and have a hearing; and, c) the “Board Lane,” in which jurisdiction for the appeal would transfer immediately to the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

PL 115-55 was cosponsored by every member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, and passed the House 418-0 on May 23. The Senate amended and passed the measure on August 1. The Senate's substitute amendment clarifies that in certain circumstances VA must correct duty to assist errors unless VA can grant the maximum benefit; provides for a limited duty to assist in connection to a supplement claim when veterans identify additional evidence needed to decide a claim; clarifies the difference between an “issue” and “claim”; and, includes some changes to the reports and reporting requirements included in the House version.

On September 29, 2017 President Trump enacted **PL 115-62**, the *Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2017*, to extend VA authorities in a number of areas. The House approved the measure on September 25 by a voice vote. On September 27 the Senate passed the bill by unanimous consent. Among the law's provisions is a five-month extension of the assisted living pilot program for veterans with traumatic brain injuries. This will enable the VA to transition currently participating veterans into other existing programs for ongoing support and rehabilitation. The bill also extends caregiver support payments, a pilot program for newly separated women veterans to receive counseling in retreat settings, and a temporary increase in payments for travel to Vet Centers. The legislation extends several other healthcare-related provisions, such as collection of copayments and recovery from third parties for care provided in some instances for non-service connected care.

Authorities in both benefits and homeless veteran programs were also extended. The measure also included some technical corrections to the recently-enacted *Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017* (**PL 115-48**) which were requested by the Trump Administration.

On November 2, 2017 President Trump enacted **PL 115-75**, the *Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2017*. This legislation increased the rates of veterans' wartime disability compensation, additional compensation for dependents, the clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children.

The President on November 21 signed **PL 115-86**, the *VA Prescription Data Accountability Act of 2017*. This bill directs the VA to disclose information about an individual who is dispensed medication prescribed by a VA employee or by a non-VA provider authorized to prescribe such medication by the VA to a state controlled substance monitoring program to the extent necessary to prevent misuse and diversion of prescription medicines.

On December 20 President Trump enacted **PL 115-95**, the *Enhancing Veteran Care Act*. This law authorizes VA to contract with a nonprofit organization that accredits health care organizations and programs in the United States to investigate a VA medical center to assess and report deficiencies of the center's facilities.

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

President Trump on August 16, 2017 enacted **PL 115-48**, the *Harry W. Colmery Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2017* – familiarly known as the “Forever GI Bill” – would make significant changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill. These changes include:

- Eliminating a requirement that veterans use their benefits within 15 years of leaving active-duty service;
- Expanding benefits for reservists, Purple Heart recipients and surviving dependents;
- Retroactively restoring benefits to veterans affected by school closures, and;
- Providing additional funds to GI Bill users pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering and math.

Many of the provisions of this law do not go into effect until 2018, with others becoming effective in subsequent years. This legislation received expedited action; it was introduced on July 13, approved by the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee on July 19, and received final House approval on July 24 by a vote of 405-0. The bill then went to the Senate, where it was passed by unanimous consent five days later.

President Trump on November 21 enacted **PL 115-89**, the *Veterans Apprenticeship and Labor Opportunity Reform Act* or the *VALOR Act*. This measure would simplify an approval process by allowing companies to register their apprenticeship programs with one central approval agency. This bill provides that the state approving agency for a multi-state non-federal apprenticeship program is: (1) for program approval purposes, the state approving agency for the state in which the headquarters of the apprenticeship program is located; and (2) for all other purposes, the state approving agency for the state in which the apprenticeship program takes place.

115th Congress, 2nd Session

The Second Session of the 115th Congress convened on January 3, 2018. Major issues on the agenda for both chambers revolved mainly around final fiscal year (FY) 2018 appropriations for the entire federal government, especially the Department of Defense (DOD), as well as appropriations for FY 2019 federal spending programs.

Three additional continuing resolutions kept the federal government funded through late March. Final funding for FY18 was approved by Congress in late March, with the House approving the measure by a 256-167 vote on March 22, and the Senate passing the bill the next day by a 65-32 vote. It was signed into law March 23 as **PL 115-141**.

To date, The American Legion has participated in twenty-two (22) congressional hearings during the Second Session.

AMERICANISM

On February 8, 2017 Representative Steve Womack (AR) introduced **House Joint Resolution (HJ Res.) 61**, a flag protection constitutional amendment for the 115th Congress. It was assigned to the House Judiciary Committee. The measure currently boasts 31 cosponsors. A Senate companion measure, **Senate Joint Resolution (SJ Res.) 46** was introduced on June 14 by Senator Steve Daines (MT). That measure now has 13 cosponsors. The American Legion will continue to seek passage of a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag because it is the right thing to do. Let “We the People” decide.

The final continuing appropriations measure for FY18, as PL 115-141, contains \$29.9 billion in funding for the Justice Department for the remainder of the fiscal year (until September 30, 2018). Specific areas of interest to The American Legion include:

- *Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)*: The FBI received \$9 billion for this year;
- *U.S. Marshals Service*: This agency would receive \$2.9 billion;
- *Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)*: \$2.6 billion is tabbed for this agency;
- *Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF)*: The legislation contains \$1.3 billion; and,
- *Juvenile Justice Grants*: One program area that has been a primary Legion concern since 1974 is the account for juvenile justice grants, which totals \$282.5 million for FY 2018. These grants address such concerns as child abuse, youth gangs and violence against children, missing / exploited children, and underage drinking.

On May 17, the House Appropriations Committee approved **HR 5952**, the FY 2019 funding measure for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science programs and Related Agencies. Funding for Department of Justice programs for the upcoming fiscal year totals \$30.7 billion, an increase of \$793 million above the FY 18 enacted level. Programs which interest The American Legion include:

- *Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)*: The FBI would receive \$9.3 billion for this year;
- *U.S. Marshals Service*: This agency would receive \$3 billion;
- *Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)*: \$2.7 billion is tabbed for this agency;
- *Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF)*: The legislation contains \$1.3 billion; and,
- *Juvenile Justice Grants*: One program area that has been a primary Legion concern since 1974 is the account for juvenile justice grants, which totals \$212 million for FY 2019, \$70 million less than the enacted amount for FY 18. These grants address such concerns as child abuse, youth gangs and violence against children, missing / exploited children, and youth mentoring programs.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Final funding for the Department of Defense (DOD) for the balance of FY 2018 was contained in PL 115-141, signed by the President on March 23. The measure allots \$659.5 billion for DOD programs, an increase of \$61.1 billion over the FY 2017 enacted level. It includes \$65.2 billion in Overseas Contingency Operations funding.

Defense spending includes:

- *Military Personnel and Pay*: \$137.7 billion for military personnel and pay accounts, including a 2.4 percent pay raise for all uniformed personnel.
- *Operation and Maintenance*: \$238 billion; this category supports key readiness programs to prepare our troops for combat and peacetime missions, including flight time and training, equipment and facility maintenance, and base operations.
- *Research and Development*: \$89.2 billion; this area will fund research, development, testing, and evaluation of new defense technologies. It will help to advance the safety and success of current and future military operations and prepare our nation to meet a broad range of future security threats.
- *Procurement*: \$144.3 billion; these funds support our nation's military readiness by providing the necessary platforms, weapons, and other equipment our military needs to train, maintain the force, and conduct successful operations.
- *Health*: \$34.4 billion for DOD health and family programs; the legislation includes funding for cancer research, as well as traumatic brain injury and psychological health research and sexual assault prevention and response programs.

- Under the provisions of PL 115-141, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) received \$47.7 billion for its various programs for the remainder of FY 2018. Specific appropriations amounts include:
- Customs and Border Protection – \$14 billion in discretionary funding, an increase of \$1.7 billion over the previous year. This includes \$1.57 billion for border security assets and infrastructure along the U.S.-Mexico border;
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) – \$7.1 billion for this agency, a \$641 million increase;
- Transportation Security Administration (TSA) – \$7.9 billion, \$115 million above FY 2017 amounts;
- U.S. Coast Guard – \$12.1 billion, including \$1.7 billion for modernization of vessels, aircraft, and facilities;
- U.S. Secret Service – \$1.99 billion, \$53 million less than the previous year's spending; and,
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – \$7.9 billion for disaster relief funds, including funds for first responder grants.

PL 115-141 provided funding for Military Construction programs of the Defense Department for FY 2018. This bill would provide \$10.1 billion in FY 2018. This amount is an increase of \$2.4 billion – or 31 percent – over 2017 spending. Within that amount, individual program areas include:

- Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) – \$750 million for projects directly related to facilities to support OCO;
- Military Family Housing – \$1.4 billion to fund construction, operation and maintenance of military family housing, an increase of \$131 billion above FY 2017 level. This funding will ensure quality housing for 1.388 million families served by the program;
- Military Medical Facilities -- \$708 million for construction and alterations for new or existing military medical facilities, an increase of \$404 million above current year level;
- DOD Education Facilities -- \$250 million for essential safety improvements and infrastructure work at four DOD Education Activities facilities in the U.S. and overseas;
- Guard and Reserve -- \$645 million for construction/alteration of Guard and Reserve Facilities in 26 states, \$450 million above the requested amount;
- NATO Security Investment Program (NSIP) -- \$178 million – same as FY 2017 – for infrastructure necessary for wartime, crisis, peace support and deterrence operations, and training requirements; and,
- Guantanamo Bay – The legislation continues language to prohibit the closure of the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station and a provision to forbid funding for any facility within the U.S. to house detainees. It also includes \$115 million to fund the construction of two new barracks to house servicemembers stationed at Guantanamo Bay.

Funding for Military Construction projects for FY 2019 are contained in **HR 5786** (detailed below).

The bill provides a total of \$10.3 billion for military construction projects – an increase of \$241 million, or 2.4 percent, above the enacted FY18 level. In addition to this amount, \$921.4 million is provided in OCO funding for projects in countries with ongoing U.S. operations and the European Deterrence Initiative. These funds will provide for the construction of facilities to enable our military to fight current and emerging threats, to support increased troop levels, and to sustain services for military families. This includes operational facilities, training facilities, hospitals, family housing, National Guard readiness centers, barracks, and other important resources. In total, 147 military construction projects across the country and overseas receive funding in the bill.

- Military Family Housing – The bill provides \$1.6 billion to fund construction, operation, and maintenance of military family housing for FY19. This is \$173 million above the FY18 level. The funding will ensure quality housing is sustained for all 1.4 million military families currently served by the program.
- Military Medical Facilities – The bill includes \$361 million for construction and alterations for new or existing military medical facilities. This funding will allow for continued support and care for 9.8 million eligible beneficiaries, including our wounded troops abroad.
- DOD Education Facilities – The bill includes \$368 million for essential safety improvements and infrastructure work at four DOD Education Activities facilities located within the U.S. and overseas.
- Guard and Reserve – The bill includes \$467 million for construction or alteration of Guard and Reserve facilities in 20 states and territories, the same as the budget request.
- NATO Security Investment Program (NSIP) – The bill provides \$171 million, the same as the budget request, for infrastructure necessary for wartime, crisis, and peace support and deterrence operations, and training requirements. The funds will support responses to the challenges posed by Russia and to the risks and threats emanating from the Middle East and North Africa.
- Guantanamo Bay – The legislation continues language to prohibit the closure of the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station and a provision to prohibit funding for any facility within the U.S. to house detainees. The bill also includes \$69 million in funding to build a new high-value detention facility at Guantanamo Bay.

On June 13, the House Appropriations Committee approved by a recorded vote of 48-4 the bill **HR 6157**, legislation to fund the Department of Defense (DOD) for FY 2019. Funding for the upcoming fiscal year totals \$674.6 billion – discretionary funding is set at \$606.5 billion, an increase of \$17.1 billion over FY 2018 funding – with \$68.1 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO)/Global War on Terrorism funding. Funding totals for major DOD accounts include:

- Military Personnel and Pay – The legislation includes \$144 billion to provide for 1.338 million active-duty troops and 817, 700 Guard and Reserve personnel. This category fully funds a 2.6 percent pay raise for the military.
- Operation & Maintenance – A total of \$245.9 billion was approved for this account. The amount is \$9.3 billion above the request and \$24.1 billion above FY17.
- Research and Development – The bill contains \$92.4 billion for research, development, testing and evaluation of new defense technologies. This funding is \$2.9 billion more than current year funding.
- Procurement – A total of \$145.7 billion is proposed for this account. This amount is \$2.5 billion above the administration's request. These funds provide for the weapons and other equipment necessary to train, maintain the force, and conduct successful operations.
- Defense Health and Military Family Programs – This account contains \$34.4 billion for the Defense Health Program, an increase of \$318 million above the request. Also included in this account are: \$364 million for cancer research; \$318 million for sexual assault prevention and response; and, \$125 million for traumatic brain injury and psychological health research.
- On June 21, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved **S 3109**, the FY 19 spending bill for the Department of Homeland Security, which received \$55.2 billion for its various programs. Specific appropriations amounts include:
- Customs and Border Protection – \$14.3 billion in discretionary funding, an increase of \$239 million over the previous year;
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) – \$7.2 billion for this agency, a \$134 million increase;

- Transportation Security Administration (TSA) – \$4.8 billion, \$83 million below FY 2018 amounts;
- U.S. Coast Guard – \$10.2 billion, \$496 million above the budget request;
- U.S. Secret Service – \$2.18 billion, \$173 million more than this year’s spending; and,
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – \$11.69 billion for disaster relief funds, including funds for first responder grants.

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

On January 9, 2018 President Trump signed Executive Order 13822, which instructs the Departments of Defense (DoD), Veterans Affairs (VA), and Homeland Security (DHS) to develop a joint plan addressing veterans’ suicide, especially in the first year after leaving military service. The departments have 60 days to develop a plan, and must report on its implementation and effectiveness within 180 days of the signing date. The order specifies that the plan should work to streamline access to mental health services throughout an individual’s transition to civilian life and across the DoD and VA. The inclusion of the DHS means that the Coast Guard will be covered by these actions.

On March 9, President Trump signed **PL 115-131**, the *Veterans Care Financial Protection Act of 2017*. Introduced by Rep. Matt Cartwright (PA), this legislation directs VA to work with federal agencies and states to develop and implement standards that protect individuals who are eligible for this increased pension from dishonest, predatory or otherwise unlawful practices.

President Trump on March 16 signed **PL 115-136**, a measure to establish a consistent applicability date for provision of memorial headstones and markers for eligible non-veteran individuals. This legislation, introduced by Rep. Jim Banks (IN), would provide a headstone or marker for all eligible non-veterans who die on or after November 11, 1998.

As contained in PL 115-141, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) received a total \$81.5 billion in discretionary funding for FY 2018, \$7.1 billion above the FY 17 level. VA accounts would receive the following funding amounts:

- VA Medical Services – \$68.8 billion. Individual accounts which interest The American Legion include: \$8.4 billion in mental health care services; \$7.3 billion in homeless veterans treatment, services, housing, and job training; \$751 million for Hepatitis C treatment; \$386 million for opioid abuse prevention; \$316 million for traumatic brain injury treatments; \$270 million in rural health initiatives; and, \$196 million in suicide prevention activities.
- Medical and Prosthetic Research – The new law provided \$722 million for this account.
- Advance Appropriations for All Veterans Programs for FY 2019 – \$179 billion. Discretionary medical programs will be funded in FY 2019 at \$71 billion. In addition, mandatory programs will be funded at \$108 billion. This was done to eliminate the possibility that VA programs would go unfunded in case of a government shutdown.
- National Cemetery Administration – This agency received \$306 million for its operations, \$20 million more than FY 2017.
- Information Technology (IT) – This account received \$4.05 billion, a decrease of \$8 million.
- Disability Claims Processing – \$2.9 billion was allocated to address the burgeoning claims backlog. This funding will support new staff to tackle claims and appeals work, digital scanning of claims; and centralized mail. Funding for the Board of Veterans Appeals was increased by \$5 million to a total of \$161 million, to address the continuing appeals backlog.
- Construction – Major construction funding totaled \$432 million. Funds will be used for correcting critical seismic deficiencies, new hospital and clinic

construction, and repairing crumbling infrastructure in some of VA's oldest structures. Minor construction was set at \$343 million.

- Construction Grants – The state extended care facilities (state veterans' homes) account received \$110 million (a \$20 million increase over the previous year), with the state cemeteries programs receiving \$45 million, a total equal to FY 2017. Both of these programs have been essentially flat-lined by Congress for a number of years; The American Legion continues to urge Congress to make substantial increases in both grant accounts to allow states to construct state cemeteries and states veterans' homes.

On March 27, President Trump enacted **PL 115-159**, entitled the *State Veterans Home Adult Day Health Care Improvement Act of 2017*. This bill would direct VA to enter into an agreement or a contract with state veterans homes to pay for medical supervision model adult day health care for a veteran eligible for, but not receiving, nursing home care. This bill requires the VA Secretary to establish a payment rate through regulations, but until that rate is published stipulates that payment under each agreement or contract between VA and a state home must equal 65 percent of the payment that VA would otherwise pay to the state home if the veteran were receiving nursing home care.

On June 6 in a White House ceremony, President Trump enacted **PL 115-182**, the *John S. McCain III, Daniel K. Akaka, and Samuel R. Johnson VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act* (or the *VA MISSION Act*, for short). The measure passed the House of Representatives on May 16, by a recorded vote of 347-70. A week later the Senate approved the measure by a vote of 92-5.

The major provisions of the legislation would:

Streamline VA's Community Care Programs

- Consolidate 7 VA community care programs into one streamlined program;
- Remove arbitrary 30-day/40-mile barriers to veterans' care in the community;
- Authorize access to walk-in community clinics for enrolled veterans who have previously used VA healthcare services in the last two years;
- Authorize local provider agreements to remove bureaucratic red tape and to meet veterans' needs for care in the community;
- Create standards for timely payment to community care providers;
- Keep the cost of community care in line with the cost of VA health care to ensure a veteran does not pay more for outside care;
- Require VA to monitor the program and report to Congress on the care provided to veterans;
- Require the secretary to develop an education program to inform veterans and VA providers about veterans' health care options;
- Establish a program to provide continuing medical education credits for community care providers on treating veterans;
- Require VA to establish and submit to Congress a strategy to ensure all VA and community care programs are operating efficiently and effectively based on a number of factors including veterans' satisfaction and access guidelines and quality standards, among others;
- Strengthen the process for VA and partnering health care providers who prescribe opioids to veterans;
- Ensure providers removed or suspended from VA practice do not treat veterans in the community; and,
- Provide \$5.2 billion for the Veterans Choice Fund.

Improve VA Healthcare Delivery

- Remove barriers for VA healthcare professionals to practice telemedicine;
- Provide additional resources for hiring and retention of VA healthcare professionals;

- Strengthen peer-to-peer support for veterans undergoing care for trauma or in rural areas;
- Establish mobile deployment teams for underserved and rural facilities to provide specialized and routine health care;
- Allow VA to provide transplant procedures on a live donor; and,
- Allow the VA to modernize assets and infrastructure.

Expand Caregivers Program

- Expand eligibility for VA's Caregiver Program to veterans of all generations; and,
- Require VA to implement an information technology system to better support, assess and monitor the program.

On May 8 the House Appropriations Committee by a 47-0 vote approved **HR 5786**, the FY 2019 Military Construction, Department of Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies funding measure. On June 7 the Senate Appropriations Committee passed their version of the measure, **S 3024**, by a vote of 31-0. In the House bill, VA would receive a total \$85.3 billion in discretionary funding for FY 2019, \$9 billion above the FY 18 level. The Senate measure would provide \$86.4 billion for FY19. VA accounts would receive the following funding amounts:

- VA Medical Services – \$68.7 billion (House) and \$78.3 billion (Senate). Individual accounts which interest The American Legion include: \$8.6 billion in mental health care services (both); \$7.3 billion in homeless veterans treatment, services, housing, and job training (\$1.8 billion in Senate); \$511 million for women veteran services (\$525 in Senate); \$386 million for opioid abuse prevention; \$270 million in rural health initiatives (both); and, \$196 million in suicide prevention activities.
- Medical and Prosthetic Research – The measure provides \$732 million for this account in the House measure, an increase of \$10 million over FY 2018. The Senate legislation would provide \$779 million for this account.
- Advance Appropriations for All Veterans Programs for FY 2020 – \$197 billion in both measures. Discretionary medical programs will be funded in FY 2020 at \$75.6 billion. In addition, mandatory programs will be funded at \$121.3 billion. This was done to eliminate the possibility that VA programs would go unfunded in case of a government shutdown.
- National Cemetery Administration – This agency will receive \$316 million for its operations, \$10 million more than the previous fiscal year, under the provisions of both measures.
- Information Technology (IT) – Both bills funded this account at \$4.1 billion, the same as FY 2018.
- Disability Claims Processing – \$2.9 billion was allocated in the House measure to address the burgeoning claims backlog, while the Senate would provide \$3 billion. This funding will support new staff to tackle claims and appeals work, digital scanning of claims; and centralized mail. Both bills set funding for the Board of Veterans Appeals at \$175 million, an increase of \$14 million, to address the continuing appeals backlog.
- Construction – Major construction funding was set at \$1.13 billion, an increase of \$607 million over the current fiscal year. Funds will be used for correcting critical seismic deficiencies, new hospital and clinic construction, and repairing crumbling infrastructure in some of VA's oldest structures. Minor construction was set at \$649 million, an increase of \$307 million, by the House, and \$707 million by the Senate; the Senate funding amount is for expenditure until FY 2023.
- Construction Grants – The state extended care facilities (state veterans' homes) account received \$150 million in both bills (a \$40 million increase over the

previous year), with the state cemeteries programs receiving \$45 million, an amount equal to FY 2018. The American Legion continues to urge Congress to make substantial increases in both grant accounts to allow states to construct state cemeteries and states veterans' homes.

In an attempt to jumpstart the FY 2019 appropriations process, the House and Senate assembled a "minibus," a spending bill containing three of the 12 appropriations bills needed to fund the federal government for the upcoming fiscal year. The three measures contained in **HR 5895** are the FY19 spending bills for: the Energy Department and Water Development programs; the Legislative Branch; and Milcon/VA programs. These three measures are usually the least controversial of the annual spending bills. On June 8 the full House voted 235-179 to approve the minibus. The measure passed the Senate on June 25 by a vote of 86-5. The bill will now go to conference, with final passage anticipated prior to the October 1 deadline for the beginning of FY 2019.

On May 21, the House of Representatives passed a number of veteran-related bills. They included:

- **HR 1972, the *VA Billing Accountability Act***, which authorizes VA to waive copayment requirements when the veteran is not billed in a timely manner. The bill passed by a voice vote;
- **HR 3642, the *Military SAVE Act***, requires VA to carry out a pilot program to furnish community care to veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma. The measure passed by a voice vote;
- **HR 3832, the *Veterans Opioid Abuse Prevention Act***, would allow for the greater sharing of information between VA and State-based prescription drug monitoring programs. This legislation passed the chamber by a recorded vote of 377-2;
- **HR 4245, the *Veterans' Electronic Health Record Modernization Oversight Act of 2017***, would strengthen Congressional oversight of VA's electronic health record modernization program. The bill passed by a voice vote
- **HR 4334, the *Improving Oversight of Women Veterans' Care Act of 2017***, would require VA to submit reports on access to gender-specific care in the community and environment of care standards for women veterans. The bill passed by a voice vote;
- **HR 4958, the *Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2018***, would provide a cost-of-living adjustment for veterans disability, additional compensation for dependents, dependency and indemnity, and clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans. The measure passed by a voice vote;
- **HR 5215, the *Veterans Affairs Purchase Card Misuse Mitigation Act***, would strengthen controls over government purchase card misuse. The measure passed by a voice vote; and,
- **HR 5418, the *Veterans Affairs Medical Surgical Purchasing Stabilization Act***, would reform the VA Medical Surgical Prime Vendor (MSPV) purchase program. The legislation passed by a voice vote.

These measures now go over to the Senate for further action.

On June 15 President Trump signed into law **PL 115-184**, entitled the *Veterans Cemetery Benefit Correction Act*. This legislation requires the Department of the Interior to provide outer burial receptacles for veterans' remains buried in open cemeteries under National Park Service control. The use of outer burial receptacles in such cemeteries shall be in accordance with regulations or procedures approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Department of the Army.

On July 24 and 25, the House approved a number of veteran-related bills, the majority of them by voice votes. The bills were:

- **HR 2409**, which would allow servicemembers to terminate their cable, satellite television, and Internet access service contracts while deployed;

- **HR 2787**, the *Veterans-Specific Education for Tomorrow's Medical Doctors Act* or the *VET MD Act*, would establish in VA a pilot program instituting a clinical observation program for pre-med students preparing to attend medical school;
 - **HR 5538**, would amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the inclusion of certain additional periods of active duty service for purposes of suspending charges to veterans' entitlement to educational assistance under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs during periods of suspended participation in vocational rehabilitation programs;
 - **HR 5649**, the *Navy SEAL Chief Petty Officer William "Bill" Mulder (Ret.) Transition Improvement Act of 2018*, would amend titles 10 and 38, U.S.C., to amend the Social Security Act, and to direct the Secretaries of Veterans Affairs, Defense, Labor, and Homeland Security, and the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, to take certain actions to improve transition assistance to members of the Armed Forces who separate, retire, or are discharged from the Armed Forces;
 - **HR 5864**, the *VA Hospitals Establishing Leadership Performance Act*, would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish qualifications for the human resources positions within the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs. This measure was approved by a 417-0 recorded vote;
 - **HR 5882**, the *Gold Star Spouses Leasing Relief Act*, would amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to provide for the termination by a spouse of a lessee of certain leases when the lessee dies while in military service;
 - **HR 5938**, the *Veterans Serving Veterans Act of 2018*, would amend the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act to direct the VA Secretary to establish a vacancy and recruitment database to facilitate the recruitment of certain members of the Armed Forces to satisfy the occupational needs of the VA, to establish and implement a training and certification program for intermediate care technicians in that Department, and for other purposes; and,
 - **HR 5974**, the *VA COST SAVINGS Enhancements Act*, would direct the VA Secretary to use on-site regulated medical waste treatment systems at certain VA facilities.
- These measures now go to the Senate for further action.

On July 23, the Senate voted 86-9 to confirm Robert Wilkie as the new secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. This marked the first time since the VA was elevated to cabinet level that the agency's leader did not receive unanimous approval by the Senate. Mr. Wilkie will leave a position at the Defense Department to take over VA. Mr. Wilkie was sworn into office on July 30.

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

On January 8 President Trump signed into law **PL 115-105**, the *Jobs for Our Heroes Act*, which clarifies eligibility rules for active-duty service members and reservists applying for commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) under Department of Transportation programs. The legislation passed the Senate in September by unanimous consent, then cleared the House by a 418-0 recorded vote on December 21.

Previously, lawmakers had created a special program for veterans seeking CDLs, which allowed them to skip driving tests and some certification requirements if they had previous applicable experience from their time in the ranks. But those provisions – outlined in the *Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act* in 2015 (PL 114-94) – did not include reservists who have not yet separated from the military or active-duty troops planning ahead for their post-service careers. Transportation officials created a two-year exemption to cover those groups, but the new legislation makes those changes permanent.

In addition, the measure also allows more Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical professionals to perform required federal health examinations for the licensing

processes. Because of current rules, only a small number of VA staffers meet the requirements for administering those tests.

FY 2018 funding for the Department of Labor (DOL) was included in PL 115-141. The Veterans Employment and Training Service (VET), which oversees veterans programs, received \$295 million, \$16 million above FY 2017 spending. Spending totals for individual programs include:

- *Jobs for Veterans state grants* received \$180 million, which fund DVOP and LVER personnel;
- *Federal administrative costs* were funded at \$42.1 million;
- *Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs* received \$50 million;
- *Transition Assistance Program (TAP)* was funded at \$19.5 million; and,
- *National Veterans' Employment and Training Services Institute (NVTI)* was funded at \$3.4 million for its operations, which includes the training of DVOP and LVER personnel.

On May 21, the House of Representatives passed several measures dealing with veterans' employment and education programs. These bills included:

- **HR 4451**, the *Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Programs Reauthorization Act of 2018*, would reauthorize the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) as well as the Homeless Women Veterans and Homeless Veterans With Children Reintegration Grant Program (HVRP-W) for five years. The bill would also clarify eligibility for both programs to include incarcerated veterans and veterans using HUD-VASH vouchers. The bill passed the House by a recorded vote of 377-1;
- **HR 4830**, the *SIT-REP Act*, would require that in order for a school or training program to be approved for GI Bill benefits they must adopt a policy that disallows the school or training program from imposing a late fee, denial of access to facilities or other penalty against the veteran or eligible dependent due to a late payment from VA. This would only apply if the payments have not been received within 90 days of the beginning of the term and the Secretary would have the authority to waive this requirement. This legislation was approved by a 382-0 recorded vote; and,
- **HR 5044**, the *Service-Disabled Veterans Small Business Continuation Act*, would address a technical issue that has arisen from legislation that was passed last Congress related to rules for surviving spouses' ability to claim service disabled veteran owned small business (SDVOSB) status for the Vets First contracting program. The bill passed by a voice vote.

These bills now go to the Senate for passage.

On July 11 the House Appropriations Committee approved **HR 6470**, a FY 2019 funding measure for the Department of Labor (DOL). On June 28, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a companion bill, **S 3158**. The Veterans Employment and Training Service (VET), which oversees veterans programs, would receive \$299.7 million – \$4.6 million above FY 2018 spending – in the House bill, while the Senate version would provide \$300 million. Spending totals for individual programs include:

- *Jobs for Veterans state grants* will receive \$180 million, which fund DVOP and LVER personnel, in both measures;
- *Federal administrative costs* will be funded at \$43.2 million in the House measure, \$42.1 million in the Senate version;
- *Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs* would receive \$50 million in both bills;
- *Transition Assistance Program (TAP)* will be funded at \$23 million in the House version, and \$24.5 million in the Senate measure; and,

- *National Veterans' Employment and Training Services Institute (NVTI)* will be funded at \$3.4 million for its operations, which includes the training of DVOP and LVER personnel, by both bills.

On July 23, the House passed **HR 5693**, the *Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act*, by a voice vote. While this bill ostensibly addresses improvements to medical foster care for veterans, it also contains language that would create a new branch of Department of Veterans Affairs operations focused on economic opportunity, a move that could better highlight employment and education programs at the department. Many veterans service organizations – including The American Legion – have pushed for the new economic opportunity administration in recent months amid concerns that the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) is too overwhelmed with disability compensation and pension claims to focus on education programs, post-military jobs efforts, and a host of other resources.

The new agency – to be named the “Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration” – would be created beside the department’s three existing administrations – the Veterans Health Administration, the Veterans Benefits Administration, and the National Cemetery Administration - and would be led by an undersecretary charged with administering the many benefits available to veterans beyond disability claims and pensions.

The legislation caps the total number of full-time employees for the new administration at current VBA staffing levels, with the goal of pulling those existing roles within that agency into a different management structure to highlight their work. HR 5693 authorizes a temporary fee on refinancing VA home loans to pay for costs of the new administration.

MARKETING COMMISSION
Kenneth D. Danilson, Iowa, Chairman
Scott Miller, Indiana, Deputy Director

The American Legion Marketing Commission was formed in October 2015 to strategize and execute the organization’s activities to promote membership growth, strengthen the fundraising program, maximize merchandising opportunities, nurture corporate alliances and achieve greater brand awareness. In its third year, the commission continued to oversee multiple initiatives to better integrate marketing efforts executed by all divisions and to provide professional support for departments, districts, counties and posts.

Efforts are still underway to upgrade the digital media infrastructure that aims to improve the user experience for those who wish to learn about The American Legion, join, donate, buy merchandise, engage in a corporate alliance and participate in programs.

The American Legion national website continues to produce an increase in visitation year over year, and a jump of access to legion.org via mobile devices. Increases in online joining and renewal continue to be reflective of the visitation growth. The website infrastructure is designed in such a way that departments, districts, counties and posts can replicate it to better synergize the user experience and to improve brand consistency at every level.

As these developments have occurred, the commission has overseen day-to-day performance in key areas of the organization’s business, including membership, fundraising, corporate relationships, merchandising and branding.

The American Legion National Headquarters has developed a team of staff members and agencies to improve brand awareness through high-profile events, such as The American Legion Legacy Run, National Poppy Day, Salute to Heroes Inaugural Ball, National Convention, American Legion Baseball World Series and a major Veterans Day parade in New York City, as well as the 500 Festival Parade in Indianapolis.

Media attention to these and other American Legion activities have been cultivated through multiple alerts, personal contact with media outlets and message-point strategies for national participants at the events. Staff and agencies have supported improved engagement with outside media.

The American Legion Marketing Commission continues its work with staff and agencies to establish long-term strategic plans to deliver an effective, cohesive and best-in-class marketing program that maintains the integrity of the organization and its legacy while applying the most modern tools of communication

EMBLEM SALES COMMITTEE

Robert A. Baranowski, Massachusetts, Chairman

Richard B. Keith, Indiana, Director

The American Legion emblem is the exclusive property of the National Headquarters. The sale of the emblem, emblem pins, merchandise carrying the emblem and other items of organizational equipment is the responsibility of the National Headquarters in Indianapolis. The following tables show gross sales, net earnings, etc., for the entire calendar year 2017 and for the first three months of 2018.

January 1 to December 31, 2017

(12 months)

Gross Sales	\$13,685,179
Cost of Goods Sold	7,386,897
Overhead	4,271,320
Operating Profit	2,026,962

Total number of 2017 orders processed was 113,139.

January 1 to March 31, 2018

(3 months)

Gross Sales	\$ 2,933,477
Cost of Goods Sold	1,534,567
Overhead	1,082,873
Operating Profit	316,037

Total orders processed for first 3 months of 2018 was 26,823.

MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Walter Ivie, Texas, Chairman

R. Jeffrey Stoffer, Indiana, Director

Henry Howard, Indiana, Deputy Director

The American Legion Media & Communications Commission oversees the vast majority of print and digital media products and channels delivered by National Headquarters. The commission also has oversight of the organization's media outreach program, including press conferences, appearances in national news and media alerts.

In addition to fulfilling obligations for the various print and media channels, Media and Communications staff members support and coordinate with the Legion's media relations staff in Washington, D.C., as well as key marketing initiatives and corporate relationships.

The flagship of the program is The American Legion Magazine, the nation's best read magazine, according to an independent audit of 170 U.S. titles. With a circulation of nearly 2 million households and a readership exceeding 3.2 million, The American Legion Magazine ranks No. 1 in readership frequency, according to a survey released in July 2018

by researcher GfK MRI. The survey shows that 71.3 percent American Legion Magazine subscribers have read four out of the last four and 78.5 percent have read three out of the last four issues. The magazine's content is general interest, driven by the organization's main areas of engagement – patriotism, defense, veterans, children and youth, national and international affairs.

The Media & Communications Division draws most of its revenue from magazine advertising sales. In 2017, the year-end sales figure was \$8,777,360, or 91.4 percent of total advertising revenue. The bulk of the remainder of the division's operating revenue comes from a \$3 per member allocation.

The division's media channels and assets include:

- **Print.** This category includes The American Legion Magazine; The American Legion Dispatch (monthly leadership newsletter); The American Legion Annual Report; The American Legion National Convention Guide; the National Commander's Testimony to Congress; brochures and internal documents and additional print media as assigned from national leadership, including event programs; and other specialty products such as Our Pillars, Your Platform, which is published during each presidential election year. Additionally, the division fulfills editing and designing needs of 200 brochures and documents associated with other National Headquarters divisions.
- **Web.** The American Legion national website at www.legion.org is the nation's most-visited veterans web platform and serves as a gateway to virtually all American Legion media products and channels. The site, which receives between 400,000 and 550,000 unique visitors per month, offers news, videos and photography; transactional engagement through donations, membership and merchandising; entrance to special-interest microsites on such topics as the 100th Anniversary of The American Legion and Legiontown USA, where veterans and family members are invited to fulfill their own content and share it; the revamped American Legion Online Extension Institute training module; and the Burn Pit blog site, among others. Legion.org is also the entry point to the organization's interactive and transactional platform supporting American Legion Baseball.
- **Video.** The American Legion creates public service announcements, testimonials, features, event coverage and other videos. The primary video vault, called LegionTV, houses all of the organization's video content in one microsite. Videos are also published on the Legion's YouTube channel so that external audiences can view them, and our Vimeo channel, where American Legion members can download videos to a mobile device and play anywhere. Additionally, American Legion staff have been using Facebook Live to broadcast important events in real time on the social media platform as well as legion.org.
- **E-mail.** The division produces a portfolio of popular e-newsletters, led by the weekly American Legion Online Update, which reaches more than 1 million subscribers every Thursday with links to the top stories of the week on the Legion.org platform. Another e-newsletter with nearly as many subscribers (925,000) is the National Commander's Message, which goes out twice monthly, typically to promote a particular American Legion program or initiative. The monthly American Legion Centennial e-newsletter reaches 625,000 subscribers with news and information about the organization's 100th anniversary celebrations. Other e-newsletters include Dispatch, Honor and Remembrance, Flag Alert, The American Legion Riders, The American Legion Baseball Dugout, The American Legion Career Center and Legislative Update. Each newsletter has an open rate ranging between 20 and 40 percent that far exceeds the industry standard of 14 percent.
- **Social.** The American Legion has a fast-growing network of social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest. The

Legion's Facebook community has surpassed 150,000 followers, and the national Twitter following is approximately 96,200.

- **Mobile.** The American Legion's mobile audience has grown rapidly over the past 24 months, now representing roughly 50 percent of page views, as compared to 12 percent three years ago. Division staff redesigned the mobile site in 2016 to make it more user-friendly for our growing audience. In 2018, the Legion introduced its first text alert notification. Cell phone users can now receive text alert notifications from The American Legion when the president orders the flag to be lowered to half staff.
- **Smartphone apps.** The American Legion Media & Communications Division has produced and developed a collection of smartphone mobile apps, including a general American Legion app introduced in 2014 that has nearly 35,000 downloads; an American Legion World Series app, which generated more than 10,200 downloads; along with a National Convention app and a Sons of The American Legion app.
- **100th Anniversary.** The American Legion Media & Communications Division is deeply involved in the organization's centennial program, including organizational structure, merchandising, promotion, media products and general support. A highlight of the 2018-19 celebration will be a comprehensive magazine series, tracing the organization's roots when it was conceptualized through its birth and first 100 years of service while also looking into the future.
- **Media outreach.** The division is responsible for promoting the organization's programs, messages and priorities to outside media and key stakeholders. This includes the writing and distribution of press releases; regular engagement with national broadcast, print and web media producers; the development and delivery of media events and press conferences; timely alerts and audience quantification.
- **Internal communication groups.** The division has been actively engaged with two communication groups that help promote Legion activities and programs. The National American Legion Press Association (NALPA) is made up of Legion Family members who are responsible for public relations at the department or post level. Division staff members provide training and resources to these members so they can efficiently and effectively promote the Legion in their communities. Staff members also support The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC). These amateur ham radio operators interact with others inside and outside the Legion, and provide critical communication support in times of emergencies or natural disasters.
- **Working with posts, departments.** Division staff members work with American Legion department and staff members to promote various events. Oftentimes, this support comes in the form of developing kits that posts can use to promote local events like System Worth Saving visits or generate awareness of programs like the American Legion Legacy Scholarship. Staff have also worked with departments on repositioning their websites to focus on the Legion brand more effectively.
- **Physical.** The American Legion Media & Communications Division produces a variety of physical displays, including parade floats, billboards, plaques, convention booths and other forms of physical media for the organization.

The goal of this integrated approach to American Legion media is to maximize efficiencies, resources and talents to deliver the organization's message in a well-branded, effective strategy that aims to improve internal and external awareness, generate membership, inform visitors, stimulate interactions and simplify transactions. These tools are used for veterans outreach, which includes promoting the many values, programs and interests of The American Legion.

Overall, the media and communications program is built to replicate and represent the values and interests of The American Legion, from the individual member to the local post to the state department to the national headquarters, internal and external, and beyond.

NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION

G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman

E.C. Toppin, North Carolina, Secretary

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 20, 2017, 270 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security initially met in the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Room A1 & A6. Mr. G. Michael Schlee (Maryland) was elected Chairman and Mr. E.C. Toppin (North Carolina) was appointed Secretary.

After the initial meeting, the following convention committees met, held elections and dealt with the resolutions assigned to them:

Aerospace	Rick Oertel (VA), Chairman Charles Craynon (OH), Secretary
Conventional Armed Forces	Charles E. Kruger (MN), Chairman Jake Cabuag (WA), Secretary
Foreign Relations	Bill Flanagan (IL), Chairman John Mella (MI), Secretary
Law and Order & Homeland Security	George Wehrli (FL), Chairman Richard Keiser (NY), Secretary
Military Benefits & Quality of Life	Jerry Jordan (IN), Chairman Roger Friend, (OH), Secretary
National Guard and Reserve Forces	William Goede (MN), Chairman Ron Struble (IA), Secretary
Unconventional Forces and Intelligence	Doug Haggan (FR), Chairman Douglas Frahm (NE), Secretary

At 10:15 am, Sunday, August 20, 2017, the delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security reconvened in the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Room A1 & A6. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 15 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security or prepared by the Committee to meet issues which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. The Convention Committee authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report of the Convention Committee on National Security on behalf of its delegates and make technical and administrative corrections to the resolutions reported out of the Committee.

AEROSPACE

Rick Oretel (VA), Chairman

NO RESOLUTIONS

CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES
Charles Kruger (MN), Chairman

APPROVED

RESOLUTION NO. 21
SUBJECT: NATIONAL DEFENSE BUDGET
ORIGIN: Maryland

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion urge Congress to support budget increases in military spending to reverse the effects of sequestration; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress not allow our military forces to reach a weakened state in these uncertain and perilous times.

APPROVED

RESOLUTION NO. 23
SUBJECT: PROHIBITION ON WRONGFUL BROADCAST OR DISTRIBUTION OF INTIMATE VISUAL IMAGES
ORIGIN: Maryland

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion urges Congress to amend Title 10, United States Code to make actions of wrongful broadcasting or distribution of intimate visual images an offense subject to court martial.

APPROVED

RESOLUTION NO. 70
SUBJECT: MEDAL OF HONOR FOR E. ROYCE WILLIAMS
ORIGIN: California

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion petition the United States Congress and the Department of Defense to consider CAPT E. Royce Williams USN (Ret.) to be awarded the Medal of Honor for his act of valor given in service to our country on Nov. 18, 1952; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion continues to exert the maximum effort for honoring our forgotten heroes that have given so much to ensure our freedom.

REFERRED TO STANDING COMMISSION

RESOLUTION NO. 5
SUBJECT: STRATEGIC NUCLEAR POLICY
ORIGIN: Montana

FOREIGN RELATIONS
Bill Flanagan (IL), Chairman

APPROVED W/ AMENDMENT

RESOLUTION NO. 22
SUBJECT: POW/MIA POLICIES

ORIGIN: Maryland

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion remains steadfast in our commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. military personnel and designated civilian personnel missing and unaccounted for from our nation's past conflicts and current and present wars; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and members of Congress to speak out on every occasion on the need to expedite the return of U.S. personnel still missing and unaccounted for, regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to support legislation and policies that will sustain use of all necessary resources to achieve the fullest possible accounting of missing American service members and designated civilians regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to provide full funding for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to meet requirements for personnel and operations to achieve accounting goals and to ensure these funds not be redirected by the DOD for any other purpose; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to continue to declassify all POW/MIA information (except that revealing intelligence sources or methods) in a form readily available to the affected families and for public review; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to establish a joint standing congressional committee on POW/MIA affairs to oversee plans and policies to ensure continued priority by the executive branch in addressing requirements to achieve the POW/MIA accounting goals; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President to strengthen the US-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, and to initiate similar such commissions with the People's Republic of China, and Democratic People's Republic of Korea to increase POW/MIA accounting and recovery efforts; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to continue taking favorable steps with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as Hanoi increases efforts to provide the fullest possible accounting for US personnel still missing in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia controlled by Vietnam during the Vietnam War; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That "fullest possible accounting" is defined as the releasing live prisoners, repatriating remains of those killed in action or who died in captivity, or providing convincing evidence as to why neither is possible.

APPROVED W/ AMENDMENT

RESOLUTION NO. 40
SUBJECT: USS LIBERTY
ORIGIN: Washington

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion calls upon the 115th United States Congress to publicly, impartially, and thoroughly investigate the attack on the USS Liberty and its aftermath and to commence its investigation before the end of 2017, the 50th anniversary year of the attack.

RECEIVED AND RECORDED

RESOLUTION NO. 1
SUBJECT: TAIWAN STRAITS DIALOGUE
ORIGIN: Alaska

RECEIVED AND RECORDED

RESOLUTION NO. 24
SUBJECT: TAIWAN DEFENSE ARMS SALES
ORIGIN: Maryland

RECEIVED AND RECORDED

RESOLUTION NO. 25
SUBJECT: TAIWAN STRAITS DIALOGUE
ORIGIN: Maryland

LAW AND ORDER & HOMELAND SECURITY
George Wehrli (FL), Chairman

APPROVED

RESOLUTION NO. 17
SUBJECT: COUNTER TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME
ORIGIN: Maryland

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion calls on the United States government to renew its commitment to countering transnational organized crime in all its forms, both domestically and globally, by coordinating with and rendering aid and support to all municipal, state, and international efforts to do the same.

APPROVED

RESOLUTION NO. 19
SUBJECT: HOMELAND SECURITY AND THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC
ORIGIN: Maryland

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That the United States government develop comprehensive and robust drug use surveillance and monitoring programs in collaboration with state and municipal authorities to provide targeted law enforcement and public health interventions into communities, that the White House and Congress support all evidence-based efforts at supply, demand, and harm reduction, and that the White House and Congress pursue wide-ranging efforts to increase regional security and counter transnational organized crime.

APPROVED

RESOLUTION NO. 27
SUBJECT: SANCTUARY CITIES
ORIGIN: Ohio

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion take a firm stand in opposition of American citizens taxpayer dollars funding "sanctuary cities" that do not

cooperate with the federal authorities on reporting the immigration status of those who violate federal, state, and local laws.

REJECTED

RESOLUTION NO. 89
SUBJECT: HEALTHCARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PATRIOTS IN EXILE
ORIGIN: NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION

MILITARY BENEFITS AND QUALITY OF LIFE
Jerry Jordan (IN), Chairman

RECEIVED AND RECORDED

RESOLUTION NO. 9
SUBJECT: SUPPORT WALKWAY IN ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY ON
CHAPLAINS HILL
ORIGIN: North Carolina

REJECTED

RESOLUTION NO. 73
SUBJECT: SANDY HOOK BAY PIER
ORIGIN: New Jersey

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE FORCES
William Goede (MN), Chairman

NO RESOLUTIONS

UNCONVENTIONAL FORCES & INTELLIGENCE
Doug Haggan (FR), Chairman

APPROVED W/ AMENDMENT

RESOLUTION NO. 20
SUBJECT: NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY STRATEGY
ORIGIN: Maryland

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion calls on the United States government to continue to develop and refine processes and policies that will enhance interagency cybersecurity, to develop programs, initiatives, and other activities that educate citizens and to grow the U.S. cybersecurity workforce across all levels of government, to support state and municipal government and private sector actors in building resilient networks through information sharing and promulgation of best practices and standards, and to ensure the protection of critical infrastructure from cyber and other electronic attack.

Mr. Commander, National Officers, and Fellow Delegates. I am particularly pleased to announce the winners of the National Blood Donor Awards for this past year.

Category I - Departments with 100,000 or more members
Post & Individual Participation: No submission

Category II - 70,000 to 99,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Minnesota

Category III - 40,000 to 69,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Maryland

Category IV - 25,000 to 39,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: No submission

Category V - 10,000 to 24,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Montana

Category VI - less than 10,000 members
Post & Individual Participation: No submission

Many of our Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. Close to 4,500 medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2016-2017 are the Departments of Alaska, Connecticut, Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, and North Dakota. This speaks well for these Departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

**REPORT OF NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION TO
THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 11-12, 2017**

You have received a copy of the report of the meeting of the National Commission during the 99th National Convention in Reno which took place on August 22nd-24th. The National Security Commission has not met since the 99th Annual National Convention. However, two resolutions were referred to the standing Commission: 1) Resolution 5: Strategic Nuclear Policy; 2) Resolution 9: Support Walkway in Arlington National Cemetery on Chaplains Hill. The recommended action for Resolution 5 is to dispose of administratively and Resolution 9 is being referred to the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

The National Security Commission and its seven committees along with the council continue to review developments in the national security and foreign relations arenas. The National Security Commission has not met since our report to you at the National Convention. The 99th National Convention adopted nine resolutions which, when added to the more than 80 existing resolutions, comprise the Commission's policy and legislative agendas for the year ahead. One resolution was referred to the standing Committee and our recommendations are contained in Addendum A attached to this report.

The following are brief updates on several critical areas for your review:

CURRENT THREAT ENVIRONMENT

Counter-ISIL coalition/counter-terrorism

On July 10, 2017, Prime Minister Abadi of Iraq declared the liberation of Mosul, the 2nd largest city in Iraq, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) capitol in Iraq. U.S.-backed Iraqi forces retook the city after eight months of intense urban combat that has killed and injured tens of thousands and displaced close to million Iraqi citizens. The counter-ISIL coalition continues to degrade the capabilities of the group and force them from territory, and are in the final phase of retaking ISIL's capitol in Syria, Raqqa, using U.S.-allied fighting groups.

There have been several major terrorist attacks since our last report by ISIL and al-Qaeda affiliates in the Europe, including the St. Petersburg Metro bombing in April (15 killed, 64 injured), the Manchester Arena bombing in May (22 killed, 116 injured), the London Bridge attack (8 killed, 48 injured) in June, and the Catalonia attacks in August (16 killed, 152 injured). ISIL and al-Qaeda affiliates have shown time and again the capacity and capability to execute mass-causality terrorist attacks, with security officials concerned that as the Islamic State collapses they will turn continue to turn toward targeting soft targets like civilian gatherings.

North Korea

Kim Jong Un continues to develop, refine, and threaten the use of nuclear weapons against the United States and its allies in East Asia, drawing universal condemnation and a broad array of international sanctions. Current intelligence estimates and observations of ballistic missile tests indicate that North Korea has the capability of reaching the continental United States, with the development of a reliable intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and reentry vehicle estimated by early 2018. On September 3, 2017 North Korea claimed to have successfully tested a thermonuclear (hydrogen) bomb which, based on the corresponding 10 fold increase in seismic activity the day of the test compared to previous attempts, demonstrated a blast with a potential yield of 250 kilotons.

In response, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 2371 in August, banning all exports North Korean coal, iron, lead, and seafood, and Resolution 2375 in September, which limits North Korean petroleum imports, banned joint ventures, textile exports, natural gas condensate and liquid imports, and banned North Korean nationals from working abroad in other countries. Additionally, in September President Donald Trump issued an executive order allowing the U.S. to cut from its financial system and/or freeze assets of any companies, businesses, organizations and individuals trading in goods, services or technology with North Korea, as well as banning aircraft and ships who have entered North Korea in last 180 days from entering the United States. Another executive order followed banning entry of North Korean nationals to the United States.

Russia

Details have emerged about the complex and wide-ranging information operation conducted by alleged Russian government affiliated entities through social media over the course of the 2016 presidential election. In May, Facebook reported that unnamed actors exploited the social network in an attempt to influence election through a combination of tactics including false news, disinformation, or networks of fake accounts aimed at manipulating public opinion. In September 2017, Facebook told congressional investigators it had discovered that hundreds of fake accounts linked to a Russian troll farm had bought \$100,000 in advertisements targeting the 2016 U.S. election audience. The ads, which ran between June 2015 and May 2017, primarily focused on divisive social issues; some were geographically targeted. Facebook has also reportedly turned over information about the Russian-related ad buys to Special Counsel Robert Mueller. Facebook had previously denied that fake news on their platform had influenced the election and had insisted it was unaware of any Russian-financed advertisements

China

Despite continuing tensions in the South China Sea between the United States, China, and other claimants like Philippines and Vietnam, current discussions between the White House and President Xi Jinping have been focused on North Korea. China remains a persistent cyber threat, however, and like Russia is interested in shifting the balance of power in what it sees as its sphere of influence. China is undergoing a concerted modernization and expansion of its maritime presence and power projection, with plans to add 100,000 Marines and the recent launching its first indigenously built air craft carrier as current examples. Whether this buildup of capability and capacity will worsen relations

between China and its neighbors remains to be seen. China's critical role in the global economy, and the desire of the Chinese Communist Party leadership to continue high economic growth, constrains China's ability to act too aggressively, though it continues to test the United States.

Iran

In April 2017, the Trump administration certified that Iran had continued to comply with the JCPOA, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, whose provisions essentially dismantle Iran's capability to develop nuclear weapons. In July 2017, Xiyue Wang, an American graduate student and researcher at Princeton University, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for "infiltration" of Iran. While the International Atomic Energy Commission continues to monitor Iranian compliance with the JCPOA, the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated 16 entities and individuals for what it said was "engaging in support of illicit Iranian actors or transnational criminal activity."

The U.S. and its regional allies in the Middle East have long worried about Iran's influence in Iraq; as well as its actions in Syria, where it supports President Bashar al-Assad; its backing of Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shia movement; its role in the Yemeni civil war, where Tehran is engaged in a proxy war with its main rival, Saudi Arabia; and its influence over Shia minorities throughout the majority-Sunni Arab world.

TRICARE Update

Beginning in January 2018, there will be changes to the TRICARE benefit.

- Section 701 of the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act will be implemented and synchronized with the Department's transition to the TRICARE 2017 contracts, beginning January 1, 2018.
- Broadened access for beneficiaries by setting the requirement that at least 85 percent of U.S. beneficiaries have ready access to network providers in TRICARE Select and gives Select beneficiaries access to no-cost preventive services from network providers.
- It expands TRICARE coverage of preventive care services, treatment of obesity, high-value care, and telehealth.
- It establishes the annual open season enrollment period that beneficiaries will participate in each year to choose their health plan, and the rules for qualifying life events that will allow for changes outside that open season. It also establishes 2018 as a transition year, during which enrollment changes will be available throughout the year as beneficiaries adjust to this new process.
- For Prime beneficiaries, it establishes new requirements for timely appointments and more access to care without the need for referrals, reinforcing standards for access to care. Prime beneficiaries will also have expanded access to urgent care without the need for a referral from their primary care manager.
- For Select beneficiaries, DOD has converted the current cost-shares, where you pay a percentage of the total cost, to a fixed dollar amount.
- It preserves benefits for active duty dependents and TRICARE-for-Life beneficiaries.
- It restructures and continues authority to update TRICARE Prime retiree copayments, which have not changed since 1995.
- TRICARE Select will replace TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra on January 1, 2018. TRICARE Select brings together the features of TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra in a single plan. Select enrollees may obtain care from any TRICARE authorized provider without a

referral or authorization. Enrollees who obtain services from TRICARE network providers will pay lower cost sharing amounts for network care.

- All current TRICARE beneficiaries will be automatically enrolled in their respective plan on January 1, 2018. TRICARE Prime enrollees will remain in TRICARE Prime. TRICARE Standard and Extra beneficiaries will be enrolled in TRICARE Select. Appendix B outlines what actions will unfold automatically, effective January 1, 2018. Future beneficiaries, or beneficiaries wishing to change their TRICARE plan must proactively change their enrollment during enrollment eligibility periods.
- Beneficiary out-of-pocket costs will be updated.
- Beneficiaries can choose to enroll in or change their TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select coverage during an annual open enrollment period in November-December, 2018 for coverage beginning on January 1, 2019. Failure to enroll in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select results in the termination of coverage for civilian care. These beneficiaries who choose to not enroll may only receive care at a military clinic or hospital on a space available basis.
- 2018 will be a transition year with a grace period for enrollment. To allow beneficiaries to adjust to making their health care option choices during an annual open season enrollment period or to remember to elect their coverage when a QLE occurs, beneficiaries can elect to make their coverage changes anytime during 2018 to ensure they have the right coverage in place starting in 2019.

READINESS

In a June 2017 report (GAO-17-369) from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified five key readiness areas that are significantly affecting the Department of Defense's ability to accomplish its mission:

- Rebalancing forces and rebuilding readiness: the military services are generally smaller and less combat ready than in recent years, and DOD officials warn that the military is not strong enough to protect U.S. national security interests from worldwide threats. In particular, the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps all are facing increasing maintenance challenges for their naval and air platforms due to operational strain.
- Mitigating threats to cyberspace and expanding cyber capabilities: in 2016, the Director of National Intelligence identified cyber threats as first among strategic threats in the United States. While DOD has made progress in developing a strategy to protect its networks against cyber-attacks, it must improve planning for continuity of operations in a degraded cyber environment, and strengthen its insider threat awareness program, and improve oversight and visibility of the cyber capabilities of National Guard units.
- Controlling escalating costs and managing finances: DOD's FY16 budget accounted for nearly half of federal discretionary spending, and its costs continue to grow. DOD remains one of the few federal entities that cannot demonstrate an ability accurately account for and reliably reports its spending or assets. DOD needs to consistently implement leading acquisition practices, address improper payments to control rising costs in the military health system (which now accounts for a projected \$60 billion of DOD's budget, a 217% increase over 16 years), identify underutilized space, and remediate financial management deficiencies. Since 2011, GAO has directed 79 recommendations to DOD in this area, of which 72 remain open, including 52 priority recommendations.

- Strategically managing human capital: funding for civilian and military personnel costs represented nearly half of DOD’s budget, projected to be \$180 billion in FY18, while it spent about \$115 billion on contractor-provided services in FY15. GAO has raised questions in the past about DOD’s information on its contractor workforce, as well as the need for a workforce mix assessment and comprehensive compensation strategy to meet recruiting and retention goals.
- Achieving greater efficiencies in defense business operations: DOD has emphasized the need to improve its business practices and reduce overhead and free up resources for higher priorities, but needs to take additional actions to drive business transformation efforts, implement management controls for its business systems investments, and develop guidance to manage the acquisition of contracted services.

BUDGETING

FY18 NDAA - Both the Senate and House Armed Services Committees (SASC/HASC) have passed a version of the FY18 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The House Appropriations Committee – Defense (HAC-D) has released their FY18 defense appropriations bill, while the Senate Appropriations Committee – Defense (SAC-D) has not. The topline budget differences between the bills and the Presidential Budget Request (PBR) are as follows:

	FY18 PBR	FY18 HASC NDAA	FY18 SASC NDAA	FY18 HAC-D Defense Appropriations
Base budget	\$574 billion	\$631.5 billion	\$640 billion	\$584.2 billion
Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO)	\$65 billion	\$64.6 billion	\$60 billion	\$73.9 billion

It is important to note that every passed FY18 defense authorization or appropriations bill exceeds the caps put into place by the Budget Control Act of 2011 and amended by the Bipartisan Budget Control Acts of 2013 and 2015. Currently, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that in FY18, defense and non-defense discretionary spending is capped at \$549 billion and \$516 billion respectively (money authorized in the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget does not count against the budget caps). That means that the PBR and every defense bill passed this session exceeds the budget cap for defense spending between \$25 to \$91 billion dollars.

The Senate and the House Armed Service Committees must now conference on the NDAA to harmonize the language in their bills. However, should Congress authorize and appropriate defense funds above the current cap without legislation in place that adjusts or removes those caps, it will trigger sequestration and automatic cuts to discretionary spending.

POW/MIA UPDATE

In September, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the appointment of its new director, Kelly McKeague, who had previously served as the DPAA’s first Deputy Director.

Full funding of DPAA is something we continue to be concerned about. The effects of continuing resolutions and threats of government shutdowns are crippling to DPAA efforts. Without guaranteed funding recovery teams are threatened with having to end their

mission and return stateside short of mission dates. Mission planning is impacted as well. The difficult mountains of Vietnam can only be excavated during the warm months and without guaranteed funding opportunities may be missed.

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander Denise Rohan, our NEC Liaison and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee for their continuing support for Commission efforts to take care of troops and "provide for the common defense"

Unaccounted for From Past Conflicts						
WWII	Korean War	Vietnam War	Cold War	Iraq & Other Conflicts	Total	
72,993	7,722	1,602	126	6	82,449	

**ADVANCE REPORT OF THE
NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION TO THE
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
February 26 – March 1, 2018
G. MICHAEL SCHLEE (MARYLAND), CHAIRMAN**

The National Security Commission convened on February 26th during the 58th Annual Washington Conference at the Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C. The following report is a summary of this session:

The commission was honored to welcome National Commander Denise Rohan. The National Security Commission was honored by her attendance and very appreciative of his participation.

National Commander Rohan addressed some key policy areas that the National Security Commission covers, particularly the importance of caring for military families since they form the foundation in the lives of active duty servicemembers.

The program proceeded in the following five sections: 1) POW/MIA update; 2) Selective Service System brief; 3) defense budgeting; 4) cybersecurity. An Awards Selection Committee composed of members of the National Security Commission and headed by the Committee on Law and Order and Homeland Security met in the afternoon of Monday, February 26 for the purpose of selecting the Regional and National Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year.

Finally, two foreign policy panels were hosted on Wednesday, February 28, in partnership with the Harriet Fulbright Institute and the Institute of Technology, Economics and Diplomacy, hosted a foreign policy summit to discuss global issues that affect the United States' relations with China and Japan, as well as Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East.

I. POW/MIA update

The National Security Commission welcomed Mr. Kelly McKeague, Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), and Mrs. Ann Mills-Griffiths, Chair of the Board for the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia. Mr. McKeague is responsible for policy, control, and oversight of all aspects of the Department's program to account for our nation's missing personnel from past conflicts. He leads DoD's worldwide enterprise of research, investigation, recovery, and identification operations, and supporting functions, in order to provide the fullest possible accounting of our missing personnel to their families and to the nation. Mrs. Mills-Griffiths served over 30 years as Executive Director and CEO of the National League of Families, and currently focuses on policy, operations and sustaining the League's financial ability to achieve accounting objectives. At the request of the Secretary of Defense, she

also serves on the Advisory Committee of the Defense Department's 50th Anniversary Vietnam War Commemoration.

The speakers provided membership with very informative updates regarding overcoming successive budget crises, the remaining obstacle to increasing the pace and scope of accounting efforts while ensuring the safety of field recovery teams. Mr. McKeague addressed the balance between budgeting for disinterment of existing, known remains and conducting field operations to identify some of the 26,000 recoverable POW and MIA service members. Mrs. Mills-Griffiths, a regular participant in the National Security Commission's work on POW/MIA accountability, gave an overview of the continuing work of the National League of Families and that organizations support for both the American Legion and the DPAA.

II. Selective Service System update

The Commission's next speaker was Mr. Donald Benton, the Director of the Selective Service System. Mr. Benton discussed the importance of the Selective Service System to the security of the United States. He explained the system's dual missions as the following: to furnish manpower to the Defense Department during a national emergency to manage alternative service for men classified as conscientious objectors, and to register, with only a few exceptions, all male U.S. citizens and male immigrants residing in the United States who are ages 18 through 26. Mr. Benton called on Legionnaires, as influencers and mentors, to volunteer and help educate their communities on the importance of registering for the Selective Service. Additionally, Mr. Benton asked for the Commission's support in continuing to back legislation aimed at ensuring that the system has proper funding and support to carry out its mission.

III. Defense budgeting

To address defense budgeting, the Commission invited Dr. Lawrence Korb, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and a former assistant secretary of defense for manpower during the first Reagan administration. Dr. Korb laid out the realities of tradeoffs within defense budgeting, remarking that no matter the dollar amount spent there is no way to buy perfect security. Dr. Korb spoke about the massive flow of defense funds that seeks to do everything from modernizing and recapitalizing nearly every existing weapon system, from long-range bombers to ballistic missile submarines, while still providing appropriate funding for operations, maintenance, and training. While most analysts agree that there are shortfalls in several major accounts that are having an impact on operations, like having the majority Marine Corps air platforms grounded due to lack of spare parts, there is a serious question about the wisdom in continuing to throw money at the Pentagon. The Department of Defense has considerable and entrenched difficulties with proper accounting, and Dr. Korb pointed to the fact that it has never undergone a full audit as more reason to be wary about committing taxpayer money with minimal oversight.

IV. Cybersecurity

The Commission's final speaker was Mr. Tim Maurer, co-director of the Cyber Policy Initiative at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Since 2010, his work has been focused on cybersecurity, human rights in the digital age, and internet governance, currently with a specific focus on cybersecurity and financial stability. In his remarks, Mr. Maurer explored the secretive relationships between states and hackers. As cyberspace has emerged as the new frontier for geopolitics, states have become entrepreneurial in their sponsorship, deployment, and exploitation of hackers as proxies to project power. Such modern-day mercenaries and privateers can impose significant harm undermining global security, stability, and human rights. These state-hacker relationships therefore raise important questions about the control, authority, and use of offensive cyber capabilities. While different countries pursue different models for their proxy relationships, they face

the common challenge of balancing the benefits of these relationships with their costs and the potential risks of escalation.

V. National and Regional Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year Selection Committee

Prior to the Washington Conference the Chairman of the Law and Order and Homeland Security Committee appointed an awards selection subcommittee to review all the nominations that had been received during 2017 from the Departments for the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and Firefighter of the Year award programs. The Subcommittee met Monday, February 26, in the International Ballroom East in the Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C., to select the 5 regional Firefighter of the Year winners and the 5 regional Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Winners. There were 23 law enforcement officer nominees and 16 firefighter nominees submitted.

The selections for the Regional Firefighter of Year Award winning Departments are:

NEW ENGLAND:	Edward Manko Department of Pennsylvania
CENTRAL:	Jack Hoffman Department of Virginia
SOUTHERN:	Dale Jogner Department of North Carolina
MIDWESTERN:	Michael Sancot Department of Iowa
WESTERN:	Damon Faust Department of Oregon

The selection for the Regional Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award winning Departments are:

NEW ENGLAND:	Jennifer Frank Department of Vermont
CENTRAL:	Clifford Hibbs Department of Indiana
SOUTHERN:	Brett Walsh Department of North Carolina
MIDWESTERN:	David Watson Department of Minnesota
WESTERN:	Steven Binstock Department of Oregon

The subcommittee then reviewed the regional winners to select one National Firefighter of the Year and one National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

The selection for the National Firefighter of the Year is:

NATIONAL FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR:	Damon Faust Department of North Carolina
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The selection for the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year is:

NATIONAL LAW OFFICER OF THE YEAR:	Officer Brett Walsh Department of Oregon
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The winners and runner-ups have been contacted and the Regional winners will receive their awards during their respective Department Conventions. The National

winners will receive their awards on stage from the National Commander during National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

VI. Foreign policy panels

On Wednesday, the National Security Commission, in partnership with the Harriet Fulbright Institute and the Institute of Technology, Economics and Diplomacy, hosted a foreign policy summit to discuss global issues that affect the United States' relations with China and Japan, as well as Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East.

The summit, held in conjunction with the Legion's 58th Annual Washington Conference in Washington, D.C., featured two expert panels moderated by American Australian Association President John Berry and Joshua Walker, head of Global Strategic Initiatives at Office of the President at the Eurasia Group.

The first panel examined China's economic and political trajectory, with a focus on the key dimensions of the U.S.-China-Japan relations among the world's largest economies – including what implications it might have for peace and security in Asia. Speakers included Oriana Mastro, assistant professor of security studies at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University; Center for a New American Security President Richard Fontaine; and Walker.

The second panel discussed the many challenges that Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East are struggling to manage and how these collectively increase political volatility and risk for investors. Among the expert speakers included German Marshall Fund of the USA President Karen Donfried; Middle East Institute President Wendy Chamberlin; Luke Coffey, director of the Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation; and Alex Vatanka, senior fellow at the Middle East Institute.

REPORT OF NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION TO THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MAY 9-10, 2018

The National Security Commission and its seven committees along with the council continue to review developments in the national security and foreign relations arenas. Two executive session of the National Security Commission met by phone on Tuesday, April 17th to act on 3 resolutions and May 3rd to act on 1 resolution.

Presiding was Chairman G. Michael Schlee

Vice Chairman present: E.C. Toppin (NC)

Committee Chairman present included: Charles Kruger (MN), Daniel Seehafer (WI), Geroge Wehrli (FL), George Bolling (MD), Bill Goede (MN), and Doug Haggan (FR).

MATTERS RECEIVED, CONSIDERED AND ACTED UPON BY THE COMMISSION: RESOLUTIONS

On April 17th resolutions 2755, submitted by the Utah Department Executive Committee and resolution 2756, submitted by the Tennessee Department Executive Committee were reviewed and both resolutions were recommended to be referred to the standing commission. (1) resolution was submitted by the National Security Commission and has been forwarded to the National Executive Committee for approval.

On May 3rd resolution 2758, submitted by the Arizona Department Executive Committee was reviewed and recommended to be approved as amended.

Resolution 2750, submitted by the New Mexico Department Executive Committee was considered by the National Security Commission during the Washington Conference has been forwarded to the National Executive Committee for approval.

Our recommendations are contained in Addendum A attached to this report.

The following are brief updates on several critical areas for your review:

NATIONAL SECURITY UPDATES

CURRENT THREAT ENVIRONMENT

North Korea

The upcoming summit represents an aggressive attempt at diplomacy engineered primarily by South Korea and the United States to avoid the collision course of war with North Korea that we appeared to be on due to the 20 ballistic missile tests by North Korea throughout 2017 and the response from President Trump.

Here is what we can expect to see in the next few days. South Korean president Moon Jae-in will likely have calls with other capitals following his meetings with Kim Jong-un. Regional discussions of the implications of the summit will take place on May 9 when the leaders of Japan, China, and South Korea will gather in Tokyo for the first trilateral summit meeting since 2015. It is likely that Moon will visit Washington, after marking the one-year anniversary of his government's election on May 10, to personally brief President Trump on his meetings with Kim.

The summit between the two Koreas is another positive step in diplomacy that keeps the situation around the Korean peninsula peaceful, moving away from last year's atmosphere of crisis. The positive atmospherics of the meeting, and North Korea's continued adherence to a weapons testing moratorium should also be welcomed. However, the inter-Korean summit today perhaps raises more questions than it answers. There is clear agreement between the two Koreas that there should be no war on the Korean peninsula anymore. But it is still unclear whether the North Korean regime defines denuclearization in the same way as the United States (CVID—complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization). It is still unclear whether there will be an attenuation of the U.S. alliance commitment to South Korea as a condition for North Korea's denuclearization.

Syria

Last month the U.S., U.K. and France launched airstrikes on targets within Syria, in response to the chemical attack against alleged rebel forces and civilians. The strikes were conducted in coordination with European allies against three targets. These targets were confined to facilities known to produce chemical weapons.

Right now, there are about 2,000 U.S. troops in Syria, working as advisers to the Syrian Defense Forces or providing other support to local militias battling the Islamic State. The mission in Syria is to eradicate the Islamic State, also known as ISIS and DoD remains committed to seeing that mission through. The Pentagon estimates that the U.S.-led coalition has reclaimed 90% of the territory once controlled by the Islamic State.

China

China intends to become a global military power and is currently building the capability to do so. Militarily, China seeks to limit our access and undermine our important alliances in the Indo-Pacific. While modernizing their nuclear enterprise, China is also developing a full range of air, maritime, space, and cyber capabilities. Their continued militarization of the South and East China Seas accompanies expanding sovereignty claims that have no basis in international law. They leverage diplomatic and economic influence through the Belt and Road Initiative, and China's military interests have followed these initiatives into the Indian Ocean, South Asia and beyond. And while we continue to seek Chinese cooperation on a number of fronts, especially with respect to North Korea, their projection of a state-controlled, 'strong-rule-the-weak' global order is incompatible with U.S. interests and a rules-based international order.

Russia

Russia continues to modernize and invest across the full range of military capability, including new aircraft, submarines, armor, counter-space, and air defense systems, while also modernizing conventional and nuclear strike capabilities. These investments and activities are specifically designed to limit our power projection capability and undermine the credibility of U.S. alliances, especially NATO.

Violent Extremism

We continue to grapple with the challenge of violent extremism, including ISIS, a resurgent al Qaida, and associated movements. Our strategy remains focused on cutting the flow of finances, foreign fighters, and their disruptive narrative, while working by, with, and through local partners to sustain pressure on their networks, disrupt attacks, and dismantle their capabilities.

Iran

Iran also continues to project malign influence and threaten freedom of navigation in the Middle East. They are also modernizing their space, cyber, missile, and conventional maritime capabilities which pose a direct threat to our Allies and our interests in the region.

The American Legion's Position: The National Security Commission has Resolution No. 175: Oppose Iran Nuclear Deal. We urge Congress not to lift any sanctions in connection with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The United States must be prepared to exercise all options, up to and including military action, in the interest of preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

READINESS

The Department of Defense (DOD) faces a strategic choice: whether to focus on modernization for high-tech conflicts with China and Russia or expand forces and improve readiness to meet a superpower's commitments for ongoing conflicts and crisis response. In their FY 2018 budgets, the services all complain that they are too small for the demands being put on them and hedge toward expanding forces and readiness.

In 2013, readiness took a hit as a result of sequestration. Because cuts had to be made late in the fiscal year, the services were forced to cut facility maintenance, international exercises, and most significantly, training activities. The services have been digging out of that hole ever since.

The administration emphasized readiness in its FY 2017 and FY 2018 budgets. Nevertheless, readiness data are conflicting. Some metrics, like Army rotations to Combat Training Centers, service flying hours, and Navy ship steaming days, have recovered from post-2013 lows, but others, like Navy and Marine Corps aircraft availability, remain depressed. With overall DOD budgets rising, targeted readiness increases, such as aviation spare parts, may be better investments than across-the-board increases.

This lack of proper training and maintenance resulting from the high operational tempo may have played some role in the recent incidents involving the surface fleet. In the wake of the deadly collisions involving the USS *John S. McCain* and USS *Fitzgerald*, investigations found the incidents were "avoidable" and occurred as a result of poor decision making and training.

High ops tempo is a policy choice, though often not in the Navy's hands. The United States could reduce deployments, and the new National Defense Strategy proposes doing that, but such reductions are often regarded as detrimental to alliances. DOD could build more forces, and the administration plans to do some of that, but such expansion is expensive, and DOD's current plan is to emphasize modernization. The services sometimes argue that replacing "tired iron" with new equipment will help readiness. While such modernization may increase capability, it may not improve readiness. Flying hour costs for an existing F-18, for example, are about half that of a new F-35B/C.

high readiness is desirable in forces and equipment. However, readiness is also very expensive and highly perishable—it must be renewed constantly. Buying more means that DOD cannot buy something else, for example, modernization or force structure. In the new DOD strategy being developed for 2019 and beyond, the services hope to pursue all three goals—expand forces, improve readiness, and increase modernization—but the fiscal future is highly uncertain, and they will likely have to make difficult trade-offs.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Japan Delegation

On March 27th, National Security staff met with an official delegation from the nation of Japan, facilitated by the Institute for Technology, Economics, and Diplomacy (INTED). Dr. Joshua Walker, head of Global Strategic Initiatives at Eurasia Group, was also in attendance. The meeting presented an opportunity for cultural and policy exchange, and resulted in Japanese delegation extending an invitation for the National Commander to meet with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during the 2018 Far East trip.

Foreign Policy Panels

On February 28, the National Security Commission, in partnership with the Harriet Fulbright Institute and the Institute of Technology, Economics and Diplomacy, hosted a foreign policy summit to discuss global issues that affect the United States' relations with China and Japan, as well as Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East.

The summit, held in conjunction with the Legion's 58th Annual Washington Conference in Washington, D.C., featured two expert panels moderated by American Australian Association President John Berry and Joshua Walker, head of Global Strategic Initiatives at Office of the President at the Eurasia Group.

The first panel examined China's economic and political trajectory, with a focus on the key dimensions of the U.S.-China-Japan relations among the world's largest economies – including what implications it might have for peace and security in Asia. Speakers included Oriana Mastro, assistant professor of security studies at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University; Center for a New American Security President Richard Fontaine; and Walker.

The second panel discussed the many challenges that Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East are struggling to manage and how these collectively increase political volatility and risk for investors. Among the expert speakers included German Marshall Fund of the USA President Karen Donfried; Middle East Institute President Wendy Chamberlin; Luke Coffey, director of the Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation; and Alex Vatanka, senior fellow at the Middle East Institute.

National Commander's Travels

From November 26 – December 8 The National Commander visited military installations in countries across the Far East to include South Korea, Okinawa, The Philippines, and Hawaii. One of the main focuses during the travel is for the National Commander to personally encourage and express thanks to U.S. service men and women in each region for their patriotic service to the nation on behalf of The American Legion. Other important aspects of the trip are to gain a better understanding of regional security issues and meet with senior Department of Defense officials to communicate the viewpoints of The American Legion. Staff also included town hall events at installations within each country in order to communicate to servicemembers the benefits available to them through programs offered through the American Legion such as support with the Department of Veterans Affairs claims, transition assistance, and employment services. In support of The American Legion's commitment to achieving full accounting of all U.S. POW/MIAs from all conflicts the National Commander visited the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's new headquarters and met with their senior leadership.

MILITARY AND VETERAN QUALITY OF LIFE

Staff has attended monthly meetings with senior defense officials from the Defense Health Agency to discuss a series of major Tricare changes that were implemented January 1, ushering in fee changes for almost all beneficiaries, a new plan name, a new regional map and new regional contractors.

The updates are the result of a periodic federally mandated contracting process combined with new legislation passed by Congress in 2016.

Impacts for All Users

Tricare's annual fee schedule will now operate on a calendar year -- January 1 to December 31 -- instead of the fiscal year system used the past. That change impacts all beneficiaries, including Tricare for Life users, who are otherwise untouched by the shifts.

On January 1 the plans known as Tricare Standard and Tricare Extra were combined into a single plan, known as Tricare Select.

Active duty family members who use Tricare Prime saw no major changes, so long as they stayed in that plan.

Starting in 2019, active duty families and those who retire from active duty will no longer be able to switch at will between plans. Instead, they must wait for annual fall "open enrollment" period to move plans or experience a "qualifying life event." Tricare has yet to release a final list of what those "life events" will include.

On February 1, 2018, TRICARE pharmacy copayments changed for all beneficiaries, except Active Duty Service Members, dependent survivors of ADSMs, and medically retired service members and their dependents.

Retail Network Pharmacy Copayment Changes (up to 30-day supply)

- Generic formulary drugs will increase from \$10 to \$11.
- Brand-name formulary drugs will increase from \$24 to \$28.
- Non-formulary drugs will increase from \$50 to \$53. (*NOTE: Non-formulary drugs are generally only available through home delivery.*)

TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery Copayment Changes (up to 90-day supply)

- Generic formulary drugs will increase from \$0 to \$7.
- Brand-name formulary drugs will increase from \$20 to \$24.
- Non-formulary drugs will increase from \$49 to \$53.

Military Treatment Facility Pharmacy Copayment Changes

- Beneficiaries can still fill their prescriptions for \$0 copay at MTF pharmacies.

Upcoming changes to TRICARE

Dental and vision changes will be implemented in the 4th quarter of 2018 as well as a first ever open enrollment for calendar year 2019. Prices for CY19 are expected to be available by October 2018.

The American Legion's Position: The National Security Commission has Resolution No. 102: Oppose Tricare Fee Increases which states that the American Legion is strongly opposed to hikes in premiums and or enrollment fees being paid by enrollees in TRICARE. The American Legion urges Congress to decisively reject these unjust proposed increase in the military retirees' TRICARE enrollment fee, deductibles, or premiums.

BUDGETING

FY18 Omnibus - Defense

This year Congress passed HR 1625, the \$1.3 trillion omnibus spending bill. The bill modified defense discretionary spending caps for fiscal years 2018 and 2019 to \$700 and \$716 billion, respectively. \$107 billion more than FY 2017. The FY19 Budget Request

builds on the FY17 and FY18 budgets and supports rebuilding the U.S. military into the lethal and ready Joint Force the nation needs. However, we cannot reverse a decade-plus of erosion in one fiscal year. The Joint Force must continue to receive sufficient, sustained, and predictable funding for the foreseeable future to restore our competitive advantage and ensure we never send future generations into a fair fight.

It includes \$589.5 billion in base discretionary funding — \$73.4 billion above FY 2017 levels — and \$65.2 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) associated with the war in Afghanistan and other counterterrorism operations such as the fight against the Islamic State (also known as ISIS or ISIL).

- The bill fully funds an active duty end strength of 1,322,500 and a reserve component end strength of 816,900, an increase of 9,500. It also funds a 2.4 percent pay raise for military personnel. The bill adds \$222 million to pay for increased end strength and \$206 million to address the increase in military pay.
- \$9.5 billion for the Missile Defense Agency (MDA), an increase of \$1.6 billion above the FY2018 budget request. In December, Congress appropriated \$2.0 billion in FY2018 funding for MDA to accelerate Missile Defense and Defeat Enhancements to counter the threat from North Korea, including: \$960 million for additional THAAD and AEGIS interceptors; \$568 million to initiate the expansion of Missile Field #4 at Fort Greely, Alaska, with 20 additional Ground-Based Interceptors equipped with the newest Kill Vehicle; and
- \$123 million to support a Joint Emerging Operational Need from U.S. Forces Korea for integration and more efficient use of missile defense systems to improve defensive capability on an urgent timeline. The bill also would provide \$44 billion for 10 F/A-18E/F Super Hornet fighters, 35 Joint Strike Fighters, and 17 Apache helicopters.
- The bill also includes \$23.8 billion, \$3.4 billion above the budget request. In total, the agreement funds the construction of 14 new ships: one aircraft carrier, two Virginia class submarines, two DDG-51 destroyers, three Littoral Combat Ships, one LXR amphibious warship, one Expeditionary Fast Transport ship, one Expeditionary Sea Base, one TAO fleet oiler, one Towing, Salvage and Rescue ship (ATS), and one T-AGS oceanographic survey ship.

FY18 Omnibus – State & Foreign Operations

The bill contains a total of \$16 billion in base and OCO funding for the operational costs of the State Department and related agencies, as well as diplomatic efforts to enhance peace and stability around the globe. The amount is \$1.8 billion below fiscal year 2017, largely due to reduced costs of United Nations international peacekeeping missions and a one-time infusion of supplemental funds that was provided last year in the Security Assistance Appropriations Act, 2017 for scaling up counter-ISIS operations.

Within this amount, the legislation provides \$6 billion for embassy security. These funds will address needs at more than 275 diplomatic facilities overseas, including facility upgrades and security personnel as recommended in the Benghazi Accountability Review Board report.

FY18 Omnibus – Homeland Security

The bill includes \$47.8 billion for the Department of Homeland Security, an increase of \$5.4 billion over the last fiscal year. These dollars will bolster border infrastructure, add more “boots on the ground,” increase detention space, and improve surveillance technology. The legislation includes \$1.571 billion for physical barriers and associated technology along the Southwest border. This amount provides for more than 90 miles of “border wall system,” going beyond the Administration’s budget request for a total of 74 miles in fiscal year 2018.

FY19 Proposed Defense & State Department Budgets

President Trump's FY19 budget includes an expected \$16 billion defense increase, offset by domestic-side cuts. The plan signaled the White House's intent to restore a "depleted" military. The request includes \$716 billion for the Defense Department, including \$617 billion in the base budget and \$69 billion in the emergency Overseas Contingency Operations account. Overall, the request is 3.1 percent of gross domestic product -- a figure near historic lows. The budget is a strategy-driven document that stresses the nation's primary goals: to defend the homeland, make the military more lethal, and to strengthen old alliances and build new ones.

The American Legion's Position: These budget increases and proposed increases for fiscal year 2019 in defense spending are a step in the right direction to rebuild our devastated military but we must continue to advocate for full funding of the military. The National Security Commission has Resolution No. 21: National Defense Budget which urges Congress to support budget increases in military spending to reverse the effects of the 2013 Budget Control Act also known as sequestration and to not allow our military forces to reach a weakened state in these uncertain and perilous times.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

One of the most important parts of the work of the National Security Division is the preparation and presentation of congressional testimony as well as letters of support on issues of national security and the quality of life of servicemembers. Since January 2017, the National Security Division has written four (4) letters of support.

The following is a synopsis of the congressional hearings and correspondence held from January to May 1, 2017, on matters pertaining to the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission:

On January 24, the staff wrote a letter of support to Representative Sanford Bishop (GA) for "The Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act", which would provide a comprehensive solution to the concurrent receipt problem facing members of our nation's armed services by ending the dollar-for-dollar offset on military retirement pay based on their VA disability compensation.

On February 12, the staff wrote a letter of support to Senator Elizabeth Warren (MA) for S. 2402 "A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the number of peer-to-peer counselors providing counseling for women veterans, and for other purposes", which emphasizes counseling for women who suffered sexual trauma while serving, have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or another mental health condition, or are at risk of becoming homeless.

On February 12, the staff wrote a letter of support to Representative Mike Coffman for "The Peer-2-Peer Act", which would increase the number of peer-to-peer counselors for women veterans and other purposes to support a better quality of life for veterans.

On April 9, the staff wrote a letter of support to Representative Daniel Lipinski for "The Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act", which would extend government commissary, morale, welfare, and recreation privileges to disabled veterans, Purple Heart recipients, Prisoners of War, and their designated caregivers.

National Security worked with the Legislative Division on testimony that was submitted on April 25th on the VA management of life insurance programs for service members and veterans. The American Legion made several recommendations to include sending veterans three month reminders prior to the expiration of their one-year enrollment period. We also raised the question of how VA is currently assessing consistency and quality of claims decisions for TSGLI.

POW/MIA UPDATE

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) has accounted for 62 service members from past conflicts since the beginning of 2018. Of this total 47 are from WWII, 11 are from the Korean War, and 4 are from the Vietnam War.

Since January 1, 2018 staff have coordinated attendance by Department leadership at 4 Family Update events hosted by DPAA at:

20 January, San Diego, California
 24 February, Jacksonville, Florida
 24 March, El Paso, Texas
 20 April, Rapid City, South Dakota

Staff will continue to coordinate attendance with Department for future updates which are scheduled for:

May 19 Louisville, KY
 June 21-24 Washington, D.C.
 August 9-10 Washington, D.C.
 September 8 Philadelphia, PA

Full funding of DPAA is something we continue to be concerned about. The effects of continuing resolutions and threats of government shutdowns are crippling to DPAA efforts. Without guaranteed funding recovery teams are threatened with having to end their mission and return stateside short of mission dates. Mission planning is impacted as well. The difficult mountains of Vietnam can only be excavated during the warm months and without guaranteed funding recovery opportunities may be missed or delayed.

The follow is the current statistical list of the unaccounted for from past conflicts:

WWII	Korean War	Vietnam War	Cold War	Iraq & Other Conflicts	Total
72046	7704	1598	126	6	81480

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander Denise Rohan, our NEC Liaison and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee for their continuing support for Commission efforts to take care of troops and "provide for the common defense"

The American Legion's Position: The National Security Commission maintains Resolution No. 22: POW/MIA Policies which calls for the fullest possible accounting which is defined as releasing live prisoners, repatriating remains of those killed in action or who died in captivity, or providing convincing evidence as to why neither is possible. The American Legion remains steadfast in our commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. military personnel and designated civilian personnel missing and unaccounted for from our nation's past conflicts and current and present wars.

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION COMMISSION

Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado, Chairman

Chanin Nuntavong, California, Director

The following report covers the activities of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and its staff during the program year ending June 30, 2018.

The Ninety-Ninth Annual National Convention in Reno, Nevada, the Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 Meetings of the National Executive Committee approved certain positions expressed in resolutions submitted to those bodies through the Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation and the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, respectively.

The approved resolutions are set forth as follows:

2017 National Convention
 Reno, Nevada

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
3	WWII Veterans Hospital and Medical Eligibility	KY

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
8	Expand the Presumptive Period for Veterans Who Served in South Korea	ME
13	Improve VA Communication With Service Officers	MN
14	Extend Allotted Time For Claims Review By Service Officers	MN
15	Department of Veteran Affairs Pharmacy Medication Dispensing Requirements	PA
16	Department of Veteran Affairs Automobile Allowance Program	PA
28	Permit Department of Veterans Affairs Providers to Discuss the Use of Medical Marijuana in Those States that Have Legalized Marijuana	OH
41	Radiation-Exposed Veterans	WA
47	Research Into Hearing Loss Due to Loud or Constant Noise Exposure in the Military	IL
58	Expansion of Presumptive Conditions Associated With Camp Lejeune Contaminated Drinking Water	NY
74	Air Carrier Access	VA&R
75	Department of Veterans Affairs Rural Health Care Program	VA&R
76	Veterans Emergency Room or Urgent Care Facility Relief	VA&R

2017 Fall National Executive Committee Meeting

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
12	Department of Veterans Affairs Drug Pricing Policy	CA
13	Columbia University Vietnam Veterans Health Study	VA&R
14	Rescinding Non-Legislative Resolutions from the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission	VA&R

2018 Spring National Executive Committee Meeting

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
16	Beneficiary Travel Philippines	VA&R
17	Call on the Department of Defense to Provide Equal Benefits to All Deceased Veterans Being Buried at Arlington National Cemetery	VA&R
18	Furnish Hospital Care and Medical Services to Veterans and Family Members who were Stationed at Military Installations	VA&R

	at which the Veterans and Dependents were Exposed to Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances	
19	Burn Pits and Environmental Exposures	VA&R
20	Suicide Prevention Program	VA&R
21	Rescinding Non-Legislative Resolutions from the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission	VA&R

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Meetings

Members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission held two meetings during the period August 19, 2017, through June 30, 2018.

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met on August 19, 2017 during the National Convention in Reno, Nevada, and a report was subsequently made to the National Executive Committee relative to the Commission's meeting.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met for the 95th consecutive year in Washington, DC, on February 26, 2018, in conjunction with the 58th Annual Washington Conference.

Annual National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference

The 95th Annual Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Conference was held at the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C. on February 26, 2018.

National Commander Denise Rohan (WI) presented Mr. Joseph H. Hodgson, from the Department of Wisconsin, the VA Voluntary Services (VAVS) Volunteer of the Year Award. Conferees were addressed by Mr. Scott Blackburn, Executive in Charge for Information and Technology, Department of Veterans Affairs, Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Executive in Charge, Veterans Health Administration (VHA); Thomas J. Murphy, Executive in Charge, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA); Ms. Melody Libby, Manager for Therapeutic Area Strategies in Government Affairs, AbbVie, Dr. Keita Franklin, Acting National Director, Suicide Prevention, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Mr. Randy C. Reeves, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, National Cemetery Administration.

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Legislative Activities

From July 2017 - June 2018, the VA&R Division participated in a total of twenty (20) hearings. Please refer to the following table for more information about the content and timeline of the hearings:

Date	Committee/ Subcommittee	Speaker	Subject
July 25, 2017	House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) Subcommittee on Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs (DAMA)	Gerardo Avila	VBA processing of claims for benefits based on post-traumatic stress disorder
September 13, 2017	HVAC/DAMA	Alex Zhang	H.R. 1721, H.R. 1900, H.R. 3122, H.R. 3656, H.R. 3657 & pending legislation

October 12, 2017	HVAC	Louis Celli, Jr.	Asset and Infrastructure Review Act of 2017, & H.R. 2773, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to sell Pershing Hall
October 24, 2017	HVAC	Roscoe Butler	Pending & draft legislation
October 25, 2017	HVAC/DAMA	David Spivey	Examining how VBA can effectively prevent and manage overpayments
December 13, 2017	HVAC/DAMA	Gerardo Avila	The Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) and VA's Pre-Discharge Programs for Separating Servicemembers
January 30, 2018	HVAC	N/A – Submittal	Appeals Reform: Will VA's implementation effectively serve veterans?
February 6, 2018	HVAC	N/A – Submittal	Department of Veterans Affairs program of comprehensive assistance for Family Caregivers
February 7, 2018	Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC)	Roscoe Butler	Pending & draft legislation
February 28, 2018	HVAC/SVAC joint hearing	Natl. Cmdr. Denise Rohan	Legislative priorities of The American Legion
March 7, 2018	HVAC Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations (O&I)	Louis Celli, Jr.	Pending legislation
March 8, 2018	House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Military Personnel	Gerardo Avila	Arlington National Cemetery
March 15, 2018	HVAC Subcommittee on Health (H)	Matthew Shuman	Department of Veterans Affairs FY 2019 budget submission for medical programs & construction
March 15, 2018	HVAC/DAMA & Subcommittee on Economic Opportunities (EO)	Matthew Shuman	Department of Veterans Affairs FY 2019 budget submission
March 20, 2018	HVAC/DAMA	Larry Lohmann	Pending legislation
April 17, 2018	HVAC/H	Louis Celli, Jr.	Pending & draft legislation
April 25, 2018	HVAC/DAMA	Jeff Steele	VA management of life insurance programs for servicemembers & veterans
May 22, 2018	HVAC	Roscoe Butler	Current status of remedial actions at VISNs 1, 5, & 22

June 7, 2018	HVAC/DAMA	Gerardo Avila	Honoring heroes: memorializing our nation's veterans
June 13, 2018	HVAC/H	Roscoe Butler	Pending & draft legislation

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division

The VA&R Division is managed by Chanin Nuntavong, Director, VA&R. VA&R is responsible for directing all matters involving veterans' health care issues, veterans related matters to include compensation, pension, disability indemnity compensation, claims submitted to the Board of Veterans Appeals and Special Claims Unit, the Appeals Management Center, all satellite offices to include Benefits Delivery at discharge offices, PMD/DMC/Insurance, the Department Service Officer School, liaison to the Department Service Officers located in the 56 regional offices, the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service program, resolutions, and National. To assist in carrying out these program responsibilities, the director is assisted by a Deputy Director for Benefits, a Deputy Director for Health Care, a Deputy Director for MEB/PEB & DoD and an office assistant.

Informational Services/Distribution of VA&R Releases

The American Legion has several pamphlets and brochures available upon request to veterans and organizations in need.

In particular, the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division offers the following publications:

- *What to do before a Veteran Dies – A Guide to Pre-Planning*
- *Veterans Serving Veterans – A Summary on The American Legion Volunteer Program in the Community*
- *Agent Orange Benefits & Program – A Guide for Vietnam Veterans and their Families*
- *Gulf War Era Benefits & Programs – A Guide for Veterans and their Families*
- *Know Your Benefits*
- *Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Handbook*
- *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*
- *Post Service Officer Guide*
- *Missing in America Project*

The handbooks and pamphlets, as well as those in regards to the Department of Veteran Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program, are also distributed at seminars, conferences, and Department Conventions. Supplies of these and other VA&R pamphlets are maintained at The American Legion headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana, and distributed upon request through The American Legion Washington (DC) Headquarters located at 1608 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006. Shipping is complimentary and requests can be made by calling headquarters directly at 202-861-2700 or by email to: Wkennedy@legion.org.

VA&R Cemetery Committee Activities

During the 2018 Washington Conference, Randy C. Reeves, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, thanked The American Legion for the opportunity to address the VA&R Commission about the accomplishments of NCA during FY 2017, and the goals for FY 2018. According to Secretary Reeves, NCA interred more than 135,000 veterans and family members during FY2017. Secretary Reeves discussed NCA's goals for 2018 and beyond. His first focus is to build a culture within NCA where every employee understands that they only have one opportunity to get it right. Secretary Reeves also announced that NCA would be establishing a Legacy Program with the purpose of

memorializing and telling veterans' stories. Under the Legacy Program, NCA will be partnering with schools across the country and offer grants to help students learn about the local veteran population, and currently nine schools have been added. Secretary Reeves remarked that we all die twice, when we breathe our last breath and when people forget us. Secretary Reeves mentioned that organizations like The American Legion exist to ensure that a veteran never dies by always honoring their memory.

During the breakout session the committee heard from Michael G. Conley, Chief of Staff, American Battle Monuments Commission and Timothy A. Nosal, Chief of External Affairs, American Battle Monuments Commission. The American Battle Monument Commission (ABMC) was established in 1922 in order to preserve and guard overseas commemorative cemeteries and memorials. ABMC is responsible for 21 cemeteries and 29 monuments, memorials and markers. The committee was interested to hear about Clarke Veterans Cemetery in the Philippines. U.S. Public Law 112-260 passed in January 2013, directed ABMC to restore and maintain the cemetery upon agreement between the United States and the Philippines. Mr. Nosal explained that an agreement was reached in December 2013, giving ABMC the authority to restore, operate and maintain the cemetery. Under the current agreement ABMC does not conduct burial services, they only determine eligibility. Anyone wishing to conduct a burial must seek a permit from the Clarke Development Corporation and make arrangements with a local funeral home. All burials are to be at family expense at no cost to the government.

Annual Report of the Medical Consultant

Dr. Ann Marie Gordon joined the Staff as the Senior Medical Consultant on September 18, 2000. She is a practicing physician with experience in Internal Medicine and Occupational and Environmental Medicine and a previous career in Forensic Toxicology.

The Medical Consultant acts as a source of medical and technical knowledge to the Appeals Representatives of the Appeals Unit located at the Board of Veterans' Appeals as well as the Washington, D.C. headquarters office and Indianapolis where a BVA Unit team was established earlier this year, in addition to the Service Officers throughout the U.S. These representatives discuss cases during case development and submit inquiries to the Medical Consultant with the VA claims record available electronically for review and evaluation as to the appropriate course of action in presenting the case either to the Board of Veterans' Appeals, the Appeals Management Office, or to the VA Regional Office of jurisdiction. The Medical Consultant after reviewing and evaluating the case may (1) discuss the case with the representative and/or (2) prepare a statement explaining the case including providing medical references and a medical opinion relative to the issues.

The American Legion Service Officers in the field also submit difficult cases for review and evaluation to the Medical Consultant. This is accomplished by requesting that the case be called-in for an administrative review or by submitting copies of pertinent documents from the VA electronic claims record. The Medical Consultant responds directly to the Service Officers. In addition, difficult cases have been submitted to the Medical Consultant by non-profit organizations, including Association for Wounded Veterans Changing Lifestyle, Inc., for review and evaluation.

The Medical Consultant is an advisor to the Director, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division on Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical matters, the attorneys at Bergmann and Moore, LLC and other attorney groups referred by Bergmann and Moore. Each consultation is usually on an informal basis and discussed among several key VA&R staff members. In the past year, the medical consultant has been working closely with the attorneys at Bergmann and Moore, providing key information and medical opinions on numerous cases. The staff attorneys have described Dr. Gordon's reports as thorough and persuasive. Staff attorney at NVLSP (our former legal partners), Patrick Berkshire, stated: "I have to say your reports are some of the best I have ever read in my six years of doing this type of work." The attorney at Covington and Berling,

LLP stated: “Based largely on your excellent opinion letter, the BVA granted (without a hearing or additional briefing) service connection....” Dr. Gordon has also worked with the new legal team, Bergmann & Moore in reviewing, preparing and presenting at the Washington D.C. Department Service Officer School.

A laptop personal computer has been purchased for the Medical Consultant’s use to enable her to keep in touch with daily operations and to present lectures at various schools of training.

During the past year, the Medical Consultant has discussed medical questions with individual Appeals Representatives, Claims Representatives and Service Officers for about 140 cases. She has reviewed 68 cases and submitted written reports on 18 of these cases (number of cases impacted by office move and lack of VBMS access in the last quarter). The research and medical opinions provided by the Medical Consultant have resulted in numerous grants and remands for additional development. As an example, one of the claims concerning cause of death resulted in a grant of \$143,831.00 and lifetime benefits to the spouse of \$1,300.00 monthly. In another claim, concerning the development of pulmonary fibrosis as a consequence of Agent Orange Exposure, the Board found the positive evidence of nexus at least equipoise to the negative evidence and Dr. Gordon’s opinion as persuasive as the VA medical examiner’s opinion, thereby satisfying the criteria for entitlement to service connection. The medical opinions provided by the Medical Consultant have resulted in many grants in cases which were denied for seven years and longer; several grants included retroactive payments.

Additionally, the Medical Consultant has conducted numerous one-on-one medical training sessions and general training for the Appeals Unit staff this year and has also conducted presentations at the Washington DC Department Service Officer School, Indianapolis Department Service Officer School, and the New York State Service Officer Training.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Service Units:

VA Insurance Center at Philadelphia, PA and St. Paul, MN DMC Center

The American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Staff at Philadelphia consists of a Chief of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative and a Pension Benefits Assistant Director/ Representative. Associated offices at the St. Paul and Milwaukee VA Pension Centers have one VA&R Pension Assistant Director with Pension Benefits Representative at each of the St. Paul and Milwaukee centers. The VA Pension Centers have moved to activate a centralized mail processing operation to facilitate processing of paper mail into the VA electronic systems.

The Chief of Insurance Activities / Insurance Representative must have a thorough knowledge of government life insurance laws, regulations, and transaction and adjudication procedures, and be able to analyze them correctly in order to properly represent insured veterans and their beneficiaries.

Daily operations involve a full range of insurance services to include the representation of insured veterans and their beneficiaries, the review of insurance case files and supporting evidence and claims files as required, the furnishing of status reports and account assistance to those insured, beneficiaries, accredited field representatives and VA adjudicative and accounts personnel, close liaison with Department Service Officers and other field personnel to ensure prompt and complete service, and the input to, review of, and where necessary the correction of VA actions and records both on cases involving disability and death claims, and on those involving any of a wide variety of insurance accounting and financial transactions that occur on active and matured accounts. General insurance information and guidance is provided to field service officers across the United States, along with assistance in the preparation of insurance appeals and claims submittals. Coordination with VA executive and program management personnel is conducted on, both, individual cases and broad policy/administrative matters. A fax to PDF capability added to the Philadelphia office has greatly expedited claims processing by enabling rapid

receipt of documents needed to complete transactions and claims that would otherwise be significantly delayed due to mailing times, particularly in emergency cases. The Philadelphia office remains heavily involved in the large increase in SDVI applications beginning in 2004 and 2005, occasioned by the mass mailing of SDVI notifications to virtually all service-connected veterans mentioned earlier. Information, staff analysis, and testimony/comments for major legislative insurance benefit increases, is provided to the Director, National VA&R Commission for presentation to Congress recently for a long overdue House oversight hearing on the various veterans life insurance programs.

The St. Paul office provides similar operations, staff representation and nationwide veteran's service in the field of VA Debt Management nationally, and for Pension operations for the western third of the nation.

A major new addition to the Philadelphia National VA&R unit occurred effective January 2010 with the acquisition of an experienced service officer for the new role of Pension Benefits Representative, to include all necessary computer and high capacity Fax equipment. A new National Staff representative was also added to the VA Regional office and PMC in Milwaukee for the middle third of the nation as well. The mission of the PMC representatives is to assist in all VA pension, DIC, accrued benefits, burial and dual entitlement claims where The American Legion holds power of attorney.

New web-based sources, provided by the Director, VA&R Commission, and by the VA Pension Center, have now been implemented to enable the processing of incoming paper and faxed claims to be received via E-Mail in pdf format, and to be submitted electronically into the VA system via a direct upload to the VA for electronic input to the VA claims process, to significantly reduce paper usage, related files storage and processing time. For example, a paperwork reduction of over 95% has been experienced in the Philadelphia unit, with service officer review and submittal times to VA vastly speeded up.

All offices have obtained access to the new VA benefits online systems coming on board in 2013: the Stakeholders Entry Portal (SEP), the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) and e-Benefits.

For the period August 1, 2017, to end of June 2018, the following activities of The American Legion's Philadelphia, St. Paul, and Milwaukee offices were reported:

Insurance, Pension & Debt Management:

(DMC = Debt Management Center)

Letters Received:	9,588
Letters Sent:	13,714
Disability Insurance Claims:	1,226
Death Insurance Claims:	126
Insurance Folders Reviewed:	1,602
In-Force Insurance Policy Accounts Reviewed:	3,160
New Insurance Accounts – SDVI:	2,869
Telephone / E-Mail Contacts:	12,231
Personal Contacts:	5,094
Submittal Memorandums & Reports:	2,632
VA Case Responses Processed: Insurance, Pension and Debt Management Cases:	8,905
*Live Claims, Evidence and Other Submittals Presented:	48,861

*Excludes death claims and includes policy transactions such as dividend, loan and premium actions, plan conversions, cash surrenders, refunds, beneficiary changes, disability claims with related medical and legal evidence, Wills, estate documents, master record data changes, general inquiries, Debt Management and Pension case claims and supporting documents.

DMC Original Claims:	
DMC Case Audits / Pension Rating Reviews:	7,536
DMC Grants & Denials	2,453
New Pension Claims:	6,406
Other Insurance Transactions & Inquiries:	747
Pension Supporting Submittals (On-Going Cases)	13,521
Pension Appeals	165
Other Pension Transactions & Inquiries	12,080

Claims Service

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division provides assistance and representation to all veterans and their survivors in claims and appeals before the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as, Department of Defense Medical Evaluation Board and Physical Evaluation Board through a staff of thirty representatives.

Within the table of organization, the Deputy Director for Claims Service is responsible for the activities of the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA). Cases at the BVA Unit are reviewed and written briefs are submitted on the appellant's behalf or a personal hearing is conducted before a Veterans Law Judge of the BVA with the appellant. The BVA Unit consists of a senior team leader (position now vacant), one team leader, two team trainers, a senior medical consultant, two administrative assistants and 14 veterans disability claims specialists. BVA Unit staff are now located at the building housing the Board of Veterans' Appeals, The American Legion Washington, D.C. headquarters office and in Indianapolis, IN.

The Deputy Director for Medical Evaluation Board/Physical Evaluation Board (MEB/PEB) & Department of Defense (DoD) is responsible for the activities of the MEB/PEB, DoD Boards, Benefits Delivery at Discharge, Pension Maintenance Center, Life Insurance, Debt Management, and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

The MEB/PEB team works directly with military members who may have a medical condition that may not meet medical retention standards and are referred to the Medical Evaluation Board for further evaluation by DoD. The American Legion representatives assist servicemembers by providing advocacy during the process in the form of counseling, education, writing written rebuttals in their behalf and representation at the formal hearing. Depending on the outcome, the servicemember will be medically retired or separated with severance, the choices made during the IDES process will impact them for the rest of their lives. The American Legion has one MEB/PEB representative in the Washington D.C. capital region.

Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) allows active duty service members to apply for disability compensation benefits from the VA prior to retirement or separation from military service. This program permits servicemembers with at least 60 days but no more than 180 days remaining on active duty to file. The 60 days is to allow sufficient time to complete the medical examination process prior to separation from service. The American Legion has two BDD representatives that have offices inside VA Regional Offices; one stationed in Winston-Salem, NC and one stationed in Salt Lake City, UT.

The VA Pension Management Centers (PMC) process adjustments of benefits for individuals in receipt of non-service connected disability pension, death pension and dependency indemnity compensation. The VA has three PMC's and the American Legion has representation to assist all claimants and DSO's; one at Milwaukee, one at Philadelphia, and two at St. Paul. The St. Paul representatives also handle debt management services for claimants that have been notified of an overpayment.

The VA Life Insurance Agency offers security in the event of the insured's death and financial protection to survivors. The American Legion has one representative at the Philadelphia VARO to assist veterans and their survivors with life insurance.

Military Review Boards Unit

Title 10, United States Code, sections 1552 and 1553 provide statutory authority for the existence and operation of the Military Discharge Review Boards and the Boards for Correction of Military Records. The American Legion was instrumental in the creation of these boards shortly after World War II and has represented former servicemembers petitioning them for relief since.

During the period 1 July 2017 through 30 June 2018, the two staff members of the Military Review Boards Unit provided counsel, guidance and representation to former servicemembers seeking correction of their service record by the Army, Air Force, Navy / Marine Corps and Coast Guard discharge review and correction boards. These requests involved a wide variety of issues including character of service upgrades, reason for discharge changes, entitlement or amendment of physical disability severance or retirement, issuance or reissuance of military awards and decorations, requests for military personnel files and service medical records, and administrative corrections to official military records.

The following breaks down the individual administrative actions taken by the staff of the Military Review Board Unit in assisting former servicemembers prepare their cases for review by the respective boards.

Case Development / Office Tasks

Volume

COMMUNICATIONS

Phone Calls	1753
Emails	2430
Mail/Fax	377
Appointments	113

CONSULTATIONS

Applicant	1875
Petitioner	556
VSO/Agency	340
Veteran/Other	234

ADMINISTRATION

Correspondence	557
Research/Training	55

The following classifies the types of reviews that were presented to the respective service boards.

Military Discharge Review Boards

	<u>Record Reviews</u>	<u>Hearing Reviews</u>	<u>Reconsiderations</u>
AIR FORCE	21	09	00
ARMY	67	14	00
NAVY	33	11	00
MARINE CORPS	43	08	00
COAST GUARD	01	00	00

Boards for Correction of Military Records

	<u>Record Reviews</u>	<u>Hearing Reviews</u>	<u>Reconsiderations</u>
AIR FORCE	23	00	00
ARMY	65	00	00
NAVY	32	00	00
MARINE CORPS	26	00	00
COAST GUARD	02	00	00

This final breakdown provides the total number of cases received back from the boards, the number of favorable decisions of petitions.

Military Discharge Review Boards

	<u>Total Decided</u>	<u>Total Corrected</u>
AIR FORCE	15	04
ARMY	43	09
NAVY	18	03
MARINE CORPS	22	04
COAST GUARD	00	00

Boards for Correction of Military Records

	<u>Total Decided</u>	<u>Total Corrected</u>
AIR FORCE	14	03
ARMY	62	04
NAVY	11	03
MARINE CORPS	09	02
COAST GUARD	00	00

Each of the discharge review and correction boards is under a congressional mandate to adjudicate cases within one year from the date of acceptance. Currently all are meeting or exceeding this requirement with timeframes ranging from 9 to 12 months.

The Military Review Board Unit also provides training material to our Department Service Officers, instructional guides for our applicants and counsel, on an as needed basis, to veterans petitioning the Combat Related Special Compensation Boards, Physical Disability Board of Review, Awards and Decorations Boards.

Benefits Delivery at Discharge

The American Legion currently has two Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) representatives, one located in Salt Lake City, Utah and the other in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

BDD is a program designed to allow a servicemember to submit a claim for disability compensation prior to separation, retirement, or release from active duty or demobilization. BDD can help servicemembers receive disability benefits sooner, with a goal of within 60 days after release or discharge. (Titles 10 and 32).

Effective July 2017, VA launched the Pre-Discharge Redesign program which replaces the current BDD program. Under the new redesign, the Quick Start program, which accepted claims from servicemembers with less than 60 days prior to their separation date, was eliminated and the new timeline to file a claim is from 180-90 days prior to discharge. Transitioning servicemembers who fail to file a claim prior to the 90 day window can file a traditional claim after discharge.

The American Legion representatives review an average of 3000 claims annually. These claims typically contain nine conditions each and are submitted from around the world by service members prior to separating from all branches of the Armed Forces. Additional research was required on some cases. The offices serve as a point of contact for veterans and Accredited Service Officers wishing to inquire about a claim, question a rating or submit documents in support of a claim. Many of the calls from veterans result from their frustration with getting prompt and accurate information from the VA assistance line and wanting some advocacy from The American Legion. These offices strive to provide immediate answers to questions or concerns. In cases that require further research, answers are normally provided within 48 hours. These offices work with little fanfare, but the positive effect on veterans and their families is enormous. Between the BDD Offices in Winston Salem, NC, and Salt Lake City, UT, we reviewed 1,445 BDD Claims with 12,101 issues. Each claim required reviewing the rating, C&P examination, and service treatment records. Additional research was required of some of the cases. The BDD offices also

received 376 phone calls from veterans and Department Service Officers throughout the country requesting the status of a claim or questions concerning a rating. The offices provided an update for the status of the claim and provided options concerning the rating. Additionally, 88 veterans visited the offices with general VA benefit questions. The offices received and reviewed 1323 pieces of correspondence and represented 24 veterans at the Rating Board Hearing.

Board of Veterans Appeals

Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018, The American Legion represented 8,054 claimants seeking benefits. For the claims receiving dispositions (12,624), over 73% of the claims were either determined to have been inadequately developed and prematurely denied or were erroneously denied by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA).

The American Legion continues to find that VBA inadequately develops and prematurely denies claims in their decisions. Failures to comply with their duty to assist or misapplication of laws when adjudicating are too frequently occurring. Through VBA's lack of proper development, veterans' appeals are often remanded for the necessary development and extending the amount of time to have a final disposition on the appeal. Training and the application of knowledge gained continues to lead American Legion personnel to achieve greater outcomes in their advocacy efforts. Bergman & Moore provides new hire training to provide the necessary tools for new employees to successfully represent claimants; moreover, Bergman & Moore provides unit and individual training to update personnel on changes in laws, court decisions, etc. Through the leadership provided by the senior team leader, American Legion personnel also routinely attend training provided by BVA attorneys, and he has implemented a regular training schedule for the unit's team leaders to provide local training.

Department Service Officers School

Beginning in 1985, The American Legion has authorized the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission to conduct Department Service Officer (DSO) schools bi-annually for accredited representatives of The American Legion. It represents the organization's ongoing commitment to developing a network of highly trained and experienced service officers responsible for effectively advocating for veterans and their families.

The purpose of these sessions is to provide current information about changes in veterans' law and VA adjudication policies. Through these efforts, American Legion service officers improve their advocacy skills. The program of instruction includes basic training for new service officers, and advanced training on issues relating to claims processing, disability ratings, personal hearings, development of appeals, and the interpretation and application of precedent decisions by the U.S Court of Appeals for Veterans' Claims and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

DSOs received training from the following organizations in 2017-2018

- Veterans Health Administration
- Veterans Benefits Administration
- National Personnel Records Center

During DSO School held in Washington, D.C. in February 28-March 2, 2018, attendees welcomed National Commander Denise Rohan. Later Commander Rohan offered high praise for the quality of instruction she observed at DSO School.

Individual department participation remains high; over 250 accredited representatives attended the trainings in 2017. During this reporting period, DSO School was held:

- July 27-29, 2017 (Columbia Club, Indianapolis, IN)
- February 28-March 2, 2018 (Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C.)

Veteran Affairs & Rehabilitation Health Policy Unit

The Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation Health Policy Unit national staff includes: Roscoe Butler, Deputy Director for Health Care, three Assistant Directors for Health Care; Warren Goldstein, Edwin Thomas, and Derrick Redd (Military Leave since 2014), Melvin Brown, Assistant Director for Resolutions and VA Voluntary Service (VAVS), Ryan Britch, TBI/PTSD Program Manager and Wanda Kennedy, Administrative Assistant. The Health Policy staff supports VA&R's mission through:

- Congressional testimonies,
- System Worth Saving site visits,
- Attending the Spring and Fall National Advisory Committee (NAC) VAVS meetings,
- Hosting the Washington Conference,
- Resolution support for the Fall/Spring National Executive Committee Meetings and National Convention,
- Providing Administrative support for the Caregivers program,
- Providing Administrative support for the Suicide Prevention program,
- Providing Administrative support for the TBI/PTSD program,
- Responding to veterans' inquiries and the National Commander's inquiries, and;
- Working with the Veterans Health Administration to improve and maintain the VA health care system

System Worth Saving

Since the 2014 wait time scandal, the Veterans Health Administration has been in constant turmoil. Whether it is access issues, staffing challenges, lack of accurate supplies and equipment inventories at VA Medical Centers, or nursing home residents going many hours without food or languishing in bed wearing only soiled sheets, these are signs that the VA Health Care System is facing serious leadership and staffing challenges.

The American Legion was pleased when on February 13, 2017, the United States Senate unanimously confirmed Dr. David Shulkin as the U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs in a 100-0 vote. To run the Veterans Health Administration Dr. Shulkin appointed Dr. Alaigh Poonam, MD as Acting Under Secretary of Health. The American Legion believed finally there were leaders in charge who understand how to move VA/VHA in the right direction. However, the Legion was disappointed when on October 7, 2017, Dr. Poonam stepped down as VHA's Under Secretary of Health and on March 28, 2018, President Trump announced that Dr. Shulkin had been removed as VA Secretary.

On May 30, 2018, the President appointed Peter O'Rourke as the agency's Acting Secretary. Dr. Carolyn Clancy has been in the role of Executive in Charge, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) since Dr. Poonam's departure.

While The American Legion is concerned about stable leadership at the highest level of the organization, we are equally concerned what our System Worth Saving (SWS) and Regional Office Action Review (ROAR) teams are seeing when they visit VA Medical Centers and Regional Offices. At some VA medical centers, the medical center executive leadership team is constantly changing which does not allow for continuity of leadership. To further compound the problem, at some VA medical centers, they have significant vacancies and find it difficult to back fill behind these positions.

The American Legion believes the SWS and ROAR visits offer an invaluable service for American Legion staff members who prepare and give testimony before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) and the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (HVAC). Issues raised by the committees typically call for a clear understanding of current issues confronting the Department of Veterans Affairs.

System Worth Saving Site Visit Selections

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission identified 15 VA Health Care facilities for a SWS site visits in calendar 1 year 2018 were submitted and approved during the 2017 Fall NEC meeting. To date, the Health Policy staff and VA&R Commission member(s) have conducted eleven SWS site visits to include one special purpose site visit.

Completed site visits to date:

- Clement Zablocki VA Medical Center, Milwaukee, WI
- Chalmers P. Wylie VA Ambulatory Care Center, Columbus, OH
- Montana VA Health Care System, Ft. Harrison, MT
- Manchester VA Medical Center, Manchester, NH
- Memphis VA Medical Center, Memphis, TN
- Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System, Muskogee, OK
- VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System, Denver, CO
- Central Arkansas VA Health Care System, Little Rock, AR
- Lee County VA Health Care Center, Cape Coral, FL (Special Purpose)
- Durham VA Medical Center, Durham, NC
- VA Northern Indiana Health Care System, Ft. Wayne, IN
- VA Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center and Clinics, White City, OR
- Miami VA Medical Center, Miami, FL
- John D. Dingell VA Health Care System, Detroit, MI;
- Plans are under way to schedule the Washington DC VAMC before the end of 2018

The remaining scheduled site visits include the Minneapolis VA Health Care System, Minneapolis, MN; Atlanta VA Medical Center, Atlanta, GA; VA Central Western Massachusetts Health Care System, Leeds, MA; Marion VAMC, Marion, IL; El Paso VA Health Care System, El Paso, TX; and Southern Arizona VA Health Care System, Tucson, AZ.

The purpose of the System Worth Saving site visit is to identify progress made since the last visit, (if any), understand what works best at the medical centers, identify any challenges, and make recommendations to help overcome their challenges. The site visit covers two and a half days, beginning with a veteran's town hall meeting on the first day. The second and third days, the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission member(s) and national staff visit the local VA health care facility and meet with the executive leadership team and departmental staff to discuss challenges, best practices, and offer recommendations. At the end of each System Worth Saving site visit, a report is issued that is shared with the medical center, VA Secretary and Under Secretary of Health, Congressional Members, and the President of the United States.

Regional Office Action Review (ROAR) Visits

For over 20 years, The American Legion has conducted quality review visits at Veterans Affairs Regional Offices (VAROs) throughout the nation. Concerned that veterans were not receiving quality adjudications pertaining to disability claims, The American Legion began dispatching seasoned accredited representatives employed by National Headquarters with representatives from Bergmann & Moore, LLC to review the adjudications of claims. Historically, The American Legion has noted severe deficiencies in the quality of adjudications and has worked with VA to improve its adjudications. Additionally, The American Legion provides its findings to Congress to ensure that they provide VA with the necessary tools resulting in properly served veterans.

Prior to this year, The American Legion would request a selected VA regional office (VARO) to provide 50 recently adjudicated original claims holding American Legion as power of attorney. American Legion and Bergmann & Moore would carefully review the claims and notate errors in adjudication. Additionally, American Legion representatives

would meet with the local department service officer (DSO) and VA employees to discuss concerns that may be occurring within the VARO.

In 2017, we shifted our focus based upon decisions of appealed claims at the VARO. Since former VA Secretary Eric Shinseki announced VA's intent to adjudicate claims with 98 percent accuracy within 125 days, a significant increase within the inventory of appealed claims has occurred. According to the September 28, 2015, Monday Morning Workload Report (MMWR), 312,980 appealed claims were awaiting adjudication. The September 27, 2010, MMWR indicated 205,169 appealed claims were awaiting adjudication. The 107,811 additional claims reflect a 52.5 percent increase in the inventory of appealed claims since Shinseki's announcement. The American Legion has held significant concerns regarding VA's sole focus on original claims in an effort to eliminate the backlog of claims meanwhile allowing the inventory of appealed claims to explode in recent years.

Due to these facts, we will be reviewing recently adjudicated appealed claims. Through these examinations, we are seeking to determine the adequacy of adjudications by VA personnel charged with adjudicated appealed claims, and we seek to discover a method to improve the process of reducing the backlog of appeals that is not detrimental to claimants.

VA has divided the nation into the following five areas for its 56 VAROs:

- North Atlantic
- Midwest
- Continental
- Pacific
- Southeast

American Legion personnel will continue to monitor closely the quality of adjudications within each VARO and will work closely with DSO and VA employees to discover "best practices" to ensure that our nation's veterans receive the service they deserve. Upon conclusion of each VARO visitation, details of our findings and forwarded to senior VA leadership, Congress, and leaders within The American Legion.

The American Legion has conducted visits to the following VAROs in 2018:

- San Diego, CA
- Manchester, NH
- Boston, MA
- Los Angeles, CA

The following locations are scheduled to be visited in 2018:

- Philadelphia, PA
- Wilmington, DE
- New York City, NY
- Newark, NJ
- Muskogee, OK
- Huntington, WV

Map to Success

To ensure that The American Legion maximizes its resources, National Headquarters staff created the following timeline to provide detail on how National Headquarters personnel will proceed with VARO visits. Effective reviews of VARO operations include reviewing individual veterans' records. Consequentially, only American Legion accredited representatives can conduct the reviews of adjudications; however, volunteers can become involved with entrance and exit interviews with VARO senior leadership.

VARO Preparation

The scheduling of the visits will begin 60-90 days prior to departure. National Headquarters staff will notify VA of the scheduled visit. VA's Benefits Assistance Service Office contacts their Office of Field Operations; VA staff will contact VARO personnel regarding the impending visit. Additionally, The American Legion will request 25-30 recently adjudicated claims to be available for review 30 days prior to the visit, which are reviewed by attorneys from Bergmann & Moore.

One month prior to departure, National Headquarters staff will notify American Legion department personnel. Department commanders, department adjutants, and department service officers will receive notification regarding the impending visit.

Visitation of VARO

Upon arriving at the selected VARO, American Legion personnel will meet with senior VARO leadership and discuss the purpose of the visit. Senior VARO leadership and personnel are encouraged to discuss changes in policy, challenges they face, etc. with American Legion personnel; non-accredited American Legion personnel may attend the meeting. The initial meeting should last approximately 1-2 hours. Written findings of the case review by Bergmann & Moore are provided to the RO leadership. Following the meeting, American Legion will meet with VA's claims subject matter experts to discuss the previously reviewed claims.

American Legion representative will meet with the DSO and VARO Veteran Service Center personnel to discuss concerns within the VARO. VARO personnel may have union representation present; any information divulged is anonymous to encourage forthright answers from VA personnel.

The final day of the VARO visit will have American Legion personnel meet with senior VARO leadership and personnel in an exit briefing: as with the initial interview upon arrival, non-accredited American Legion personnel may attend. Bergmann & Moore personnel participate via speakerphone to address VA's responses to reviewed cases. Throughout the process, VA, Legion, and Bergmann & Moore personnel will be discussing individual cases reviewed; if necessary, VA has the opportunity to rescind its previous decision. Reflections of changes performed by VA are included in the post-visit report.

Post-VARO Visit

Immediately following the visit, American Legion National Headquarters staff will combine the findings between their preliminary case review in Washington, D.C., and at the VARO and determine if trends/patterns exist regarding the adjudication of claims. Any alterations to adjudications are noted.

TBI and PTSD Programs

The TBI & PTSD Programs Coordinator in consultation with the TBI & PTSD Committee have been engaged in a number of initiatives this year to include:

- Suicide Prevention Program Updates – Working with VHA's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention to develop best practices and procedures for The American Legion's Suicide Prevention Program. Recommendations have been developed for the TBI & PTSD Committee's consideration and will be presented at the next TBI & PTSD Committee meeting.
- White Paper Report on Veteran Suicide – The objectives of this white paper are to examine the recent trend of veteran suicide, discuss potential causes and recommend steps to take in order to address this crisis.
- The War Within – Working in conjunction with the National Media Director, efforts are underway to update the 2013 publication, The War Within. The updated publication will be titled "The Road Home" and seeks to inform veterans, their families, and the public on a variety of topics including:
 - TBI/PTSD/MST and the high rates of overmedication
 - Complementary and alternative medicines and treatments for PTSD
 - Ways to regain a sense of purpose and sense of belonging
 - Recent advancements in the scientific field surrounding TBI & PTSD
- TBI & PTSD Symposium – Plans are underway to sponsor a TBI & PTSD Symposium in Feb 2019. The purpose of the 2019 Symposium is:
 - To hear directly from veterans concerning their experiences with CAMs to manage TBI, PTSD, and pain,
 - To hear from leading scientists on emerging technology and treatments for TBI & PTSD,

- To hear from VA experts on their initiatives and programs on suicide prevention and treating TBI&PTSD,
- To hear from VA experts on the dangers of benzodiazepines on VA efforts to curb prescriptions and move to integrative health and wellness, and
- To determine how the Administration, Congress, and the Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) are integrating complementary and alternative medical (CAM) treatments and therapies for servicemembers and veterans suffering with TBI, PTSD and chronic pain.

The TBI & PTSD Programs Coordinator has taken the recommendations of the TBI & PTSD Committee and will revise and finish these projects to present at the next TBI & PTSD Committee meeting.

Caregivers Program

The caregivers program ensures that all American Legion members and caregivers have support and access to the entitlements they deserve. This program assists the underserved caregiver community by providing outreach resources, benefit information and counseling referral. The American Legion wants to be the forerunner for a program that has the highest number of membership within the veteran organization community. Our program supports caregivers of all eras and conflicts.

Significant events concerning the Caregiver Program since the 2017 National Convention:

The American Legion, working with other Veteran Service Organizations, was successful in getting Congress to pass historic legislation expanding caregiver benefits for all veterans. On June 6, 2018, the President of the United States signed the Mission Act into law. However, benefits will be phased in over several years.

First, benefits will be expanded to family caregivers of veterans with a serious injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service on or before May 7, 1975, after the VA Secretary submits to Congress a certification that VA has fully implemented the information technology system required by section 302(a) of the bill.

Two years after the certification is submitted, eligibility will be expanded to include veterans with a serious injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service after May 7, 1975, and before September 11, 2001.

Accredited Representatives

In completing VA form 21-22 "Power of Attorney," the claimant appoints The American Legion as accredited representative in a claim for benefits administered by the Department of Veteran Affairs. It is the duty of the organization to provide assistance, advice, and counsel veterans, survivors and dependents so as to ensure their rights are protected and they receive all benefits to which they may be entitled under the law. The American Legion, as a congressionally chartered organization since 1919, conducts this service program through the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. Accredited Representatives of The American Legion provide formal representation in claims before VA Regional Offices or the Board of Veterans' Appeals. Their respective Departments have recommended these representatives for accreditation because of their knowledge, experience, and expertise in the field of federal benefit programs, especially those provided through the Department of Veteran Affairs.

To become an accredited representative of The American Legion, a formal application must be submitted to the National VA&R Director, with an accompanying endorsement signed by the Department Adjutant. The director, as the national certifying officer, will review and forward the request to VA's Office of General Counsel (OGC) to finalize the request for accreditation. The form is never sent directly to OGC; accreditation will not be

approved by VA until certified by the requesting organization. Upon approval of the application, the individual is recognized by VA as an accredited representative of The American Legion and will receive official notification of this action from VA. The accreditation will remain in effect until such time as the VA&R director receives a written request from the Department Commander or Department Adjutant to revoke the individual's accreditation due to death, retirement, resignation, or on rare occasions for just causes. The director will then notify OGC the accreditation should be cancelled.

New accreditations and cancellations are reported monthly on VA's general list of accredited representatives-VA information Bulletin IB 2-51. During the reporting period 568 requests for accreditation and 121 requests for cancellation were received from the Departments and submitted to VA for necessary action. As of June 30, 2018, there were 3,593 accredited representatives of The American Legion with 1 pending accreditation. Any questions concerning the proper procedure or regulations pertaining to accreditation of individuals or their representatives should be submitted to the director for the National VA&R Division in the Washington, D.C. office.

Staff Field Assignments

Staff from the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division, including the director, deputy directors, assistant directors, and representatives from the Health Policy Unit and Board of Veterans Appeals attended various American Legion functions around the country such as: the National Convention, Fall and Spring National Executive Committee (NEC) meetings, the Annual Mid-Winter Conference in Washington, D.C., Department Conventions, Department Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) trainings, Department Seminars, Department Service Officer Schools, Department Claims training, fully developed claims assessment and training at seven VA Regional Offices, fact-finding trips, and various conferences.

Personnel and Organization

As of August 1, 2018, VA&R staffing is reported as follows;

Director	1
Administrative Assistants	3
Deputy Director for Health Policy	1
Assistant Director for Health Policy (Resolutions)	1
Assistant Director for Health Policy	3
TBI & PTSD Programs Coordinator	1
Assistant Director for Caregivers (Volunteer)	0
Deputy Director for Claims	1
Assistant Director for Claims	1
Team Trainer, BVA	3
Claims Specialists	8
Administrative Assistants	3
Deputy Director for MEB/PEB/DoD	1
Assistant Director for DoD Military Review Boards	1
Assistant Director for Women & Minority Veterans Outreach	1
Medical Consultant	1
Total Personnel – Washington Office	30

Satellite Offices

Board of Veterans Appeal: Indianapolis, IN

Team Leader, BVA	1
Claims Specialist	5

VA Regional Office: Philadelphia, PA

Chief of Insurance Activities	1
Assistant Director for Pension Management Center	1

VA Regional Office: St. Paul, MN

Assistant Director Debt Management	1
Assistant Director for Pension Management Center	1
Assistant Director (Restricted Claims)	1

VA Regional Office: Milwaukee, WI

Assistant Director for Pension Management Center	1
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VA Regional Office: Winston-Salem, NC

Assistant Director for Benefits Delivery at Discharge	1
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VA Regional Office: Salt Lake City, UT

Assistant Director for Benefits Delivery at Discharge	1
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VA&R Total	44
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Certificates of Appreciation

Under authority of May 1958 NEC Resolution, we have continued the program of awarding a Certificate of Appreciation to officials of the Department of Veteran Affairs, upon their retirement or resignation, For Services Rendered and Cooperation Extended in Connection with The American Legion's Rehabilitation Program. Under criteria established in line with the enabling resolution, nominations for the award are submitted by Department or National officials of The American Legion twice a year. The nominations are considered by a committee of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission at meetings preceding the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference, and the National Convention. The Committee recommends to the Commission the names of those considered deserving of the Certificate. Six Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded during the period July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018, for an overall total of 1,344 since the program was initiated.

Citation for Meritorious Service

The Citation, authorized by the National Executive Committee in May 1956, seeks to recognize the long and faithful service of Post Service Officers and others. Nominations for the Citation are submitted by Department officials to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Director at any time; acting for the Chairman and members of the Commission issues the award.

Fourteen Citations for Meritorious Service and loyal cooperation in The American Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation program were presented during the period July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018. Since this type of recognition and appreciation began, 5,164 citations for meritorious service have been presented.

Department of Veterans Affairs Health-Care Provider & Physician of the Year Award

Spring National Executive Committee 2017 Resolution No. 7, *Department of Veterans Affairs Health-care Provider of the Year* and Resolution No. 8, *Department of Veterans Affairs Physician of the Year*, established the latest awards presented by The American Legion. These awards recognize the contributions VA physicians and health-care providers have to the veterans they serve. At the 2018 Washington Conference Commander's Call, Dr. Amy C. Heinlein, Minneapolis VA Health Care System and Nurse Jillene Sroczynski, Oklahoma City VA Health Care System received The American Legion's physician and health-care provider awards for 2017.

**American Legion Auxiliary Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
Nicole Clapp, National Chairman**

Our work to enhance the lives of veterans, military, and their families through the ALA Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation program, along with the ALA 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan, provided our members opportunities to serve in volunteer leadership roles

within their local Veterans Affairs hospital (Goal 3: Develop Leadership at All Levels). This broadens our membership pool (Goal 1: Enhance Membership Strength) among a target population and builds brand loyalty (Goal 5: With The American Legion, Build Brand Loyalty) with the veterans themselves. Departments used their creativity and generosity to carry out the mission and achieve our goals in countless ways!

Every day, program objectives were addressed by assisting in activities that help homeless veterans through coordinating stand downs and collection of sundries, bedding, food, and much needed clothing. ALA members promoted job fairs for veterans and their families to transition back to civilian life in addition to working with The American Legion to obtain all their VA benefits. Waukesha County ALA in Wisconsin supported the new Racine Tiny Homes project. Each tiny home has a bed, small storage area, a microwave, Keurig machine, refrigerator, and TV. These homes surround a community center complex for homeless veterans. This nurturing environment fosters the necessary tools for success and wellbeing. Group therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder and Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA), assistance with work, finances and housing, along with classes for cooking, yoga, and art therapy are offered.

Units and departments demonstrated supportive rehabilitation and healing of veterans through arts, crafts, and hobbies across America. The 2017 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Buffalo, N.Y., recognized the progress and recovery made through recreation therapy and raised the visibility of the creative achievements of our nation's veterans after disease, disability, or a life crisis.

Thousands of hours and dollars were donated by our members through Service to Veterans. Wreaths Across America tributes, fishing trips in Delaware, and hurricane relief efforts for our heroes made possible by the departments of Alabama, Florida, Texas, and Puerto Rico were just the tip of the iceberg.

Supporting caregivers of veterans through the Military and Veteran Caregiver Network and other acts of *Service Not Self* were very important aspects of our organization's efforts. Baby showers were a huge service for expecting military females and wives of servicemen. In Wyoming, a 9-year-old boy whose mother is a disabled veteran requested help in finding a "bed without holes in it." Not only was a bed found by Unit 42, but also a whole bedroom set along with bedding.

Last, but definitely not least, VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) volunteers at healthcare facilities remains essential to the quality care our veterans need. The ALA remains the largest organization volunteering services to the VAVS program. Congratulations to ALA member Anne Morris from North Carolina, for being recognized as the American Legion Auxiliary Volunteer of the Year!

American Legion Auxiliary's Impact Made Serving America's Veterans/Military:

Volunteer Hours Serving Veterans & Military:.....	6,223,136
Total Dollars Spent Serving Veterans & Military:.....	\$698,666,617
Total Number of Veterans Assisted:.....	3,005,482
Veterans in Schools Presentations:.....	17,744
In-Kind Donations:.....	\$6,393,411
Total Number of Poppies Distributed:.....	5,544,703
Total Dollars Raised from Poppies:.....	\$4,381,342
Total Dollars Paid to Veterans:.....	\$423,573

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

Paul E. Dillard, Texas, Chairman

Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Director

This report covers the programs, activities and accomplishments of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, its two standing committees (Employment and Veterans Preference and Veterans Education, Other Benefits &

Homelessness), and the staff from July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2018. Since the commission and the committees always meet concurrently, all future references to the commission in this report will automatically indicate the inclusion of the committees.

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission is chaired by Randall Fisher (KY). The division consists of Director Joseph Sharpe, Jr., Deputy Director Mark Walker, Assistant Director Davy Leghorn, Assistant Director Ariel De Jesus, Jr., Assistant Director John Kamin, and Administrative Assistant Jasmine Davis.

National Veterans Employment & Education Commission

- *Employment & Veterans Preference Committee
- *Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness Committee
- * Veterans Employment & Education Council
- *Awards Subcommittee
- *Small Business Task Force Advisory Board
- *Homeless Veteran Task Force Advisory Board

2017-2018 Meetings

During the period this report covers, the commission met for four regularly scheduled executive sessions. A list of those meetings follows:

- (1) Members and guests of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission met on Saturday, August 19, 2017, in the Atlantis, Emerald, Sections A & B, Second Floor, Reno, Nevada, in conjunction with the Ninety-ninth Annual National Convention. A report on that meeting was made to the National Executive Committee on Monday, August 21, 2017. The complete text of that report appears in the Proceedings of the National Executive Committee's Pre- and Post-Convention Meetings.
- (2) An executive session of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission was held in the headquarters of The American Legion in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 11-12, 2017. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, October 2017.
- (3) At the 58th Washington Conference, on Monday, February 26, 2018, which was held in the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, DC; commission members and guests met to hear the latest on subjects of concern to them.
- (4) The chairman of the commission met May 7, 2018, in the headquarters office of The American Legion, in Indianapolis, Indiana. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, May 9-10, 2018.

Legislative Appearances

A very important part of the work of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission is the preparation and presentation of congressional testimony on issues affecting the economic well-being of America's veterans. During the period covered by this report, the commission staff testified before Congress, and also participated in the preparation of testimony presented by other members of the Legion staff on several occasions.

The following is a synopsis of the congressional hearings and correspondence held from August 1, 2017 to July 31, 2018, on matters pertaining to the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission:

- On October 11, 2017, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans Affairs on "Pending Legislation regarding Education Issue and Home Loan."

- On March 20, 2018, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Pending Legislation regarding Education Issues."
- On March 23, 2018, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Pending Legislation regarding Veteran Issues."
- On July 17, 2018, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Investigation, Oversight and Regulation on Small Business and Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Veterans Affairs Committee on "Implementation of Sections 1832 and 1833 of the FY17 National Defense Authorization Act."

Administrative Activities

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission and its two standing subcommittees on Employment and Veterans Preference and Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness are responsible for ensuring that America's veterans have the opportunity to provide, with honor and dignity, the economic necessities of life for themselves and their families. In order to achieve this goal, the commission and its committees work closely with governmental agencies and liaison to assist the organization's members.

A staff responsibility is answering the large volume of mail and electronic mail that is received annually from veterans seeking information or assistance on issues which come under the commission's jurisdiction. While the staff can neither place individual veterans in jobs nor represent them in labor disputes, the staff does provide information, guidance and, when appropriate, referral. Besides correspondence from individuals, the staff also receives and answers frequent requests and inquiries from government agencies, members of Congress, congressional committees, private organizations, and other groups regarding veterans' economic issues.

Employer of the Year Awards

One of the commission's major programs is its awards program, which is administered by the staff. Through this program The American Legion pays tribute to those employers across the country who has established outstanding records in the employment and retention of veterans, workers with disabilities and older workers, and to outstanding members of the state employment security agencies.

Each year since 1969, the Legion's National Veterans Employment & Education Commission has sponsored an Employer of the Year Awards Program. This program seeks to honor those employers across the country that has established an outstanding record in the employment and retention of veterans. Prior to this year's Washington Conference, the chairman of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, Randall A. Fisher (KY), appointed a seven-person subcommittee to review all of the nominations that had been received during 2017 in the Employer of Veterans Awards Program.

The Commission's Awards Subcommittee met to select the following National winners:

- **Large Employer:** Southwest Airlines, Texas
- **Medium Size Employer:** Gallery Furniture-Houston, Texas
- **Small Employer:** Allied Universal Security Services, Texas

Employment Service Awards

Beginning in 1993, three awards have been presented to the Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year, and the Employment Service Office of the Year. These awards are given in cooperation with local Job Service offices across the country, to recognize truly outstanding veteran-dedicated staff members.

National winners are as follows:

- **LVER of the Year:** Spencer Horton, Georgia
- **DVOP of the Year:** Samuel L. Denson, Florida
- **Employment Local Office:** IDES Sterling Office, Illinois

Other Awards:

- **Employer of Older Workers:** ESW, Inc., Indiana
- **Homeless Veterans Outreach Award:** The American Legion Department of New Jersey

EMPLOYMENT & VETERANS PREFERENCE COMMITTEE

James Fratolillo, Massachusetts, Chairman

Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Director

The mission of the committee is to promote employment and training opportunities for veterans. To accomplish this, the committee works at the national level with Congress and various federal agencies. The committee does not place veterans in jobs, but rather, relies on its network of employment chairpersons to assist individual veterans in finding employment. Their Posts and Departments appoint these employment chairpersons. Occasionally, Departments also appoint them at the County and District levels. Additionally, this committee is charged with promoting veterans' preference throughout the federal government and ensuring that agencies continue to observe all veterans' preference laws.

VETERANS EDUCATION, OTHER BENEFITS & HOMELESSNESS COMMITTEE

Eric W. Measles, California, Chairman

Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Director

This committee is charged with ensuring that veterans' educational benefits provided by the federal government are sufficient and that every generation of veterans has substantially the same as, or better benefits than, the previous generation. In addition, this committee is to ensure that all veterans receive the benefits to which they are entitled as recompense for their military service on behalf of a grateful nation while continuing to push for federal and local governments to allocate adequate resources to combat and ultimately eliminate veteran homelessness.

Federal Veterans' Economic Programs

The following is a brief overview of the Commission's interactions with those federal agencies, and their veterans' programs, with which the commission works regularly.

EDUCATION

On February 28, the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission convened the DOD SkillBridge Profiles in Success roundtable. The roundtable was

convened to review successful applications of the DOD's SkillBridge authority, and introduce new stakeholders to opportunities to better collaborate with DOD. The roundtable was attended by 44 stakeholders, and featured presentations from Fort Bragg's transition services, Microsoft, Amazon, DOD Voluntary Education, ABF Freight, and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. The DOD SkillBridge initiative promotes the civilian job training authority available for transitioning servicemembers. Service members meeting certain qualifications can participate in civilian job and employment training, including apprenticeships and internships. Such training can take place starting up to six months prior to servicemember's separation. Additionally, the training must offer a high probability of employment and be provided to the servicemember at little or no cost. Through DOD SkillBridge, tremendous potential exists for servicemembers, companies, trade unions, and others for leveraging this new DOD authority.

On March 1, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division organized an Avenir Life Coaching Mind Fit Workshop. The objective of the event was to offer veterans and family members' techniques to enhance natural responses to stress, thus improving cognitive and psychological capacities and health. In addition, participants learned research-based nutritional information and exercises to encourage self-regulation and mindfulness. The workshop was attended by 30 participants. The commission also convened the Future of Veteran and Servicemember Higher Education Symposium. The symposium was convened to review legislative proposals related to a reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and their potential implication on veteran and military students. The symposium was attended by 47 stakeholders, and featured presentations from The American Council on Education, Student Veterans of America, the Center for American Progress, Career Education Colleges and Universities and The American Legion. As a direct result of the symposium, The American Legion was able to rally VSOs to opposition against the Promoting Real Opportunity, Success and Prosperity through Education Reform (Prosper) Act, resulting in coverage in the Military Times and Inside Higher Ed.

In addition to overhauling student loan forgiveness, the PROSPER Act would roll back rules cracking down on for-profit colleges, including a requirement applied primarily to for-profit schools requiring them to demonstrate that their graduates get jobs. It would also eliminate a requirement that for-profit colleges get at least 10 percent of their funds from sources other than federal financial aid. Veterans groups not only support keeping that so-called 90-10 rule in place, they also have long pushed for stricter versions of it. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions is working on comparable legislation to the PROSPER Act that lawmakers hope to push out this spring with bipartisan support, a spokesman for committee chairman Senator Lamar Alexander (TN), told Military Times. He did not say whether the Senate bill will also propose an end to public service loan forgiveness, as it has not yet been finalized.

LICENSING & CERTIFICATION

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission hosted a 'DOD SkillBridge Profiles in Success' roundtable on Thursday, February 28, in the Gunston room, Terrace Level, Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, DC. The objective was to support cutting-edge hiring initiatives for transitioning servicemembers by bringing together key leaders from government, military, and industry to discuss best practices in the implementation of the Department of Defense SkillBridge Initiative. The DOD SkillBridge Initiative promotes the civilian job training authority available for transitioning military servicemembers. Servicemembers meeting certain qualifications can participate in civilian job and employment training, including apprenticeships and internships. The roundtable was attended by 44 stakeholders, and featured presentations from Microsoft, the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University, Fort Bragg Transition Services, and Amazon Web Services. The keynote speaker for the event was Dawn Bilodeau, Chief for the Department of Defense (DOD) Voluntary Education.

VETERANS' PREFERENCE

The American Legion is deeply concerned with the protection of veterans and the prevention of illegal hiring practices. Currently, veterans are filing claims after the non-compliance employment event occurred and may become financially disadvantaged while waiting for results of the claim. Proactive measures and continuous oversight must be exercised to protect veterans from unfair hiring practices, not just reactionary investigations.

The following steps taken by the federal government to protect veterans' employment and demonstrates reactionary measures to assist veterans which may take months to resolve. Many veterans give up or do not file complaints because they must seek employment elsewhere or face serious financial difficulties. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administers entitlement to veterans' preference in employment. The Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) provides assistance to all persons having claims under USERRA. DOL is the enforcement authority for USERRA, and it processes all formal complaints of violations of the law. The veteran may then request that the Department of Justice (DOJ) litigate on their behalf but only after a certain period has passed.

Veterans' preference is authorized by the Veterans' Preference Act (VPA) of 1944; it only applies to federal government employment. It provides that most veterans are to receive an extra five points (ten points for disabled veterans) in receiving and keeping federal jobs. The Veterans' Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA) of 1998 extended certain rights and remedies to recently separated veterans. VETS were given the responsibility to investigate complaints filed by veterans who believe their veterans' preference rights have been violated and to conduct an extensive compliance assistance program. Veterans' preference is being ignored by numerous agencies. Figures show a decline in claims by newer veterans compared to Gulf War I. In reality employment opportunities are not being broadcast. Federal agencies as well as subcontractors are required by law to notify OPM of job opportunities but these vacancies are rarely made available to the public.

The American Legion is concerned with the current OPM's vision for reforming veterans' preference. There is discussion within OPM that it would survey transitioning servicemembers to see what occupations they desire. Then, OPM would block off a certain percentage of those occupations for veterans. The American Legion believes this is extremely problematic since most of these occupations would be low-level general series (GS) jobs. Seemingly, this new concept would put transitioning servicemembers and veterans at a disadvantage compared to their non-veteran counterparts.

The American Legion reiterates its position that protection of veterans' employment rights should be proactive and continuous oversight must be replaced to protect veterans from unfair hiring practices. Reactionary investigations and lawsuits are not sufficient. We further believe that the veteran must be protected at the onset of the hiring process, corrective actions to remedy the veteran's situation in the veteran's favor are not guaranteed. We recommend that DOJ provide a detailed description of their veterans' employment activities.

A grateful nation created veterans' preference to ensure fair treatment for those citizens who served this country in the Armed Forces. Veterans' preference should play a large role in employing veterans and their spouses. Federal agencies need to make sure that their Human Resource personnel are properly trained to effectively implement veterans' preference. The federal government has scores of employment opportunities that educated, well-trained, and motivated veterans can fill given a fair and equitable chance to compete. Working together, all federal agencies should identify those vocational fields, especially those with high turnover rates, for transitioning veterans who are trying to continue their service within the federal government.

EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER FAIRS

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission of The American Legion collaborated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to host a hiring event on Friday, February 23, in the International Terrace, Terrace Level, Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, DC. This event started with an opening ceremony, which included speakers Eric Eversole, Executive Director, Hiring our Heroes, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation; Ely Ross, Director, Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs, District of Columbia; and Verna Jones, Executive Director, Washington, DC Office, The American Legion. There were 55 employers from various industries and over 140 attendees that participated in the Career Fair. There were 5 immediate hires at the event.

The American Legion manned a table at this event. The table was manned by Ariel De Jesus, Jr., Assistant Director, National Veterans Employment & Education Division and Shalene Durham, Assistant Director, Human Resources Division. These Legionnaires discussed how The American Legion assists veterans with reintegrating back to their local communities. Additionally, they answered service members/veterans questions about benefits and described the Legion's programs as well as explained how to become a member. The employers and participants at this event were pleased with the outcome. The employers stated that the participants were professional and qualified. The participants liked that employers were from different industries and willing to hire veterans.

Additionally, on Thursday, February 22, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had its first meeting of the Employment Innovation Task Force. The Task Force was formed to combine the talents, expertise, and innovations of government, nongovernment organizations, and private sector companies in bringing solutions forward for The American Legion to champion with its federal agency partners for the purpose of improving employment opportunities for transitioning servicemembers and veterans. This includes introducing both service delivery, business process, and technology innovations in support of the Transition Assistance Programs (TAP) and credentialing of servicemembers. Also, the Task Force will be examining all aspects of TAP and credentialing from résumé writing, financial planning, goal setting, job searches, interviewing, networking, peer-to-peer support, family transition support, higher education, individual career development plans, entrepreneurship, VA benefits, and other elements of holistic support of transitioning servicemembers and veterans. The primary objective is to provide for a seamless transition from military service to the civilian workforce.

The purpose of the Task Force is to:

- Provide independent surveys and assessments of the efficacy and efficiency of delivering "for life" support to transitioning servicemembers and veterans in the digital era;
- Introduce innovations responsive to the digital age warrior and digital era employer;
- Identify best practices from the best of demonstrated veteran-friendly employers to encourage adoption by all employers;
- Use labor market and labor economic data to guide career goal setting and development of transitioning servicemembers and veterans;
- Introduce the use of digital tools and skill drills to support just-in-time delivery of information, assistance, support, training, and skill development underlying the "for life" concept;
- Ensure all outcomes further the goal of providing a seamless transition from military service to private sector employment; and

- Create feedback loops for continuous improvement of TAP and credentialing programs along with continuous innovation in the method and means by which transition and “for life” support are provided.

Furthermore, on Friday, February 23, the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission hosted a Financial Literacy and Resume Workshops. The workshops were designed to help veterans, service members and their spouses find meaningful careers in the civilian workforce, expand their networks and gain the tools necessary to stand out throughout the hiring process. The day began with a free networking breakfast, and then segued into financial literacy and resume workshops. Speakers for these workshops included Rodney Rolland, Human Resources Director, American Legion, and Judy Viccello, Partner, New York Life. Following the morning workshops, attendees were able to mingle with each other and prospective employers during a networking luncheon. The forum speakers included: Adam Rocke, Colonel (Ret.) Vice President, FASTPORT; Brian Armstrong, Manager, Military Recruitment, Hilton; Mark Escherich, Manager and Military Veteran Programs Manager, U.S. Transportation Security Administration; Ralph Hernandez, Senior Military Program Leader, Amazon.com, Inc.; Adam Martinez, Director, Military Talents, Miligistix; Nathan Naylor, vice President, Development for Veterans Health, Philips.com; Heather Tinsley-Fix, Senior Advisor, Financial Resilience, AARP; and Gary Patton, Major General, U.S. Army (Retired), Vice President, Veterans Outreach, CACI.

The new Job Fair/Workshop dynamic that The American Legion and U.S. Chamber created really has stepped outside the box, benefitting frustrated jobseekers. The opportunity to polish and use the skills they have been refining during their job searches seemed to tremendously benefit participants. Jobseekers stated that the workshops along with the Job Fair was very informative and filled with quality job opportunities.

The American Legion’s National Veterans Employment & Education Division, through its relationships, continues to play a vital role in assisting American Legion Posts to produce successful Job Fairs, small business development workshops, and employment training services throughout America. In addition, the staff of the National Veterans Employment & Education Division is also involved in a number of advisory committees. Director Joseph Sharpe Jr. is a member of the Small Business Administration’s Advisory Committee, and Deputy Director Mark Walker is a member of the Department of Veterans Affairs Homeless Veterans Advisory Committee.

Aside from advisory committees, The American Legion is also a stakeholder and active participant in numerous government agencies and private businesses’ veteran initiatives, where our input into their programs is highly valued. The American Legion has a representative on the Department of Labor’s Advisory Committee Veterans’ Employment, Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO) and Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development. Lastly, The American Legion participates in the Veterans’ Entrepreneurship’s Task Force (VET-FORCE) business forums and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s Service Member’s Affairs meetings.

Lastly, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division has participated in numerous Career Fairs throughout the nation, allowing The American Legion to get in front of more than 10,000 veterans and their families. The American Legion has been invited to participate in over 15 Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) Events. The YRRP is a Department of Defense (DOD) effort to promote the well-being of National Guard and Reserve members, their families and communities, by connecting them with resources throughout the deployment cycle. The American Legion is the only Veterans Service Organization that participates in these events. Locations for the YRRP included but were not limited to Florida, California, Maryland, Virginia, District of Columbia, and Hawaii.

NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION FORUM

On Monday, February 26, the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission assembled in Jefferson West, Concourse Level, Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, DC, to address education, employment and small business concerns regarding veterans and their families. The meeting started with an update from Melody Libby, Manager, Therapeutic Area Strategies in Government Affairs, AbbVie Inc., then a briefing on small business opportunities for veteran business owners from Erica Courtney, Chief Executive Officer, 2020vet along with Susan Weinstock, Vice President, Financial Resilience, AARP, discussing their new initiatives for veterans and Elizabeth Murray-Belcaster, Consultant, International Brotherhood of Teamsters updating the commission on their program to assist transitioning service members and culminating with a corporate panel about private sector opportunities for veterans.

Melody Libby, Government Affairs, AbbVie, discussed Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) and its impact on U.S. veterans. Hepatitis C is a contagious liver disease caused by a virus. HCV is spread primarily through contact with the blood of an infected person. Upon infection, some have mild illness lasting a few weeks. In 85 percent of cases, it leads to a serious, lifelong illness that attacks the liver. Chronic HCV is a leading cause of liver transplantation and liver cancer. It was mentioned that half of the people with HCV are unaware they are infected. 4 percent – 17 percent of veterans may have HCV infection. 700,000 veterans in VA care need to be screened. Currently, 65,000 veterans have been treated. The goal is to encourage veterans to visit the VA for a simple HCV blood test. Early treatment improves liver and non-liver related complications and survival.

Additionally, Erica Courtney, Chief Executive Officer, 2020vet, briefed the commission on small business opportunities for veterans. She explained that veteran entrepreneurs are the United States most untapped, highly skilled economic development resource. The presentation included reasons for veterans to go into business: (1) Job placement and mental healthcare not working; (2) Corporate America not always a good fit; (3) Self-driven, technical experts; (4) Provides spouse and a livelihood; (5) Independence; and (6) Challenges finding peer-to-peer mentorship, culturally different, networks and funds.

Recent data concerning veteran businesses is the following:

- 40 percent of Post-9/11 veterans are going into business for themselves vs. 10 percent in the Vietnam era
- 10 percent of small businesses are owned by veterans
- \$1.2 trillion in annual sales receipts with 6 million employees
- 78 percent veteran-owned firms have sales over \$100,000
- 38 percent registered over \$500,000 in sales

Other relevant data on the veteran population:

- 75 percent of veterans are 55 or over
- 200,000 service members are transitioning out per year
- 43 percent recently discharged veterans reported service related disabilities

Total of Veteran-Owned Businesses:

California = 252,377	Georgia = 96,787
Texas = 213,590	Ohio = 91,316
Florida = 185,756	Illinois = 89,110
New York = 137,532	North Carolina = 86,571
Pennsylvania = 97,969	Virginia = 76,434

Concentration of Veteran-Owned Businesses:

South Carolina = 13%	West Virginia = 11.28%
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New Hampshire = 12.24%	Maine = 11.24%
Virginia = 11.70%	Alabama = 11.21%
Alaska = 11.69%	Arkansas = 11.17%
Mississippi = 11.38%	Oklahoma = 11.08%

Furthermore, Susan Weinstock, Vice President, Financial Resilience, AARP, discussed their focus on assisting experienced (older) workers with employment opportunities. AARP has created a website and job board to steer jobseekers to openings in different industries. The website helps make the job search easier and the experience worker more competitive by advising them on resume writing, interviewing and networking.

Finally, Elizabeth Murray-Belcaster, Consultant, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, updated the commission on the Teamsters Military Assistance Program (TMAP), which assists active-duty military that are transitioning, veterans and military spouses with job opportunities with responsible employers. Currently, TMAP is partnering with two employers: ABF Freight in the freight trucking industry and FirstGroup in the passenger transport industry. TMAP, in association with Helmets to Hardhats, offers the following courses to veteran, Reserve and National Guard communities at no cost to the candidate:

- 200-hour Teamster/Military CDL Licensing Program;
- Teamster Construction Apprenticeship Program;
- 40-hour Basic Hazardous Waste Worker Course;
- 8-hour Hazardous Waste Refresher Course;
- 8-hour Hazardous Materials Transportation Awareness Course;
- 16-hour Emergency Responder – Operations Level Course;
- 10-hour Construction Safety and Health Outreach Course; and,
- 10-hour General Industry Safety and Health Outreach Course.

The Commission meeting ended with a corporate panel discussing opportunities in the private sector and how transitioning servicemembers and veterans can prepare themselves for these positions. The forum speakers included: James Cunningham, Graduate, Harvard School of Business; Thomas Dawkins, Workforce Development & Education Director, Microsoft Corporation; Ralph Hernandez, Military Senior Program Leader, Amazon; David Wallace, Military Relations Project Manager, Lockheed Martin Corporation; Vivian Greentree, Senior Vice President, First Data; and Rod Markham, National Director for Federal Government, Hemsley Fraser.

VETERAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission conducted a Veterans Small Business Workshop on Wednesday, February 28, at the Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, DC. Approximately 30 veterans to include Reserve, National Guard and military spouses participated in this event. The workshop, “Boots to Business”, was specifically designed for service members, veterans, and spouses who own their own businesses or thinking of starting one. The intensive entrepreneurship course was created by The American Legion in collaboration with local small businesses such as Vets GSA LLC, Goldschmitt & Associates LLC, and the National Veterans Small Business Coalition.

The workshop featured informative sessions presented by Charles McCaffrey, Director, Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC), National Capital Region and the Washington, DC’s Small Business Development Center. Topics at the workshop included: Introduction to Business Ownership; Basics of Opportunity Recognition; Understanding Markets and Competition; Small Business Economics; Picking the Right Legal Entity for your Business; Financing your Business; Introduction to Business Planning; and Business Resources. The American Legion has been a partner with the Small Business

Administration (SBA) to pilot the Boots to Business: Reboot Workshop. In the program's third year, we are still assisting the SBA in hosting and outreach for these events. At the end of the course, the SBA provided all attendees with a certificate of completion which allows them to take an 8-week course online offered by the SBA.

Recognizing the need for curriculum that goes beyond starting a business, The American Legion partnered with Insight CFO and Habits of Profitability to host the Small Business Advanced Course. This was not a class for the nascent business owner, this course was focused on helping existing businesses with at least 8 quarters of demonstrable positive revenue, scale up. The course was taught by instructors from Georgetown University and the University of Maryland. The 12 business owners in attendance received personal counseling from certified financial officers of local companies and walked away with a personalized 5-part plan of action for expanding their business.

Following the informational sessions, participants were invited to a networking luncheon where they interacted with federal and private sector representatives. Our commission understands that for many veterans, entrepreneurship is a viable option, especially for those veterans who may find the job market tough to navigate. Consequently, The American Legion recognizes how important it is that we assist and advocate on behalf of our veterans who are self-employed. This is why The American Legion is one of the few Veterans Service Organizations that have invested in tangible programs and services for veteran entrepreneurs.

The American Legion's Small Business Task Force is a consortium of accomplished veteran business owners who have volunteered to advise the Legion on legislative matters that pertain to veteran businesses. The group of 30 members shares their experiences -- ranging from the public and private sectors -- to help inform the National Veterans Employment & Education Division on matters relating to federal contracting for veterans, procurement and other areas that affect veteran business owners.

HOME LOAN GUARANTY PROGRAM

VA's Home Loan Guaranty program has been in effect since 1944 and has afforded more than 22 million veterans the opportunity to purchase homes. The Home Loan programs offer veterans a centralized, affordable and accessible method of purchasing homes in return for their service to this nation. The program has been so successful over past years that not only has the program paid for itself, but has also shown a profit in recent years. Administrative costs constitute a relatively small portion - less than 10 percent - of the total capital and operating costs. The predominant costs are claims costs and other costs associated with foreclosure and alternatives taken to avoid foreclosure. Each claim costs the federal government about \$20,000. However, revenues that VA collects from different sources, including the funding fee that borrowers pay, property sales, and proceeds from acquired loans and vendee loans, offset this cost. In fiscal year 2017, the number of loans guaranteed through the program was 740,339. The average amount of the loan was \$254,870.

In 1982, PL 97-253 was enacted and imposed a ½ percent funding fee (1/2 percent of the loan amount) on all veterans using the loan program, with the exception of those veterans in receipt of compensation for a service connected disability. This was considered to be a temporary measure to help reduce the national debt. Unfortunately, this fee has become a fixture of the home loan program and, even more unfortunately, it has been raised numerous times by Congress since 1982. Presently, veterans using the program for the first time pay 1.40 percent of the loan amount and those using it for a second time subsequently pay 2.15 percent.

Although veterans are permitted to include the fee in the loan amount, it constitutes an added financial burden. For example, a veteran using the program for the first time obtaining a \$200,000 loan will pay \$2,800. For a second time user the fee on this loan amount would be \$4,300. While this is substantial in and of itself, it is even more significant

when you consider the amount of interest the veteran will pay on these amounts as a 30 year mortgage is amortized.

The following persons are exempt from paying the funding fee:

- Veterans receiving VA compensation for service-connected disabilities.
- Veterans who would be entitled to receive compensation for service-connected disabilities if they did not receive retirement pay.
- Surviving spouses of veterans who died in service or from service-connected disabilities (whether or not such surviving spouses are veterans with their own entitlement and whether or not they are using their own entitlement on the loan).

The American Legion strongly urges Congress to consider either eliminating this fee or significantly reducing it. Veterans should not have to make such a significant financial sacrifice in order to use a benefit that they have earned as a result of their service to America.

VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

On Wednesday and Thursday, February 28-March 1, the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission hosted a two-day homeless veteran's summit in Washington, DC. The Summit was a chance to pull expertise from different organizations and work toward a consensus on addressing issues facing homeless veterans. The group recognized that it would be best served to modify existing programs rather than proposing new programs. Those programs include HUD-VASH, which combines HUD housing vouchers with VA supportive services; Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), which provides case management and supportive services for very low-income veterans; and the Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program, through which the VA funds some 600 agencies providing over 14,000 beds for eligible veterans.

The document the group is working toward will address the VA's homeless programs along with programmatic and policy recommendations. Additionally, the Summit provided the Legion an opportunity to brief House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee personnel about the current state of veteran homelessness and our continued support of addressing this important issue. The information shared at the Summit will permit us to make meaningful recommendations so that VA and other stakeholders can be more effective in combating and ultimately ending veteran homelessness. The group included representatives from The American Legion, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV), National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH), American Bar Association, National League of Cities, Community Solutions, Atlas Research, and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

VA and HUD reported roughly 40,000 homeless veterans on a single night in January 2017 (2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress). VA has taken decisive action toward its goal of ending homelessness among our nation's veterans. To achieve this goal, VA has developed a plan to assist every homeless veteran willing to accept services retain or acquire: a safe housing; needed treatment services; opportunities to retain or return to employment; and benefits assistance. Also, VA has implemented a prevention initiative - the Supportive Services for Veterans and Families (SSVF), which is VA's primary prevention program designed to help veterans and their families rapidly exit homelessness, or avoid entering homelessness.

The American Legion continues to place special priority on the issue of veteran homelessness. With veterans making up approximately 11 percent of our nation's total adult homeless population, there is plenty of reason to give the cause special attention. Along with various community partners, The American Legion remains committed to seeing VA's goal of ending veteran homelessness come to fruition. Our goal is to ensure

that every community across America has programs and services in place to get homeless veterans in the housing (along with necessary healthcare/treatment) while connecting those at-risk veterans with the local services and resources they need.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

National President Diane Duscheck, Wisconsin

As I visited with members across the country, it was exciting to hear American Legion Auxiliary members express that by embracing the ALA Centennial Strategic Plan, they felt they now had permission to change the way they had always conducted meetings. Rather than having a full-day business meeting, the time was broken into leadership information, packing boxes of items to ship to troops, collecting and labeling books to be given to local first responders to comfort youngsters they met in difficult situations, cheering on their favorite membership horse during the races, and wearing Kentucky derby hats. The seriousness of meetings gave way to laughter and camaraderie.

How wonderful it was to see the difference members make in the lives of veterans! It was most enjoyable immersing myself into your departments. A number of units provided cleaning materials — cleanser, sponge, mop, broom, paper toweling, laundry detergent — to transitional housing units for veterans who were ready to move into their own apartments.

Crocheting ALA members shared tips for making sleeping mats out of plastic bags. Members stayed in the meeting hall after adjournment to cut, link, and roll the plastic strips into balls of plastic so it would be ready to be used to crochet mats to keep homeless veterans off the cold, damp ground, and provide a little padding.

Always thinking of others, ALA units maintained closets of clothing and blankets for those who are less fortunate. The unique facet of this: Units that experienced the wrath of late summer hurricanes are most interested in providing for those less fortunate than themselves.

ALA Junior members found tasks they excelled at and brought smiles to veterans' faces. They decorated enough handmade cards so each resident in veterans homes could receive a note emphasizing how important that veteran truly is. Junior members and younger Sons of The American Legion also worked together in the ALA Junior Patch Program.

The Veterans Creative Arts Festival was supported by members in two ways. Many members volunteered at local festivals so veterans could show off their artwork and compete for a place in the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Others supported the creative arts through donations to the ALA Foundation. Much healing takes place when veterans immerse themselves in the arts and when they share their experiences with other veterans.

At ALA National Headquarters, dedicated staff celebrated the holidays by doing service projects — making fleece blankets, assembling toiletries and comfort bags for veterans, offering poppies before Memorial Day, and working in the food pantry at a homeless shelter for veterans. They are truly vested in the ALA's mission.

Germany and South Korea were opportunities for informative briefings on the state of our troops and the necessity of troops to be spread across multiple continents. In Korea, American troops have a presence throughout South Korea and in the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone). While in Germany, we received briefings from the Central Command, European Command, and African Command. This president was most surprised by the number of terrorist cells scattered across northern Africa and the task our troops have to contain those cells on the African continent.

In both South Korea and Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, the identification of recovered remains of servicemembers is taking place. More than 120,000 South Korean and

7,700 U.S. troops from the Korean War (1950-53) alone remain unaccounted for and are believed to be lost in North Korea. The Joint U.S.-North Korean military search teams are working diligently to provide the fullest possible accounting of missing personnel to their families and to the nation.

As an organization that realizes we need to embrace change in order to grow, it remains important for each of us to tend to our personal growth and our Auxiliary growth, to engage in the ALA Academy, to support the strategic plan, to read the *Organizational Effectiveness Assessment* and the *Department Operations Guide*, to set aside differences, and embrace our common mission. We have invested in ourselves; now we need to take advantage of that investment. We have trees to plant and seeds to sow in order to secure the future of the American Legion Auxiliary. We must be the change we wish to see.

**National Vice President
Kathy Dungan, Mississippi**

Being installed as national vice president of the American Legion Auxiliary at last year's National Convention in Reno was one of the most exciting times in my life. Representing the Auxiliary this year has provided many opportunities to serve our veterans, military, their families, and today's youth.

I began immediately by attending the September meeting in Indianapolis of the ALA 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan's Implementation Team forum with the goal champions and strategy co-captains working together on the five goals of the plan.

I was honored to represent Auxiliary members at the Veterans Day ceremony at the Indiana War Memorial in Indianapolis. I also attended the city's Veterans Day parade. I served as facilitator at the ALA Mission Training in Hartford, Conn., in October. Also that month, what a privilege it was to serve as a volunteer at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) in Buffalo, N.Y. NVCAF is a celebration of national winners and features a grand finale stage show. Veterans display their artwork and original writings or perform musical, dance, or dramatic selections in the grand finale show. These veterans are talented and amazingly skilled!

As national vice president, I began planning for the 2018–2019 administrative year. There were Finance Committee meetings, National Executive Committee meetings, the National Chairmen's Meeting, and a planning session with the national Membership Committee and staff at ALA National Headquarters. In January, I was in Charlotte, N.C., serving as facilitator at ALA Mission Training. National updates and valuable information were presented, and members shared ideas about serving the mission and working in their communities. In February, I attended The American Legion's Washington Conference to advocate for veterans and active-duty military. What an honor it was for me to attend National Commander Denise Rohan's testimony before a joint session of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs. The Legion's legislative priorities, discussed at the commander's call, were informative and provided Auxiliary members many ways we can help our heroes.

In April, I attended The American Legion's National Oratorical Contest in Indianapolis, serving as a quarter-finalist and semi-finalist judge. Seeing these bright and talented students gave me hope for the future. Their orations on the U. S. Constitution were so inspiring.

The Department Leadership National Conference in May was attended by upcoming department leaders, membership chairmen, and department secretaries who shared ideas. Information was provided by national leadership on the membership plan and focus for the 2018–2019 administrative year. Members left with positive attitudes and a commitment to continue working our mission of serving our children and youth, veterans, military, and their families.

Another privilege I had was presenting an award on behalf of our members to a special midshipman at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., showing the ALA's

continued support of our military, midshipmen, and their mission.

It has been an awesome and exciting year, thanks to all of you — the grassroots members. I am so honored and humbled to be a part of this great organization representing you on the national level. God bless each of you.

Secretary

Mary “Dubbie” Buckler, Indiana

We’re a big corporation. You can be proud that, again, our external audits earned us the highest marks on our national finances, National Headquarters (NHQ) financial processes, Foundation finances, benefits, and *Auxiliary* magazine. NHQ received stellar findings — and again, **no** criticism from regulatory or watchdog groups.

The American Legion Auxiliary Centennial Strategic Plan **is** mission-critical. Everything we do at ALA National Headquarters is geared toward achieving the five goals adopted by the National Executive Committee. Staff members volunteer their time alongside goal and strategy team members to ensure the ALA’s future. Almost two-thirds of the way through the 5-Year Strategic Plan, implementing initiatives requires ongoing attention and effort in addition to the daily whirlwind of operating a large business that supports our membership.

Resourcing the Plan’s strategies requires investing in the ALA itself from our reserve funds and recognizing the ongoing need for a dues structure that addresses our financial needs responsibly. The findings of the *ALA Organizational Effectiveness Survey* are clear: members think our dues are modest to low; dues are not a factor in membership decline; organizational effectiveness must improve at all levels to strengthen the ALA and develop good leadership (Goals 4 and 3); we must increase awareness (Goal 5 — build brand loyalty); and we must improve our internal culture to make membership meaningful (Goals 2 and 1).

Goal-centered successes include the highly rated presentations on governance and management role clarification, civility, and fiduciary stewardship. The online ALA Academy has four free training courses for members, with more planned for roll-out over the next year. So far, 3,000 have taken a course, with members rating the content highly useful.

The number of donors to the ALA has increased to over 80,000, with half of our donations coming from non-members! The now-expired \$4 million ALA Call to Service Corps AmeriCorps/VISTA Grants Program greatly expanded national awareness about the ALA, resulting in the Corporation for National Community Service awarding ALA NHQ funds in 2017 for fifty \$1,000 grants for 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance projects.

The Members Only section of the national website at www.ALAforVeterans.org has over 2,000 resource documents! The most popular: membership and scholarship applications and the *ALA Department Operations Guide*. ALA-branded marketing resources include the 100th anniversary logo, banner, and signage templates for downloading and customizing for local printing.

The online dues renewal payment option continuously grows in popularity; 26% more members paid online or over the phone this year, saving time and money. Nearly 1,000 new members now have joined online. The national website can be accessed by simply tapping an ALA icon on your tablet or smartphone — nearly half our website access is via smartphones or mobile devices. The ALA Management Information System (ALAMIS) serves an ever-growing number of authorized users at the department, district, and unit level; and through the website’s Members Only section, members can update their personal information. We thrive in a digital world. Donating, joining, and paying online all enhance membership satisfaction.

We must foster an internal culture of goodwill for the ALA to survive and thrive. We can enhance membership strength by 2020 if we succeed with the other 4 Strategic Plan goals.

Investing in the ALA Centennial Strategic Plan is paying off. Before the Plan, membership was steadily declining 10% per year. In the past 4 years, that rate has improved to 6% per year. And membership dropped only 3% from FY2017 to FY2018 — investing in our future is working! Still, half of our new members drop out within three years. It's a brutal fact — we must reverse it. Members will renew only if they enjoy the experience of belonging, or because they are so proud of what they see the ALA doing, that they want to financially support it.

Treasurer
Marta Hedding, Indiana

In this, my final report before I retire, I reflect with pride on the long-term track record of clean external audits for each of the last 24 years while I served as National Treasurer. Finance responsibilities have always been a team effort. As the Finance Division has taken on more responsibilities over the years driven by increased legal and regulatory requirements, the team has adhered to the highest professional standards and best fiduciary practices. I know that will continue.

I'm also proud to have been instrumental in changes to automate and modernize operations and to see how our great staff have enacted improvements to help National Headquarters be more efficient, cost-effective, and professionally managed. Our increased technical functionality saves time and resources for the entire organization and provides an improved experience for our members!

For over two years, Dubbie and I carefully planned and prepared for my retirement, including transitioning many of the management responsibilities that had accumulated over time onto my plate to other staff members. In doing so, it became clear that the remaining governance duties of the National Treasurer can be accomplished in just a few hours per week. I know that as long as Dubbie is in charge of National Headquarters, with her extensive chief executive background, things will continue to improve, and I expect Sara Riegel to do well as part-time National Treasurer while continuing in her full-time staff position as Assistant Director of Finance. Sara, who has been with ALA NHQ for over eight years, has developed much expertise in regulatory compliance, budget management, and NHQ financial operations. I have great respect for them, along with Susan Stewart who has been at ALA NHQ for over 40 years. Susan will be as big a help to Sara as she has been to me.

As a Strategic Plan Goal Champion and mother to two biracial children, I'm especially proud of efforts to increase diversity in the ALA and enhance membership strength by improving organizational effectiveness, developing good leadership at all levels, and fostering an internal culture of goodwill — a must if the ALA is to be around for future generations. Tammy Wiggins has worked with all things membership-related at ALA NHQ for over eight years in charge of information technology (IT). She is also well-prepared for her expanded role as Director of IT Systems and Membership.

During my 24 years as National Treasurer, I have advocated the importance of a dues structure that adequately meets the Auxiliary's needs. Over 25 years, the ALA has only adopted three national dues increases, resulting in the National organization operating many years with deficit budgets. The previous two dues increase proposals, notably less than \$5 per year, were met with such rancor and negativism that some members left the organization. I am proud that delegates last year valued the information pre-circulated, and, with no negative debate, adopted the annual increase recommended by the National Executive Committee of \$3 per annum for adult members and \$1.25 per annum for Junior members.

The JGA Assessment revealed that members think our dues are low and not a factor in membership growth. Looking ahead, the ALA must either reverse the membership decline or adopt a dues structure that enables the national governing board to make periodic

nominal inflation-indexed increases based on budgetary needs, approved by the NEC through the ALA budget proposal process.

The ALA Centennial Strategic Plan goals must succeed to ensure the ALA endures. In retiring, I appreciate having worked with so many good people and wish the ALA the best. I've always been proud to work for an organization that puts God and country first.

**Chaplain
Evelyn Espinola, Colorado**

Our year has come to an end. We've made many cherished memories with The American Legion Family coming together.

This year, as national chaplain, I started a monthly conference call, which has been very uplifting and joyful. It has let our members talk to others across the nation about ideas, difficulties, and sorrows without conflict and hate. We started with prayer, and we ended in prayer. We laughed and enjoyed each other's words. I reached out for help over the holidays; we had 50 active military members in Korea who were in need. I couldn't be prouder of the units nationwide that came together and helped out.

We watched over each other day to day, and we helped those who are new to learn and grow.

We hope all the things we've done will help you along the way. So, as we all go on our way to our next step with great hope and expectations for what the next year holds, think about this:

Every end has a new beginning. The experiences you gained, and that I gained as your national chaplain, will make us stronger and more confident people. Every little encounter we experience throughout the years will be enriching and will remain within our hearts and memories for all our lives. All of us here and everywhere have gained stories to share with the next generation of new members. The future is not a gift, but an achievement. Your dreams are limitless. You all have inspired me to move ahead with a positive attitude and determination. This year has been a true blessing for me. God bless you all.

Reading the reports I received, departments were very busy. Units opened and closed their meetings with prayer, and many units were asked to give prayer at American Legion events. I'm so happy to read how units like the chaplain in Unit 146 in Beaver Dam, Wis., went on a search in the oldest cemetery to find graves of soldiers that no one kept up — now they are decorated with wreaths and are cared for. Parkinson, Iowa, found 423 veterans' graves that now have an American flag. Puerto Rico Chaplain Luz Tosado and the department were there in numerous capacities. For example, members there gave 107 families Thanksgiving meals, gave 500 meals to families in nearby towns, and developed a program for children affected by the hurricane. Many units are holding Sunday worship services with the message focusing on mission work through music and games. Our chaplains stepped up and worked on Honor Flights, gift shops, and helping the elderly by cleaning houses, grocery shopping, and driving them to appointments.

You all should be very proud of yourselves, as I have been proud of you this year.

Totals for 2017–2018:

- Memorial donations: \$53,623
- Total cards sent: 17,868
- Visits: 17,778
- Memorial ceremonies: 423
- Four Chaplains ceremonies: 71
- Money spent: \$26,047
- Other monetary donations: \$2,745
- Direct veterans involved: 271
- Volunteer hours: 18,637
- Mileage: 7,507
- Departments reporting: 36

Remember to always talk about your blessings more than talking about your burdens. I thank you for your part in my journey and for being the biggest part of why I smile each day.

**National Historian
Susan Campbell, North Carolina**

“For historians ought to be precise, truthful, and quite unprejudiced, and neither interest nor fear, hatred nor affection, should cause them to swerve from the path of truth, whose mother is history, the rival of time, the depository of great actions, the witness of what is past, the example and instruction of the present, the monitor of the future,” said Miguel de Cervantes.

As historians, from unit to department to national, our obligation is to record and preserve our histories for future generations to build upon and continue our legacy of *Service Not Self*.

Reports show our members worked diligently on American Legion Auxiliary mission programs to help our veterans, military, and their families, and help their communities and youth. This year was especially challenging for a lot of our members, from hurricanes with high winds and flooding, to wildfires devastating thousands of acres and homes, to a volcano eruption. Through it all, our members came to the rescue with needed donations to the Auxiliary Emergency Fund, continuing to assist as needed with each natural disaster.

ALA National President Diane Duscheck emphasized the American Legion Auxiliary 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan, and fundraising for the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Mission Endowment Fund. The ALA Centennial Strategic Plan is well on its way with the implementation of the first four segments of the ALA Academy (*ALA 101, ALA Communication Methods, ALA Leadership: Living Our Motto of Service Not Self, and Establishing an ALA Culture of Goodwill*), with more courses to come in the near future. The teams have also been working diligently on diversity and membership with blog posts profiling diverse members and members from several generations. It is exciting to see so much happening to ensure our organization will be here to help our veterans, the military, and their families in the future.

The American Legion Auxiliary again was the co-presenting sponsor of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Held in Buffalo, N.Y., in October, 120 gold medal winners participated in the art exhibit, creative writers meet-and-greet, and the live stage show. National President Diane, National Vice President Kathy Dungan, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation National Chairman Nicole Clapp, Children & Youth National Chairman Kathy Daudistel, and numerous volunteers made the week a memorable one for all the veterans who attended.

National President Diane crisscrossed the country, visiting departments, Veterans Affairs Medical Center facilities, nursing homes, parades, and children’s homes. The list goes on and on. She had the privilege of accompanying American Legion National Commander Denise Rohan on Far East and European trips. They visited the demilitarized zone in South Korea, Okinawa, Japan, the Philippines, and Hawaii, where they went to the DNA lab and the USS Arizona Memorial. The European trip included a visit to Normandy.

This year, we lost three of our great Past National Presidents of the American Legion Auxiliary: Syble Deshotel on April 5, Evelyn Starr on April 8, and Phyllis (Bachman) Sickmond on April 17. May they rest in peace.

**Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee
Nicole Clapp, Iowa, Chairman**

Our work to enhance the lives of veterans, military, and their families through the ALA Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation program, along with the ALA 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan, provided our members opportunities to serve in volunteer leadership roles

within their local Veterans Affairs hospital (Goal 3: Develop Leadership at All Levels). This broadens our membership pool (Goal 1: Enhance Membership Strength) among a target population and builds brand loyalty (Goal 5: With The American Legion, Build Brand Loyalty) with the veterans themselves. Departments used their creativity and generosity to carry out the mission and achieve our goals in countless ways!

Every day, program objectives were addressed by assisting in activities that help homeless veterans through coordinating stand downs and collection of sundries, bedding, food, and much needed clothing. ALA members promoted job fairs for veterans and their families to transition back to civilian life in addition to working with The American Legion to obtain all their VA benefits. Waukesha County ALA in Wisconsin supported the new Racine Tiny Homes project. Each tiny home has a bed, small storage area, a microwave, Keurig machine, refrigerator, and TV. These homes surround a community center complex for homeless veterans. This nurturing environment fosters the necessary tools for success and wellbeing. Group therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder and Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA), assistance with work, finances and housing, along with classes for cooking, yoga, and art therapy are offered.

Units and departments demonstrated supportive rehabilitation and healing of veterans through arts, crafts, and hobbies across America. The 2017 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Buffalo, N.Y., recognized the progress and recovery made through recreation therapy and raised the visibility of the creative achievements of our nation's veterans after disease, disability, or a life crisis.

Thousands of hours and dollars were donated by our members through Service to Veterans. Wreaths Across America tributes, fishing trips in Delaware, and hurricane relief efforts for our heroes made possible by the departments of Alabama, Florida, Texas, and Puerto Rico were just the tip of the iceberg.

Supporting caregivers of veterans through the Military and Veteran Caregiver Network and other acts of *Service Not Self* were very important aspects of our organization's efforts. Baby showers were a huge service for expecting military females and wives of servicemen. In Wyoming, a 9-year-old boy whose mother is a disabled veteran requested help in finding a "bed without holes in it." Not only was a bed found by Unit 42, but also a whole bedroom set along with bedding.

Last, but definitely not least, VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) volunteers at healthcare facilities remains essential to the quality care our veterans need. The ALA remains the largest organization volunteering services to the VAVS program. Congratulations to ALA member Anne Morris from North Carolina, for being recognized as the American Legion Auxiliary Volunteer of the Year!

Children & Youth Committee **Kathy Daudistel, Kentucky, Chairman**

American Legion Auxiliary members made it a priority to support and care for the children in our communities, especially military children.

Pennsylvania Department President Mary Greiman said the ALA's Children & Youth program allows members to see firsthand the difference we can and do make.

"While monetary assistance is a relief and much welcomed, interacting with the children is the most rewarding," she said.

Mary's words seem to echo Auxiliary members across the nation who are actively engaging children in their communities and enjoying the programs as much as the children do.

Members from a unit in New York collaborated with a local school and hosted "The Great Bedtime Pajama Drive." Students were asked to bring in a new pair of pajamas that were later delivered to a shelter in the neighborhood. The drive took place for two weeks, and more than 300 pairs of pajamas were donated. Scholastic Books even contributed a book for each pair of pajamas donated. The school's principal was so impressed with the success

that he declared one day a “pajama day,” allowing students to wear their PJs to school.

Maine members supported more than 200 military kids at Bog Brook, a two-week camp for children of the Maine Army National Guard. They spent more than \$1,000 for sheets, craft and party supplies, a bubble machine, and toiletries. They also spent an entire day at the camp setting up more than 100 beds to prepare for the kids’ arrival. Unit 24 members sponsored muffins and ice cream socials throughout the camp, and all were able to enjoy the experience with the children.

Homeless children were a main priority in many departments, especially with the weather disasters that hit many areas this year. Puerto Rico was hit extremely hard and displaced many families. Units in Puerto Rico worked together amidst their own losses to take care of the children. Members distributed shoes, clothing, personal items, and food to families in need. One member from Unit 140 visited with a 12-year-old girl who had a medical condition that required electricity. The member managed to locate an alternate device for the young girl, and, in effect, saved her life.

Auxiliary members were also on the lookout for young people who exemplified *Service Not Self* attitudes. This year alone, 159 Good Deed Awards and 40 Youth Hero Awards were presented in recognition of outstanding young people.

Overall, members reported that 109,444 children were served, 64,500 volunteer hours were recorded, and more than \$1 million donated. Outstanding, but not surprising because it is who we are, what we do, and why we matter!

Americanism Committee
Martha Corriher, North Carolina, Chairman

“Americanism is a question of principle, of idealism, of character. It is not a matter of birthplace, or creed, or line of descent.” —*Theodore Roosevelt*

Members across the nation have shown the above quote to be true. They worked hand-in-hand promoting the ALA’s promise of *Service Not Self*. From the grassroots member to national officers, we are alike, working the Americanism program to educate and grow our future leaders.

Every department promoted the ALA Americanism Essay Contest. There were 1,952 student essays reported, and winners were chosen in each essay class for every division.

A first for the essay contest was the challenge for senior members to write an essay and follow the same rules as students. This was well received across the country, with 57 entries and a winner selected in each division. The challenge enabled senior members to understand the purpose of our essay contest and respond to “What can I personally do to promote Americanism in my school or community?”

Units across the country touched the lives of more than 4,800 students and untold numbers of military families. Members shared flag etiquette information, held flag disposal ceremonies and patriotic programs, folded more than 5,000 pocket flags, and assisted with Wreaths Across America by placing more than 100,000 wreaths on graves in our national cemeteries.

In Wisconsin, students were shown the folding of the flag for presentation to a fallen soldier’s family. For many in attendance, it was the first time they had heard the meaning of each fold. In Maryland, members assisted with naturalization ceremonies, welcoming more than 2,000 new U.S. citizens. A unit in Nebraska participated in a funeral service for a POW-MIA soldier with more than 1,100 people attending. In North Carolina, a 9/11 Day of Remembrance was observed at a middle school funded by a grant the local unit received from the Corporation for National & Community Service and national American Legion Auxiliary. The Department of New Mexico kept the American flag at the top of their agenda by presenting certificates of appreciation to businesses and residents who fly the flag.

Throughout the year, members enjoyed patriotic holidays and opened their celebrations to their communities. Some members took their show on the road, presenting

holiday programs to schools, churches, and civic organizations.

Twitter and Instagram grew in popularity with units and departments. Many new Facebook pages were created, and publicizing events in print was a first for some units taking advantage of resources available on the national website, giving examples of news releases and a multitude of printed materials.

Members realized that working ALA programs instills the founding principles of Americanism and creates a culture of respect, dedication, and loyalty to our community, state, and nation. As we approach our 100th birthday, may we pledge to do more, love more, and be more — not for ourselves, but for those who gave us the privilege of membership in the American Legion Auxiliary.

Community Service Committee
Beth McGinn, Delaware, Chairman

“Volunteers are the only human beings on the face of the earth who reflect this nation’s compassion, unselfish caring, patience, and just plain loving one another.”—*Erma Bombeck*

American Legion Auxiliary members are an integral part of their communities because they contribute their valuable time as they serve the Auxiliary’s mission. Units and departments complemented their volunteer base and completed projects by reaching out to local organizations, businesses, and other veterans service organizations through social and traditional media.

Auxiliary unit volunteers reported hosting or participating in national days of service throughout the year. This year, grants were awarded by ALA Foundation and the Corporation for National and Community Service to units for 9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance tasks. Grant funds were used for a variety of activities. Unit 146 in North Carolina hosted a community service educational presentation for 550 students at a local middle school, and Unit 539 in Texas spruced up its post outside area called “Slim’s Alley.”

To honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., countless units held celebrations in January focused on homeless veterans and military families. Activities included assembling baby baskets, women’s purses, and food drives.

There were many unique ways that members recounted how they help in their communities. For example, Indiana Unit 6 in Kokomo collected and donated glasses to Cataract & Laser Institute; Virginia Unit 284 Colonial Heights held a dinner in support of Women of Worth, a program of mentoring and character building for sixth through eighth grade girls; and the Department of Kansas staffed phones for a public television fundraiser.

Members also supported local first responders by donating baked goods and books. Florida Unit 356 supported Habitat for Humanity and helped their local animal shelter by donating dog food, blankets, and other basic items. During National Volunteer Week, members of Unit 156 New York helped restore the nautical-themed storefronts on City Island.

Plastic bag comfort mats were popular because the process offered tasks for all ages and degrees of creativity. Volunteers spent hours cutting, wrapping, and crocheting mats. One member, Jo-Ellen Claws, 88, of Illinois Unit 26, has made more than 800 mats in the past nine years. Each mat requires 750 bags and 35 hours. Jo-Ellen’s reward is the warm thanks she receives when presenting a mat to a veteran.

Volunteering not only helps those in need, but it also can increase the happiness of those who volunteer. Helping others kindles contentment, and, as a result, happy volunteers build a culture of goodwill as they come together for a common cause.

Education Committee
Vickie Koutz, Indiana, Chairman

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” —
Nelson Mandela

Once again, our members fully supported the American Legion Auxiliary’s mission of serving veterans, the military, and their families.

\$788,313 in scholarships was given out this year across our nation. National scholarship winners represented 20 different departments.

Give 10 to Education school supplies such as earbuds, staples, pencils, pens, erasers, markers, dry-erase markers, colored pencils, crayons, notebooks, rulers, construction paper, dictionaries, binders, portfolios, tissues, sanitizing wipes, bandages, glue sticks, tape, bookmarks, hula hoops, backpacks, and clothing were collected. These items were worth \$979,076, and 17,994 hours were reported donated.

In Virginia, several units were able to start their own scholarships by standardizing the procedures required, which ensured the scholarships would be available for distribution for the fiscal year.

A unit in Alaska encouraged students to dress up in old military uniforms and white gloves and carried an oversized flag in parades.

Units in Connecticut supported Teachers Appreciation Week by including all personnel, including the principal, office workers, teachers, custodians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and all volunteers. Nebraska members showed their appreciation by distributing candy bars, cookies, serving breakfast, and providing cheese and meat trays throughout the week.

On Fridays, North Carolina members sent students home with enough food to last until Monday morning.

Unit 001 and Unit 100 in Arkansas worked together during a “backpack bingo” event at the beginning of the year, during which they handed out backpacks filled with supplies for every student present. The leftover backpacks were then sent to Houston to assist in replacing supplies destroyed by Hurricane Harvey. A unit in Illinois reported sending several large boxes of school supplies to the Department of Texas American Legion and Auxiliary headquarters to assist victims of the hurricane.

Puerto Rico interviewed the mother and son of a veteran from Iraq. They helped the son complete an application form for a donation to cover his expenses, clothes, and everything else needed for his graduation from high school.

A unit in Massachusetts donated to a library program that mails books to local children.

The Department of Michigan sponsored adult literacy presentations. They also helped the Teal Pumpkin Project raise awareness of food-related allergies and encouraged parents, schools, and communities to offer non-food items during Halloween in order to allow kids with food allergies the same fun and opportunities.

Units in Indiana, Iowa, Rhode Island, and several other states collected Box Tops.

A special thanks to all members who helped promote the ALA’s Education program this year.

ALA Girls Nation Committee
Lisa Chaplin, DNP, Virginia, Chairman

The American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation Committee achieved 100 percent reporting for the 2017–2018 year. The committee provided ongoing updates and shared ideas and best practices through bulletins and correspondence to departments. Some of the ideas shared related to improving ALA Girls State program recruitment efforts by making grassroots connections and forging relationships with communities, schools, and parents of high school students. Ideas were offered for the structure of delegate selection

processes and meaningful orientation sessions, making certain that all delegates “know before they go” that these are ALA programs. Members were encouraged to customize their orientation sessions, as all ALA Girls State programs are not identical; it’s not a one-size-fits-all endeavor.

Other important topics were addressed, such as the importance of branding. It is imperative that we improve branding our programs and ourselves so that everyone knows ALA Girls State and ALA Girls Nation are programs of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Another focus was avoiding missed opportunities to highlight our programs and the achievements of those who have attended them. Yet another focus was fostering ongoing relationships with our prior ALA Girls State delegates and striving to incorporate them in our orientations and later as volunteer staff at our ALA Girls State sessions.

As always, we want to promote ALA membership for all who are eligible. Many departments enhanced their use of social media to maintain ongoing connections.

An additional area of paramount importance addressed was succession planning. It is our responsibility now to look ahead to ensure ongoing successful delivery of this ALA marquee program through our engagement with both new and existing members, allowing us to incorporate new perspectives while providing opportunities for others to gain experience working with volunteers well-versed in conducting these programs.

Though all ALA Girls State programs share the same overarching ideals, the delivery of the programs varies within the scope of our mission to promote citizenship, patriotism, service to the community, and, above all, service to our veterans, the military, and their families. Some of the mission-based activities reported: folding pocket flags for deployed military; collection of comfort items for Veterans Affairs hospitals, stand-downs and shelters; donations to the USO; donations of toys used for training service dogs for veterans through programs such as Retrieving Freedom; support to Operation: Military Kids; writing cards and letters to hospitalized veterans and to deployed servicemembers; fundraising to support Honor Flights; and inviting veterans from a VA nursing home for lunch and entertainment during an ALA Girls State session. These are but a few ways our mission was incorporated into this program that included nearly 15,000 young women last year. That’s impact!

Junior Activities Committee
Pamela Ray, Illinois, Chairman

American Legion Auxiliary Juniors around the country were very busy! Their commitment to our veterans, active-duty military, National Guard, and reserves was shown in their everyday activities. Many departments reported special Juniors projects, including working the ALA Patch Program.

Juniors in Wisconsin worked the Patch Program, with many units finding the activities as a way to get out-of-town Juniors involved with the ALA. The Department of Wisconsin Juniors chairman held a Junior workshop for senior members. They shared ideas on how to recruit Juniors, participated in creative activities, and treated the young women to a recruitment tea party.

The Department of Iowa has a Junior camp each year. They actively involve their Juniors in the planning. The interaction was positive for Juniors and seniors. The Juniors of District 4 in Iowa focused on donations to Retrieving Freedom, a group that places service dogs with veterans.

A special project by Juniors from Delaware was creating “chemo bags” for the Tunnell Cancer Center. The bags included crackers, water, juice, candy, socks, pens, and other necessities. Each bag was decorated with stickers and included cards of encouragement.

Vermont Juniors are growing each year. This year, Hardwick Unit 7 participated in a spaghetti dinner to raise money for a young woman with a brain tumor. The combined efforts of The American Legion Family raised more than \$14,000, and the Juniors paid for her ALA

dues. This new Junior is now the acting historian and has recruited her mom to become an ALA member!

The Department of Minnesota recruited 90 new Juniors this year; talk about working the ALA 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan, Goal 1 (Enhance Membership Strength) specifically. Those new Juniors helped the honorary department Junior president raise \$2,130 to provide school supplies to children in the community. What a great way to get the ALA name out there. Wyoming Juniors participated in an Adopt-a-Vet program where they had a secret veteran and sent them gifts for each holiday.

Juniors from the Department of Virginia worked our ALA programs by participating in the ALA Patch Program. One unit reported 749 hours volunteering to support our programs. South Carolina Juniors were “A Sisterhood Growing Together” by making hero packs for children of deploying soldiers, holding a canned food drive, and participating in growing membership by bringing ALA-eligible friends to their meetings.

In Arizona, Juniors colored 480 eggs for the community Easter egg hunt and assembled 225 Easter baskets. During the holidays, Juniors provided a cookie decorating station for children during the “Shop with a Cop” event. Alaska Juniors made more than 100 Christmas ornaments for veterans’ Christmas stockings and baked cookies for soldiers.

We can learn so much from our Juniors — from recruitment to giving. They are our future leaders.

Legislative Committee

Carol Edwards, South Dakota, Chairman

As members of the American Legion Auxiliary, it is our mission to advocate for veterans, servicemembers, and their families. The Legislative Program supports the legislative priorities adopted by The American Legion. The Department of Virginia said it best: “Who can say no to a large group of well-informed and passionate ladies?”

Here are some of the Legislative program accomplishments achieved this year:

The historic signing of the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 by President Trump at the 2017 National Convention in Reno.

The signing of the “Forever GI Bill,” also called the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017. Already 1.7 million individuals have taken advantage of the Post 9/11 GI Bill, but this will give many more that opportunity.

Passage of The American Legion 100th anniversary commemorative coin act. The funds gained from sales will support caring for those who served and are currently serving in the Armed Forces and programs that maintain patriotic values, strong families, and assistance for at-risk children.

Passage of the VA Mission Act. This bill expanded the Department of Veterans Affairs Comprehensive Family Caregiver Program to veterans injured in service before Sept. 11, 2001.

As advocates for the legislative agenda of The American Legion, Auxiliary members raise awareness of the mission and increase brand loyalty. The Department of Florida literally “rocked” it! Department Chairman Dee Bell introduced her American Flag Painted Rock Project: 300 rocks were painted with the American flag on the front and the Florida website on the back. The rocks were distributed locally and worldwide; anyone finding a rock would gain knowledge of the ALA and our legislative priorities.

Department legislative priorities also found traction when members of the ALA joined forces with the Legion. In Arkansas, a bill was passed that allowed schools and state-funded public buildings to display posters proclaiming the national motto “In God We Trust.” Unit 100 helped raise funds to cover the cost of printing the posters.

In West Virginia, members successfully advocated for the passage of several bills directly impacting veterans. Two in particular were HB 2771, temporary teaching certificates to military spouses certified to teach in other states; and SB 47, requiring U.S. Department of Defense advocacy groups to be notified in abuse or neglect of military

children.

The ALA Legislative program is about more than just the passage of legislation. The Department of Kansas hosted a County Government Day for 300 juniors and seniors in high school, using the event as an opportunity to register 150 students to vote. The Department of Kentucky hosted a Welcome Home Vietnam Vets Dinner with more than 700 in attendance.

Wendy O'Brien of the Department of California had a great message: "What we do DOES make a difference," and the departments have proven that.

National Security Committee
Brenda Collins, South Carolina, Chairman

Our members continued to honor active-duty military, Reservists, and National Guardsmen by supporting them daily. Units prepared and shipped thousands of care packages to servicemembers all over the globe. No task was too big or too small, as members supported military spouses and their families by preparing meals, and doing household chores and lawn care for families experiencing a deployment.

Members hosted baby showers for military spouses and women currently serving. Support was given to the USO to help ensure servicemembers have a place to unwind while serving.

Blood drives were held at American Legion posts, churches, and in shopping center parking lots to help raise awareness of the need for us to be prepared at home.

Although coupon clipping is slowly being toned down due to electronic coupons, homebound members clipped and mailed coupons with a value in the millions of dollars to commissaries in Japan and Europe.

Blue Star and Gold Star Banners were distributed nationwide to the families of both servicemembers and our fallen heroes. No matter the size of your town or unit, you can make a difference. In Nebraska, a quest to honor one member's grandmother and her husband's grandmother as Gold Star Mothers led to a special endeavor for Carol Verbeek and Scribner American Legion Auxiliary Unit 121. The unit honored the families of fallen servicemembers in northern Dodge County by locating and identifying the graves of these Gold Star Mothers.

"This was a fairly ambitious project to do in a town of 800," said Verbeek. The unit found the graves of 35 veterans and the graves of their Gold Star Mothers. Unit President Tracie Zahourek said the project was the epitome of the Auxiliary's mission.

"These moms — their sons sacrificed their lives for their country," she said. "It's a way for one small little Auxiliary to reach out to moms."

The unit received more than \$1,400 for the project, including a Scribner Area Foundation grant and Legion members' donations.

The families were honored at a Sept. 24, 2017, dedication ceremony at the Scribner Cemetery. They have gathered about 70 names so far for the project's second phase on recipients elsewhere in Dodge County, and they continue to apply for other grants, including to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation, to continue honoring the Gold Star Mothers in their area.

Poppy Committee
Carol T. Robinson, Ohio, Chairman

Our efforts to share the story of the poppy across the country are gaining momentum! May 25, 2018, was the second annual National Poppy Day®, and nationwide efforts were made to honor the fallen and raise money to help veterans, military, and their families.

Proclamations were made by mayors across the nation to recognize National Poppy Day. City, county, and state legislators and media were given a letter with a poppy enclosed and were asked to wear it.

The Ohio Department of Transportation, in partnership with the Department of Ohio American Legion and VFW Families, held an Ohio World War I Red Poppy Remembrance Garden Dedication Ceremony to commemorate the centennial of the end of WWI. More than 1,600 full-sized red poppies filled the nearly one-third acre garden located between mile markers 70 and 71 on Interstate 70 eastbound rest area in Madison County, Ohio.

In many departments, Miss Poppy and Poppy Poster contests were held, and ALA Girls State programs held poppy wreath ceremonies. Poppies were displayed on parade floats, table decorations, corsages, wreaths, hats, aprons, fashion shows, and so much more! Let's not forget social media: Facebook played an essential part in getting the poppy story out. Wonderful stories and ideas were shared!

With the rise in demand for crepe paper poppies, the need for poppy producers has grown. Department of Oregon Unit 41 member Dani Huck discovered in March that Oregon did not have a poppy production program. The local post purchased kits, and Dani posted flyers around town looking for veterans willing to make the poppies. Five veterans signed up immediately. The Department of South Dakota worked very hard getting the word out to potential poppy makers at the Hot Springs, S.D. Veterans Affairs facility, where veterans reported how therapeutic it is to make poppies.

Experienced poppy makers are valuable assets to our mission. The Department of Ohio has seven veterans at the Ohio veterans home who make poppies all year. Ruddy, the lead poppy maker, has been making them since 1988. He alone makes about 1,000 poppies a day. Another experienced poppy maker, the Department of Massachusetts' Poppy Chairman Ann Fournier, makes poppies every morning on her train commute into the city. Her efforts were the focus of print and broadcast news stories, including a feature on the local FOX-TV affiliate in Boston!

Last, but not least, even our members affected by tragedy found time to spread the word. The Department of Puerto Rico suffered devastating losses this past year with back-to-back hurricanes, yet the unit members still found time to distribute poppies. A poppy PowerPoint presentation was created by the department Poppy Committee chairman in both English and Spanish to aid them in promoting the ALA Poppy program.

Audit Committee
Pamela Jackson, Ohio, Chairman

The national Audit Committee serves both as the Audit Committee for the American Legion Auxiliary and the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation as prescribed by the national Audit Committee charter adopted by the National Executive Committee in 2010. The Audit Committee's responsibilities include engagement of a qualified, independent external audit firm; examination of annual consolidated financial audits for the Auxiliary and ALA Foundation; review of the IRS 990 reports; assessment of various risk aversion policies; and risk management oversight. This committee operates at arm's-length from the rest of the organization to ensure an unbiased approach to performing its duties in a conscientious and effective manner.

The Audit Committee is comprised of outstanding professionals with expertise in public accounting, risk assessment, and other appropriate executive backgrounds for fulfilling responsibilities to this organization and its governing board. This year's five-member committee consists of retired CPA Helen Riedlinger (South Dakota), representing the national Finance Committee; Marybeth Revoir (Illinois), representing the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation; and the three members confirmed by the NEC: Paula Means (Indiana); Patty Waltz (Indiana); and Chairman Pamela Jackson (Ohio).

The Audit Committee engaged Alerding CPA Group Inc., a specialist in the not-for-profit sector, to conduct the FY17 audit. The Alerding CPA Group has a unique and relevant understanding of governing boards, internal controls, and financial reporting for non-profit organizations. In February, the financial statements were reviewed and accepted by the national Audit Committee, then presented to both the national Finance and Executive

committees during the mid-year NEC meeting in Indianapolis. The Report to Governance indicated no material weaknesses, and the FY17 Audit Reports were accepted by the National Executive Committee.

The Annual Governance and Management Risk Assessment Exercise conducted by the Audit Committee resulted in two recommendations: 1) In order to improve effectiveness, the Audit Committee recommended that the executive titles of the National Headquarters top management positions be reviewed and modernized to reflect the chief executive positions they serve; and 2) In order to optimize mission delivery, the Audit Committee recommended that the Future Focus Committee assess the number and appropriateness of our national committees. The Audit Committee is pleased that the national president took immediate action and assigned the tasks as recommended.

The Audit Committee also thoroughly reviewed the Internal Revenue Service 990 reports prepared for both the American Legion Auxiliary and the ALA Foundation by the external auditor. The IRS 990 serves as the American Legion Auxiliary's annual report to the federal government and to the public. The reports are quite lengthy and serve as documentation that the American Legion Auxiliary operates in a manner consistent with the purpose identified and detailed in the IRS regulations. The 990 provides information to the IRS that demonstrates the Auxiliary is in compliance with all federal regulations so as to maintain its tax-exempt status. In keeping with the expectations for transparency by the IRS, the reports are posted on the American Legion Auxiliary national website upon approval.

The national Audit Committee appreciates the knowledge and expertise of the Alerding CPA Group and also recognizes, with gratitude, the efficiency and dedication of our National Headquarters staff whose adherence to high ethical standards and execution again resulted in a stellar audit. The Audit Committee strongly encourages all departments, units, and members to be diligent financial stewards and strive for excellence as we continue our mission of enhancing the lives of our veterans, military, and their families in the spirit of *Service Not Self* for generations to come.

Auxiliary Emergency Fund Committee
Elaine Mackenzie, Vermont, Chairman

The Auxiliary Emergency Fund, established in 1969, was made possible by a generous legacy gift from Helen Colby Small of Burlington, Wis. Funding for AEF grants comes from generous contributions from units and members and can be awarded to members who have exhausted all other personal and community resources due to financial hardship, natural disaster, or the need for competitive job skills education.

Floods, hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes — seems overwhelming, doesn't it? Well, our Auxiliary members did not allow themselves to be overwhelmed. They stepped up and did what was necessary to help other members in need. The purpose of this program is twofold: to educate our members about the grants and to raise funds.

This year, the most popular way to raise funds in departments was for individuals or units to fill water bottles with coins. Some departments requested units remit an amount per member to fund the AEF. Virginia suggested a voluntary "tax" on units to collect funds during meetings, not only helping to boost total donations to the AEF on the part of the entire department, but also to help educate members throughout the state about the AEF and its importance.

Other ways units and departments raised funds: raffles; selling pie slices at a post dinner; and hosting spa days, dinners, dances, silent auctions, and variety shows. Wisconsin Unit 315 held a wreath-making workshop and sold the resulting wreaths at a local street fair. At department meetings, Wyoming sold raffle tickets with the prize of one year's membership dues.

Many departments reported getting their Junior members involved in their own projects to raise funds and awareness for the AEF.

Overall, units and departments were very successful in educating members about the

availability of AEF grants. The disaster grants received lots of publicity, especially this year with so many natural disasters hitting such a wide area. Much attention was given to members whose life circumstances changed suddenly and found themselves in need of temporary assistance with living or education expenses. These funds were granted to members in every division this year.

Our members recognized the importance of continuous fundraising. The number of AEF grants and disaster grants given to members this year was high. Ongoing donations from members, units, and departments will continue to keep the Auxiliary Emergency Fund strong.

This program is so special to our members because we all see the results of helping each other. Members helping members is an idea we can all get behind and helps build brand loyalty and retain members.

Constitution & Bylaws Committee
Denise Delaney-Wrolen, Indiana, Chairman

As members of the American Legion Auxiliary, it is our responsibility to inform and educate the members of our organization on the importance and power of properly written, reviewed, and updated constitutions and bylaws, policies, and procedures. When each member understands our governing documents, it allows the American Legion Auxiliary to run smoothly, which addresses Goal 4 of the ALA 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan: Create an Internal Culture of Goodwill.

The goal this year in the *ALA Programs Action Plan* was to encourage units, districts, and departments to review and update their governing documents. Departments reminded units to review their constitution and bylaws to ensure they were in line with their department and National Headquarters' documents. Areas of importance were membership eligibility, transfer of membership, dues increase, and the ALA Code of Conduct.

Several departments hosted workshops at conferences and conventions with step-by-step instructions for reviewing and updating documents, and detailed how-to-sheets were provided to help units get started.

Many units reported sending their updated constitution and bylaws to their department for review. They provided, or made available, copies of their unit and department documents to new and current members upon request.

The Department of Arkansas thanked members in their department for taking time to actually work the *ALA Programs Action Plan* and the Centennial Strategic Plan, consistently conducting themselves with honor by maintaining fairness and fostering and promoting goodwill with transparency amongst their members.

The Department of Florida started the year by making sure their current constitution, bylaws and standing rules templates were correct and available on the department's website. Sample templates were sent out in the department's newsletter, along with ALA National Headquarters' Constitution & Bylaws program updates.

The Constitution & Bylaws Committee in the Department of Texas visited units to personally assist them with updating their governing documents. They also have a sample unit constitution and bylaws template on their website and encourage units to compare the newest sample against previously updated documents. The suggested sample includes many note boxes that help them update their documents.

The Department of Montana conducted a constitution and bylaws workshop at their fall conference for attending units and distributed templates for unit constitution and bylaws and explained how to use them to create or update their documents. Guidelines for standing rules were also given with explanations on what to include.

Thank you to all department and unit chairmen for taking the time to review and update your governing documents and for submitting your annual reports.

Finance Committee
Peggy Thomas, Virginia, Chairman

The National Finance Committee continued to meet the challenges of good fiscal planning to meet today's needs as well as future fiduciary requirements.

This committee is comprised of five appointed members, each serving a five-year term. Currently, the committee is made up of three Past National Presidents, and includes a retired corporation vice president and a retired certified public accountant.

The committee reviews the draft budget, makes any adjustments that may be necessary to reflect new or changing goals, and recommends a budget for the National Executive Committee's consideration and adoption. Also, in carrying out its role as fiduciary stewards, the ALA National Finance Committee is responsible for investment planning; reviewing financial statements; monitoring member benefits and fundraising campaigns; reviewing and overseeing the financial policies of the organization; reviewing the annual audit of the Auxiliary and the ALA Foundation; and making fiscal policy recommendations for NEC action to ensure that the ALA National Organization is meeting nonprofit benchmarks and governmental requirements in keeping with best practices.

The National Finance Committee designates one committee member as a liaison member to the ALA Foundation Board and another as a liaison member to the ALA National Audit Committee.

Due to responsible oversight, we were able to fund visits to departments by our five national division vice presidents; continue department secretary/manager training at National Headquarters; and continue underwriting the costs for three department representatives to attend the Department Leadership National Conference. Your Finance Committee believes strongly in the value to members of ALA Mission Training and national Junior meetings. Nearly 500 members attended the six Mission Training sessions this fiscal year. Attendance at the six national Junior meetings grew this fiscal year with more than 150 Juniors attending — three times the number attending when only one meeting was held each year.

The successful fundraising efforts by our direct mail vendor continued this year with three appeals for the ALA and one for the ALA Foundation. Fiscal year direct mail donations for the ALA as of May 31, 2018, totaled a net \$244,000. The Auxiliary is fortunate to have such generous donors both inside and outside the ALA. Every year, about half of the direct mail donations come from non-members! Thank you for your continued support of our great mission!

Our members continued to use their Auxiliary USAA Credit Cards. Since inception through December 2017, \$45 million has been charged by cardholders, resulting in a minimum of \$25,000 in revenue each year to the ALA as a reward for our members' card use. Now, 90 percent of the annual proceeds are shared with departments each year as a result of the change enacted by the Finance Committee to distribute most of the credit card royalties back to departments. Previously, 50 percent was shared with departments. Starting with fiscal year 2018, that amount was raised to 90 percent to provide more help to departments.

The national Finance Committee also spent considerable time reviewing the fiscal analysis of purchasing a building for National Headquarters versus continuing to lease. The committee toured the property and determined it was much more cost effective to buy the property, and recommended the National Executive Committee approve the purchase. The NEC did approve, and closing took place in October.

As always, the National Finance Committee urges each member to increase her financial knowledge of her department, district, and unit in order for the ALA to carry out our obligations to our military and our veterans for years to come.

History Committee
Cathi Taylor, Indiana, Chairman

When we hear the word “history,” it seems that many people think, *Ugh*. Perhaps it is because they remember needing to memorize names and dates or the teacher who spoke in a monotone voice. Whatever the reason, people tend to see history as a boring subject and not worth learning.

As the American Legion Auxiliary nears its centennial, I am happy to report that our members don’t see it that way. During the year, our units and departments found new and creative ways to share their history.

A number of Wisconsin units digitized their unit histories, saving them to a disc or flash drive so that their members will have access. Mayville Unit 69 displayed their history in a local museum, while Brillion Unit 126 has a permanent display at the Brillion Community Center. Other units have been provided space at their local historical society and libraries to showcase their history. Franklin Unit 192 worked its way through several large cartons of histories, scrapbooks, and memorabilia that a longtime member found when she was moving.

Florida reported that five units created a new Cavalcade. Nine other units updated their existing displays. In total, these 14 units dedicated 264 hours to the preservation of their history. Unit 107 added a new display case, while Lake Helen Unit 127 held a dedication ceremony for the framing of its charter membership roll. Riverview Unit 148 brought in a special guest who spoke about that unit’s beginnings.

Naylor Memorial Unit 643 of Missouri honored its first unit president. To celebrate the unit’s 85th birthday, Poplar Bluff Unit 153 displayed its history and scrapbooks for all to enjoy. The local newspaper covered the occasion.

Units from the Department of Arkansas shared their history in places other than their unit and post homes. They organized a road show, which included displays at fairs and senior centers.

Do you remember the hurricane that ripped its way through Puerto Rico? These members did not let it stop them from keeping their history alive. Two units, St. Thomas 90 and Country Club 140, did their part through remembrance. They celebrated the lives and contributions of two longtime members. Unit 140 is preparing a book chronicling the member’s life and work as an Auxiliary member.

A Department of Texas unit provided a tour of the unit’s Cavalcade to new members. Another unit restored old scrapbooks.

Whether through contests, displays, tours, or restoration, the ALA is seeking new ways to share its history with all. Let us hope this work continues on well past the centennial celebration.

Leadership Committee
Norma Tramm, Minnesota, Chairman

“Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence.” — *Sheryl Sandberg*

Many departments begin the year with leadership training for department officers, chairmen, and district presidents. Iowa provided a reference book following the training to help attendees recall the training during the year. New Jersey had monthly bulletins that provided information and fun facts. Other departments sent unit mailings and utilized social media to reach members. South Dakota had activity sheets in their monthly mailing. Mississippi had classes for new officers and new chartered units.

One of Maryland’s goals was to have every member continue to learn and teach others. Idaho’s training sessions encouraged officers to prepare productive meetings and get new members involved early.

ALA 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan Goal 3, Develop Leadership at All Levels, is

alive and well in our departments.

“Being a leader means you need to train others and spread the knowledge about the Auxiliary,” said Susie Bozella, Colorado National Executive Committeewoman.

West Virginia units held informal meetings to discuss their history and share information about programs.

In Wyoming, a leadership workshop included how to log on to www.ALAforVeterans.org and enroll in the ALA Academy. Four courses are now available for all members to gain knowledge. The ALA Academy is available 24 hours a day, and you can log on at a time convenient to your schedule.

Many leadership workshops included information on civility, branding, how to run a meeting, protocol, and information on many leadership tools. Question-and-answer time was always valuable at trainings. Pennsylvania published their questions and answers in a mailing. When asked to evaluate the leadership workshops, Maine members asked for more hands-on and interactive training.

Several departments shared they provided leadership classes for their Junior members, including the Junior Leadership Course. Alabama held a Junior leadership camp for members age 7 to 17 years old. Some Juniors return as senior members to assist with the program.

Georgia units participated in joint sessions with The American Legion, SAL, and Riders to discuss how they could help each other. Florida held a joint workshop with The American Legion to discuss how each group works their programs and then compared notes on how they can work together. Alaska is working on promoting goodwill and working with The American Legion Family to promote all programs.

Through leadership, you will plant the seeds of success, and growth will come, providing strength for the American Legion Auxiliary for the next 100 years.

Liason To Child Welfare Foundation Linda Newsome, Maryland, Chairman

In 1954, The American Legion endorsed the separate incorporation of The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation (CWF). Since then, the CWF has granted \$15.7 million to support youth-serving projects that seek to enhance the lives of children by addressing their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. This year, grants totaling \$636,467 covered 28 of the 147 grant applications. The following are a few of the grants that were recommended by the American Legion Auxiliary.

Art with Heart of Seattle, Wash., was awarded \$30,000 for its project, “Art with Heart as Partners in Possibility,” which will provide therapeutic intervention to children.

Gratitude Initiative of Bryan, Texas, was awarded \$21,000 for its project, “Gratitude Initiative Promotional Video,” which will provide college application resources to high school students who are military dependents.

Hope Flight Foundation of Castro Valley, Calif., was awarded \$8,000 for its project, “Free Medical Flights for children with cancer and other life-threatening illnesses... .” This project will provide air transportation for children with serious illnesses and their families from remote homes to inner city hospitals for treatments.

Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund of Oceanside, Calif., was awarded \$20,000 for its project, “2017 Semper Fi Fund Kids Camp.” This project will send military kids to camp whose parents suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. The camp will have fun activities along with emotional support for the children.

PAB’s Packs of Minneapolis, Minn., was awarded \$15,000 for its project, “Packs of Comfort for Chronically Ill Teens.” This project will provide custom-designed backpacks, filled with special comfort items, to chronically ill teens in the hospital.

Saint Francis Community Services Inc. of Salina, Kan., was awarded \$20,000 for its project, “Awareness of Child Sexual Human Trafficking in the Heartland,” which will

create a video about human trafficking that will show individual stories of children and how they are coerced in to that lifestyle.

Membership Committee
Donna Ray, Ohio, Chairman

In writing this report, I first want to thank and acknowledge the wonderful Membership Committee members. They went above and beyond, keeping the lines of communication (and goodwill) open with the department membership chairmen and presidents.

Our team focused on Goal 1, “Enhance Membership Strength,” of the ALA 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan and on sharing and utilizing the tools available to do so. We saw an increase in online renewals and new memberships, as well as more units across the nation subscribing to ALAMIS access. ALAMIS has helped departments and units better organize themselves and increase access to the data all can use in furthering their membership goals.

We offered two opportunities for departments to earn a monetary award. Each department reporting that *every* unit in their state had at least one new member by October was awarded \$1,000. If they achieved this by March, they got \$500. Thirty-two departments rallied their efforts to help their units find a way to have at least one new member by October, and another 13 attained this by March. This really shone a light on units where communication may have broken down or who needed a little attention from their district and department leaders. We heard from many about the huge effort made by department leaders, especially Membership chairmen, to reach out to units that hadn’t had a single member renew by those milestone dates.

In reading all of the department reports this year, we saw that so many worked very hard to engage with their units to encourage and support them in their goals. There were really creative reports telling of inspirational and creative methods of supporting districts, units, and members. The Department of Arizona reported that good old teamwork within The American Legion Family led to their success. They took a Family approach and held a challenge for events held outside of the post home. They offered an award based on how many

were recruited from the Auxiliary, Legion, and Sons at those events. The challenge encouraged creative, new outreach ideas. And members stepped up with entire Legion Families branding themselves and recruiting at places such as a Bass Pro Shops and an Ostrich Festival.

Several units in Colorado took the spirit of goodwill to a whole new level. When Units 58 and 17 saw the devastation from hurricanes in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, they contacted ALA National Headquarters to see if they could help by paying the dues of their “sister” ALA members to make sure they were current and eligible to apply for Auxiliary Emergency Fund grants. Puerto Rico reports that between this kind member-to-member support and their own persistent communication with their units, they achieved their goal this year... and then some!

There were so many other wonderful, inspirational ideas, which we hope planted ideas that will grow and spread beyond this membership year. Minnesota held four leadership conferences throughout the year, Utah emphasized having a tangible “new member packet” to share with new members, and Kansas challenged its members to pair new recruits with a mentor. Finding ways to get the tools and information out to ALL units and members should continue to be a focus, and this team reported on and led some wonderful ways to do this.

Past Presidents Parley Committee
Mary Davis, Washington, Chairman

Mentoring prospective and upcoming leaders, encouraging camaraderie, and providing a healthy foundation for the department or unit organization — that is Past Presidents Parley. Our ALA Unit Guide definition states the purpose of the program is “to utilize the experience and knowledge of past Auxiliary leaders for the training and encouragement of future Auxiliary leaders.”

Within the scope of each department’s Past Presidents Parley, the mission differs. Many have an organized group of past presidents to provide mentoring and raise money to award nurses scholarships. Others meet to develop a commonality. During the year, *ALA In the Know* eBulletin articles provided guidance on effective mentoring to support department and unit Past Presidents Parleys. Supplementing the eBulletin articles, Iowa Chairman Tammy Wright offered advice to her department: Mentor without criticizing.

Most departments reported formally meeting during their yearly department convention. Others met at mid-year during all executive committee meetings, and some met just because they enjoy each other’s company.

The Department of Alaska eulogizes past presidents who have passed away during the year. Others, such as Wisconsin, recognize and honor past presidents by highlighting accomplishments achieved during their year of service as president. The Department of Kansas recognized past unit presidents with “You are the Roots to our Mission” bookmarks.

California believes in the strength and contribution of Past Presidents Parleys. They helped establish five new unit Past Presidents Parleys during this administrative year. Also in California, districts assign “big sisters to little sisters” as a way to individualize mentoring. Much like that program, Virginia has a mentors and mentee program with established tools, some of which include familiarizing the member with the content of the *ALA Programs Action Plan* and providing leadership talks.

Colorado reported raising funds for a health professional scholarship, and Georgia gives two scholarships: a past presidents scholarship and a nursing scholarship. It was a banner year for scholarships in Illinois, as they were able to fund 25 scholarships.

At the mid-year luncheon in Nebraska, members reviewed the Past Presidents Parley guidelines, then changes were taken to convention for approval. At each Department Executive Committee meeting, in Oregon, a Past Presidents Parley luncheon is held. While there, they review and discuss methods to help strengthen their department.

With the horrific weather in Puerto Rico this past year, Past Presidents Parley members helped unit members complete Auxiliary Emergency Fund grant applications, and they recognized members who helped units continue to recruit members.

This year, 19 servicewomen from all five branches of service were nominated for the 2018 Salute to Servicewomen honor at National Convention. Of course, only one woman from each branch is selected for this honor. Also, 47 departments selected honorees for their Unit Member of the Year Award.

Remember: Effective mentors are the foundation our organization needs.

Public Relations Committee
Melanie Taylor, California, Chairman

By promoting who we are, what we do, and why we matter, public relations strengthens our identity and attracts potential members to the American Legion Auxiliary, all while achieving Goals 5 and 1 of the ALA 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan.

Focusing on Goal 5: With The American Legion, Build Brand Loyalty, departments reported their members proudly wore their ALA branded attire at parades, poppy day distributions, stand downs, and on Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Veterans Day events.

Many departments and units reported establishing a Facebook page for the first time. Auxiliary units and Legion posts also shared websites. Twitter and Instagram were used, in addition to email and newsletters. Those units without email or limited internet service reported sending newsletters via USPS to their members.

The Department of Tennessee reported a small, rural town unit published articles or radio ads almost daily, indicating they had over 600 radio announcements on the air this year. These PSAs were heard within a 50-mile radius and resulted in new members from nearby towns who did not have an Auxiliary unit.

With the widespread devastation in Texas from Hurricane Harvey, many unit members gained exposure and acknowledgment by organizing and volunteering with storm relief distribution centers, working side-by-side with Legionnaires providing emergency supplies, food, and water to hurricane victims.

The Department of Florida reported that two television stations covered their fall conference for the presentation of a \$9,100 check to the department president's special project, "K9s for Warriors." Those segments aired eight times.

Unit 91 of Beebe, Ark., was successful in establishing the first Gold Star Family Memorial in Arkansas, located in Beebe. Their alternate National Executive Committeewoman, Carol Westergren, worked with city officials in accomplishing this project.

The Department of Georgia reported that units who sponsored sports teams in their area donated money for advertisements in their program books and on signs in the outfield.

Kim Vincent with Bradley Keffer Unit 138 in Holtville, Calif., sent care packages to troops serving in the Middle East after hearing there was an urgent need because those troops were serving in isolated areas without running water, a toilet, and only MREs to eat. Kim rallied the unit and Legion members and her community to gather personal hygiene items and snacks to ship to the troops. Channel 11 KYMA in southern California received information about the project and interviewed Kim and other Auxiliary members at the post while packing the boxes. An active-duty serviceman who helped pack the boxes said care packages do so much more for morale, especially for those facing tough times.

Thanks to all departments for their great end-of-year reports and 100 percent reporting.



Crowe Horwath LLP
Independent Member Crowe Horwath International

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Members of the National Finance Commission
The American Legion National Headquarters
Indianapolis, Indiana

Report on Financial Statements

We have audited the accompanying consolidated financial statements of The American Legion National Headquarters ("Legion"), which comprise the consolidated statements of financial position as of December 31, 2017 and 2016, and the related consolidated statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these consolidated financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of consolidated financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these consolidated financial statements based on our audits. We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the consolidated financial statements are free of material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the consolidated financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the consolidated financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the consolidated financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the consolidated financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the consolidated financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters as of December 31, 2017 and 2016, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Other Matter

Our audits were conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the consolidated financial statements as a whole. The consolidating statements of financial position and activities are presented for purposes of additional analysis of the consolidated financial statements rather than to present the financial position and results of operations of the individual companies, and are not a required part of the consolidated financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the consolidated financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the consolidated financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the consolidated financial statements or to the consolidated financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the information is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the consolidated financial statements as a whole.

Crowe Horwath LLP

Crowe Horwath LLP
Indianapolis, Indiana
May 1, 2018

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION
Dec. 31, 2017 and 2016

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,174,906	\$ 1,256,591
Accounts receivable	5,040,578	5,265,909
Interest receivable	904,673	838,861
Prepaid expenses and deposits	953,487	1,911,233
Deferred membership expense	4,596,295	4,950,405
Inventory	2,761,406	2,847,503
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	11,511	13,575
Beneficial interest in trust	<u>114,200</u>	<u>151,994</u>
	16,557,056	17,256,071
Investments		
General	16,334,237	15,421,583
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved Funds	35,277,631	34,066,122
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	28,107,482	29,615,976
Samsung scholarship fund	7,768,802	7,609,593
Building funds	6,380,417	5,938,455
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	13,181,694	12,065,719
Special account – Endowment Fund	2,270,210	2,252,939
General account – Endowment Fund	7,610,997	7,463,980
National Emergency Fund	5,791,430	4,841,986
American Legion Charities	4,749,866	3,791,850
Other	<u>3,853,224</u>	<u>3,839,637</u>
	131,325,990	126,907,840
Property, plant and equipment, net	<u>4,489,117</u>	<u>4,679,174</u>
	\$ 152,372,163	\$ 148,843,085
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	\$ 3,327,417	\$ 3,405,248
Scholarships payable	1,346,892	1,091,879
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	283,453	290,318
Deferred income	929,571	1,394,884
Deferred dues income	25,316,796	27,449,484
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	3,708,642	3,696,407
Accrued vacation benefits	947,080	1,002,001
Accrued pension expense	19,449,457	12,058,718
Other liabilities	860,355	1,528,684
Notes payable	631,749	831,449
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life membership	23,664,141	23,532,607
Life memberships due to state and local posts	<u>26,239,151</u>	<u>26,093,304</u>
	106,704,704	102,374,983
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	5,178,172	8,742,165
Temporarily restricted	27,434,580	24,729,158
Permanently restricted	<u>13,054,707</u>	<u>12,996,779</u>
Total net assets	<u>45,667,459</u>	<u>46,468,102</u>
	\$ 152,372,163	\$ 148,843,085

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
Year ended Dec. 31, 2017

	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Temporary Restricted</u>	<u>Permanently Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>
Revenue, gains and other support				
National member dues	\$ 31,799,455	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 31,799,455
Direct membership solicitations	6,191,175	-	-	6,191,175
Member service fees income	579,943	-	-	579,943
Affinity income	2,128,372	-	-	2,128,372
Sales of emblem items	13,649,875	-	-	13,649,875
Advertising	9,353,077	-	-	9,353,077
Contributions	14,226,926	3,223,625	130,490	17,581,041
Label and printing fees	1,600,308	-	-	1,600,308
Interest and dividends, net of fees of \$365,958	1,804,836	1,081,228	-	2,886,064
Net realized gains (losses)	(40,306)	(36,167)	(50,294)	(126,767)
Other	<u>4,407,398</u>	<u>12,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,419,398</u>
Net assets released from restriction	85,701,059	4,280,686	80,196	90,061,941
	<u>1,901,056</u>	<u>(1,901,056)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total revenues, gains, and other support	87,602,115	2,379,630	80,196	90,061,941
Expenses				
Salaries	16,829,990	-	-	16,829,990
Employee benefits	5,839,456	-	-	5,839,456
Cost of sales – Legion	7,364,200	-	-	7,364,200
Department and magazine costs	2,673,921	-	-	2,673,921
Direct publications	10,458,470	-	-	10,458,470
Executive, staff and program travel	4,060,552	-	-	4,060,552
Commission and committee	1,737,332	-	-	1,737,332
Printing and postage	14,148,656	-	-	14,148,656
Scholarships, grants and awards	2,850,847	-	-	2,850,847
Office and other operating	14,145,429	-	-	14,145,429
Occupancy and usage	2,404,297	-	-	2,404,297
Special projects and programs	<u>2,316,772</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,316,772</u>
	84,829,922	-	-	84,829,922
Change in net assets from operations	2,772,193	2,379,630	80,196	5,232,019
Net unrealized gain (loss)				
– investments	587,170	325,792	(22,268)	890,694
Net change in PUFL	234,749	-	-	234,749
Amortization of pension loss	(2,199,456)	-	-	(2,199,456)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	<u>(4,958,649)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(4,958,649)</u>
Change in net assets	(3,563,993)	2,705,422	57,928	(800,643)
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>8,742,165</u>	<u>24,729,158</u>	<u>12,996,779</u>	<u>46,468,102</u>
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ 5,178,172</u>	<u>\$ 27,434,580</u>	<u>\$ 13,054,707</u>	<u>\$ 45,667,459</u>

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
Year ended Dec. 31, 2016

	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Temporary Restricted</u>	<u>Permanently Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>
Revenue, gains and other support				
National member dues	\$ 25,782,809	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 25,782,809
Direct membership solicitations	6,165,333	-	-	6,165,333
Member service fees income	631,106	-	-	631,106
Affinity income	2,506,181	-	-	2,506,181
Sales of emblem items	13,020,287	-	-	13,020,287
Advertising	9,563,462	-	-	9,563,462
Contributions	12,410,731	3,282,236	55,232	15,748,199
Label and printing fees	1,566,817	-	-	1,566,817
Interest and dividends, net of fees of \$348,294	1,762,993	1,007,686	-	2,770,679
Net realized gains (losses)	174,520	30,590	(38,142)	166,968
Other	<u>2,762,247</u>	<u>10,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,772,247</u>
	76,346,486	4,330,512	17,090	80,694,088
Net assets released from restriction	<u>1,284,235</u>	<u>(1,284,235)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total revenues, gains, and other support	77,630,721	3,046,277	17,090	80,694,088
Expenses				
Salaries	16,198,035	-	-	16,198,035
Employee benefits	4,207,101	-	-	4,207,101
Cost of sales – Legion	7,036,004	-	-	7,036,004
Department and magazine costs	2,943,026	-	-	2,943,026
Direct publications	10,863,367	-	-	10,863,367
Executive, staff and program travel	3,633,261	-	-	3,633,261
Commission and committee	1,758,486	-	-	1,758,486
Printing and postage	12,910,600	-	-	12,910,600
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,989,396	-	-	1,989,396
Office and other operating	13,345,446	-	-	13,345,446
Occupancy and usage	2,049,531	-	-	2,049,531
Special projects and programs	<u>2,794,203</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,794,203</u>
	79,728,456	-	-	79,728,456
Change in net assets from operations	(2,097,735)	3,046,277	17,090	965,632
Net unrealized loss – investments	(318,591)	(251,612)	(80,411)	(650,614)
Net change in PUFL	(1,886,814)	-	-	(1,886,814)
Amortization of pension loss	(2,506,774)	-	-	(2,506,774)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	<u>2,916,028</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,916,028</u>
Change in net assets	(3,893,886)	2,794,665	(63,321)	(1,162,542)
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>12,636,051</u>	<u>21,934,493</u>	<u>13,060,100</u>	<u>47,630,644</u>
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ 8,742,165</u>	<u>\$ 24,729,158</u>	<u>\$ 12,996,779</u>	<u>\$ 46,468,102</u>

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS
Years ended Dec. 31, 2017 and 2016

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>
Cash flows from operating activities		
Change in net assets	\$ (800,643)	\$ (1,162,542)
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash from operating activities		
Depreciation expense	777,333	795,306
Loss on disposal of property and equipment	154,736	-
Realized (gain) loss on sale of investments	126,767	(166,968)
Unrealized (gain) loss on investments	(890,694)	650,614
Net change in Paid-Up-For-Life annuity	(234,749)	1,886,814
Amortization of pension loss	2,199,456	2,506,774
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	4,958,649	(2,916,028)
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	(130,490)	(55,232)
Changes in assets and liabilities:		
Accounts receivable	245,331	376,622
Interest receivable	(65,812)	(6,531)
Prepaid expenses and deposits	957,746	1,109,503
Deferred membership expense	354,110	(945,856)
Inventories	86,097	(28,878)
Beneficial interest in trust	37,794	33,749
Accounts and scholarships payable	177,182	(163,071)
Deferred income	(2,080,501)	6,404,112
Accrued pension expense	232,634	(673,495)
Other accrued liabilities	<u>(723,250)</u>	<u>(412,337)</u>
Net cash from operating activities	5,381,696	7,232,556
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of property and equipment	(759,619)	(202,316)
Sales of property and equipment	17,607	-
Purchase of investments	(48,059,223)	(66,209,480)
Sales and maturities of investments	44,405,000	59,352,265
Investments in affiliate (CFA)	2,064	659
Net cash from investing activities	<u>(4,394,171)</u>	<u>(7,058,872)</u>
Cash flows from financing activities		
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	130,490	55,232
Repayment on notes payable	<u>(199,700)</u>	<u>(193,700)</u>
Net cash from financing activities	<u>(69,210)</u>	<u>(138,468)</u>
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	918,315	35,216
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	<u>1,256,591</u>	<u>1,221,375</u>
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	<u>\$ 2,174,906</u>	<u>\$ 1,256,591</u>
Supplemental cash flows information		
Interest paid	\$ 21,120	\$ 25,424
Investment maturities	(33,958)	-

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Dec. 31, 2017 and 2016

NOTE 1 – NATURE OF OPERATIONS AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Nature of Organization. The American Legion National Headquarters ("Legion") is a national veterans organization which was declared to be a corporate body by an Act of the United States Congress on September 16, 1939.

According to the Original Act and Subsequent Amendments, the purpose of the Legion is "to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to promote peace and goodwill among the peoples of the United States and all the nations of the earth; to preserve the memories and incidents of the two World Wars and the other great hostilities fought to uphold democracy; to cement the ties and comradeship born of service; and to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual helpfulness and service to their country."

Nearly 40% of the Legion's income is derived from membership dues (including amounts allocated for magazine subscriptions). An additional 11 - 12% is generated through advertising for the American Legion Magazine. Another significant source of income is Emblem sales, which includes the sale of apparel, jewelry, and other items bearing the American Legion Emblem. Income is expended by the Legion on several different programs including The American Legion Magazine, Emblem sales, veterans' assistance and rehabilitation, youth programs and others. The Legion's youth programs include American Legion baseball, oratorical contests and Boys Nation.

Principles of Consolidation. The consolidated financial statements include the accounts of The American Legion National Headquarters, The American Legion Charities ("ALC"), The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation ("ALEF"), and the National Emergency Fund ("NEF") (collectively, "the Legion"). All material inter-organizational accounts and transactions have been eliminated in consolidation.

The American Legion Charities includes the consolidated balances and activities of the American Legion Charities Trust and the American Legion Charities, Inc. The ALC was established to solicit funds from the individuals, organizations and corporations and to disburse said funds as may be directed to various Legion programs and charities. The ALC also promotes the common good and general welfare of the people of the United States of America by raising money for the programs of the Legion and its departments and posts. The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation, a tax-exempt Indiana corporation, was created to provide permanent funding for the rehabilitation of American veterans and assistance to orphans of veterans.

The National Emergency Fund is a tax-exempt trust established to provide gifts and grants to relieve suffering and ameliorate financial hardship incurred by American Legion members, families and Posts.

Basis of Accounting. The financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America ("GAAP").

Use of Estimates in Preparation of Financial Statements. The preparation of financial statements in conformity with GAAP requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues, expenses, gains, losses and other changes in net assets during the reported period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Financial Statement Presentation. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with GAAP, which requires, among other things, that the financial statements report the changes in and total of each of the net asset classes, based upon donor restrictions, as applicable. Net assets are to be classified as unrestricted, temporarily restricted and permanently restricted.

The following classes of net assets are maintained:

Unrestricted Net Assets – The unrestricted net asset class includes general assets and liabilities of the Legion, as well as assets and liabilities designated by the National Executive Committee, the governing body of the Legion. The unrestricted net assets of the Legion may be used at the discretion of management to support the Legion's purposes and operations.

Temporarily Restricted Net Assets – The temporarily restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion related to gifts with explicit donor-imposed restrictions that have not been met as to specified purpose, or to later periods of time or after specified dates. Unconditional promises to give that are due in future periods and are not permanently restricted are classified as temporarily restricted net assets. As the restrictions are met, the net assets are released from restrictions and included in unrestricted net assets. Contributions for which the restrictions are met in the same period in which the contribution is received are also recorded as temporarily restricted revenue and released from restrictions.

Permanently Restricted Net Assets – The permanently restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion for which the donor has stipulated that the contribution be maintained in perpetuity. Donor-imposed restrictions limiting the use of the assets or its economic benefit neither expire with the passage of time nor can be removed by satisfying a specific purpose.

Cash and Cash Equivalents. Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand and less than 90 day deposit balances with banks. The Legion maintains all of its cash deposits in banks and brokerage firms. This may result in a concentration of credit risk in the case of a severe regional financial failure. The maximum amount at risk is the excess of the deposit liabilities reported by the banks over the amounts that would have been covered by federal insurance. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation ("FDIC") insures deposits up to \$250,000 per financial institution.

Accounts Receivable and Allowance for Uncollectible Accounts. The Legion bills members, posts, and departments for dues and bills agencies for advertising in the Legion magazine. Interest is not normally charged on receivables. Management establishes a reserve for losses on its accounts based on historic loss experience and current economic conditions. Losses are charged off to the reserve when management deems further collection efforts will not produce additional recoveries. Management estimated that no allowance was necessary for the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016.

The Charities collects donations from members, posts, and departments. Losses are charged off to the reserve when management deems further collection efforts will not produce additional recoveries. Management estimated that no allowance was necessary for the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016.

Inventory. Inventory consists of Emblem items held for sale, magazine paper and publication rights and is stated at the lower of cost or market using the first-in, first-out ("FIFO") method. Supplies which are not intended for sale are expensed when purchased.

Investments. Investments are carried at fair value. The fair values of investments are based on quoted market prices, where available. If quoted market prices are not available, fair values are based on quoted market prices of comparable instruments. Realized and unrealized gains and losses are reflected in the consolidated statements of activities. Premiums or discounts on investments are generally recognized at the time of disposal or maturity.

Property and Equipment. Expenditures for property and equipment and items which substantially increase the useful lives of existing assets and are greater than \$1,500 are capitalized at cost. The Legion records depreciation on the straight-line method at rates designated to depreciate the costs of assets over their estimated useful lives. Buildings are depreciated on the straight-line method using a thirty year life. All other capital assets are depreciated over lives ranging from three to seven years.

Impairment of Long-Lived Assets. In accordance with GAAP, the Legion reviews its property and equipment for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of an asset may not be recoverable. If the fair value is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognized for the difference. No impairment loss has been recognized during the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016.

Collections. The Legion owns many collectible military related items and historical documents which were not recorded as they were acquired. It is often impracticable to determine a value for collections and accordingly, the Legion has concluded that they need not be capitalized. Some of these items have been appraised for insurance purposes.

NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Dec. 31, 2017 and 2016

NOTE 1 – NATURE OF OPERATIONS AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

Support and Revenue: The Legion reports gifts of cash and other assets as restricted support if they are received with donor stipulations that limit the use of the donated assets. When a donor restriction expires, that is, when a stipulated time restriction ends or purpose restriction is accomplished, temporarily restricted net assets are reclassified to unrestricted net assets and reported in the statement of activities as net assets released from restrictions.

Dues Income and Expense: Dues are recognized as income over the applicable membership period, which is on a calendar year basis. In addition to other methods of obtaining new members, the Legion uses direct mail and other direct marketing approaches. The income generated from direct membership solicitation is recognized over the applicable membership period (calendar year). The direct-response expenses incurred in obtaining new members are deferred and recognized in the subsequent membership year.

Income Taxes: The Legion is exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(c)(19) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. ALC, ALEF and NEF are exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. None of the entities are considered to be a private foundation. The Legion is subject to income tax on unrelated business income. In 2017 and 2016, the Legion incurred no tax expense.

Current accounting standards require the Legion to disclose the amount of potential benefit or obligation to be realized as a result of an examination performed by a taxing authority. For the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016, management has determined that the Legion does not have any tax positions that result in any uncertainties regarding the possible impact on the Legion's financial statements. The Legion does not expect the total amount of unrecognized tax benefits to significantly change in the next 12 months. The Legion recognizes interest and/or penalties related to income tax matters in income tax expense. The Legion did not have any amounts accrued for interest and penalties at December 31, 2017 and 2016.

Fair Value of Financial Instruments: The carrying amount of all financial instruments of the Legion, which include cash and cash equivalents, accounts receivable, beneficial interest in trust, investments, accounts payable, and notes payable, approximate fair value.

Expense Allocation: As disclosed in Note 16, expenses have been classified as program services, management and general, member development and fund raising based on actual direct expenditures. Additionally, some expenses are allocated among departments based upon estimates of the amount of time spent by Legion employees performing services for these departments.

Subsequent Events: Management has performed an analysis of the activities and transactions subsequent to December 31, 2017, to determine the need for any adjustments or disclosures to the financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2017. Management has performed their analysis through May 1, 2018, the date the financial statements were available to be issued.

NOTE 2 – COLLECTIONS

The Legion owns many collectible military related items and historical documents which were not recorded as they were acquired. It is often impracticable to determine a value for collections and accordingly, the Legion has concluded that they need not be capitalized. These items have been appraised, or are in the process of being appraised for insurance purposes and are as follows:

	Appraisal date	(unaudited) Replacement value
World War I posters	12/10/2015	\$ 492,204
World War II posters	12/10/2015	469,039
Military unit histories	12/10/2015	112,410
Fine art collection	12/10/2015	980,000
Museum collection	12/10/2015	120,475

NOTE 3 – INVESTMENT IN AFFILIATE

The Legion, in conjunction with approximately 120 other organizations, has created a nonprofit corporation known as The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. ("CFA") for the purpose of

aiding in the campaign to secure a constitutional amendment empowering the Congress and the States to enact legislation to protect the Flag of the United States of America from physical desecration.

CFA recognized a change in net assets of \$(2,064) and \$(659) in 2017 and 2016, respectively. Accordingly, the Legion's investment in CFA has been changed by these amounts and corresponding adjustments have been reflected in unrestricted net assets for 2017 and 2016.

NOTE 4 – BENEFICIAL INTEREST IN CHARITABLE LEAD TRUST

The ALEF has been named a beneficiary of a charitable lead trust. Under the charitable trust, the ALEF is to receive quarterly distributions in the amount of \$9,919 until December 2020, or until the funds of the trust are exhausted. Based on the terms of the trust and a 2.57% discount rate in 2017 and a 2.05% discount rate in 2016, the present value of future benefits expected to be received by the ALEF is estimated to be \$114,200 and \$151,994 at December 31, 2017 and 2016, respectively.

NOTE 5 – FAIR VALUE OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

Fair value is defined as the price that would be received for an asset or paid to transfer a liability (an exit price) in the Legion's principal or most advantageous market for the asset or liability in an orderly transaction between market participants on the measurement date.

GAAP establishes a fair value hierarchy which requires an entity to maximize the use of observable inputs and minimize the use of unobservable inputs when measuring fair value. GAAP describes three levels of inputs that may be used to measure fair value:

Level 1: Quoted prices for identical assets or liabilities in active markets that the entity has the ability to access as of the measurement date.

Level 2: Significant other observable inputs other than Level 1 prices such as quoted prices for similar assets or liabilities; quoted prices in markets that are not active; or other inputs that are observable or can be corroborated by observable market data.

Level 3: Significant unobservable inputs that reflect a reporting entity's own assumptions about the assumptions that market participants would use in pricing an asset or liability.

In many cases, a valuation technique used to measure fair value includes inputs from multiple levels of the fair value hierarchy. The lowest level of significant input determines the placement of the entire fair value measurement in the hierarchy.

The fair value of money markets and common stock are based on quoted prices in active markets (Level 1 inputs). The fair value of U.S. Government and agency obligations, asset backed securities, corporate bonds, and state and municipal bonds are based on quoted market prices of similar securities with similar due dates using the market approach (Level 2 inputs).

The fair value of beneficial interest in trust assets is determined using the income approach and is based on a valuation model that calculates the present value of estimated distributed income. The valuation model incorporates assumptions that market participants would use in estimating future distributed income. The Legion is able to compare the valuation model inputs and results to widely available published industry data for reasonableness; however, the Legion is unable to redeem the assets of the trust and only receives distributions (Level 3 inputs).

Assets and Liabilities Measured on a Recurring Basis: Assets and liabilities measured at fair value on a recurring basis are summarized below:

NOTE 5 – FAIR VALUE OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS (continued)

	Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2017 using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Assets:			
Beneficial interest in trust	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 114,200
Money market accounts	17,316,734	-	-
U.S. government obligations	-	39,658,140	-
State and municipal bonds	-	27,969,090	-
Corporate bonds	-	45,920,019	-
Common stock	462,007	-	-
	\$ 17,778,741	\$ 113,547,249	\$ 114,200

	Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2016 using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Assets:			
Beneficial interest in trust	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 151,994
Money market accounts	16,823,777	-	-
U.S. government obligations	-	39,610,707	-
State and municipal bonds	-	26,705,453	-
Corporate bonds	-	43,767,903	-
Common stock	-	-	-
	\$ 16,823,777	\$ 110,084,063	\$ 151,994

The tables below presents a reconciliation and statement of activities classification of gains and losses for all assets measured at fair value on a recurring basis using significant unobservable inputs (Level 3) for the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016:

	Beneficial interest in trust
Beginning balance, Jan. 1, 2017	\$ 151,994
Change in value of split interest agreements	1,882
Distributions from trust	(39,676)
Ending balance, Dec. 31, 2017	\$ 114,200
	Beneficial interest in trust
Beginning balance, Jan. 1, 2016	\$ 185,743
Change in value of split interest agreements	5,927
Distributions from trust	(39,676)
Ending balance, Dec. 31, 2016	\$ 151,994

NOTE 6 – PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

The Legion's property and equipment, and the related accumulated depreciation at December 31, 2017 and 2016 are as follows:

	2017	2016
Washington, D.C., real estate		
Land	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000
Building	5,661,735	5,621,056
Indianapolis real estate		
Land	389,264	389,264
Building	4,082,610	4,082,610
Furniture, fixtures and equipment		
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	6,931,764	6,834,390
Washington, D.C.	728,651	765,312
Construction in progress	34,470	98,838
	17,908,494	17,871,470
Less: accumulated depreciation	(13,419,377)	(13,192,296)
	\$ 4,489,117	\$ 4,679,174

Depreciation expense for the years ended, December 31, 2017 and 2016 was \$777,333 and \$795,306, respectively.

NOTE 7 – LONG-TERM DEBT

In 2013, the Legion refinanced its long-term debt. Principal and interest is payable in monthly installments, with the final payment due December 3, 2020. The stated interest rate is 1.35% plus the 30-day London Inter Bank Offered Rate ("LIBOR"). The outstanding balance on long-term debt is \$631,749 and \$831,449 as of December 31, 2017 and 2016.

The future maturities of the long-term debt are as follows:

	2018	2019	2020	Total
	\$ 205,200	211,200	215,849	\$ 631,749

Interest expense was \$21,120 and \$25,424 for the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016, respectively.

As a strategy to mitigate exposure to the risk of interest rate fluctuations, the Legion entered into an interest rate swap agreement on the long-term debt on December 3, 2013. This interest rate swap has been designated as a derivative and provides for the Legion to receive interest from the counterparty at the 30-day LIBOR rate plus 1.35% and to pay interest to the counterparty at fixed rate of 2.98% on a notional amount of \$631,749 and \$831,449 at December 31, 2017 and December 31, 2016, respectively. The interest rate swap matures in 2020. Under the agreement, the Legion pays or receives the net interest amount monthly, with the monthly settlements included in interest expense.

NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Dec. 31, 2017 and 2016

NOTE 8 – LEASES

The Legion has several non-cancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment, and copiers that expire at various dates through 2021. Rent expense under these leases for the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016 was \$361,660 and \$478,963, respectively.

Minimum lease commitments are as follows:

2018	\$	367,207
2019		360,652
2020		332,628
2021		293,200
	\$	<u>1,353,687</u>

In addition, the Legion had a lease with the State of Indiana for rental of the National Headquarters building in Indianapolis which expired on June 30, 2013. The Legion is operating on a month-to-month basis until a new lease agreement extending the lease term is finalized. According to the terms of the lease, the Legion is required to maintain the interior of the building, and provide adequate insurance on the building in lieu of lease payments. The cost of maintenance for 2017 and 2016 was \$1,024,409 and \$982,978, respectively. Insurance coverage is included in the Legion's general insurance policy.

NOTE 9 – PAID-UP-FOR-LIFE MEMBERSHIP FUND

The National Executive Committee approved the establishment of a life membership plan available to any member of a participating department. In accordance with the plan, the assets of the Paid-Up-For-Life ("PUFL") Membership Fund are included in unrestricted, board designated net assets and segregated in a trust account from which funds equal to the annual dues of life members are withdrawn for current operations each year. The trust agreement provides that the Legion has the right to withdraw part or all of the assets of the trust account and to modify or terminate the trust agreement at its discretion.

Under the terms of the PUFL program, participating member's national, state and local dues are paid by the Legion for the remainder of the individual's life. Management has estimated and recognized a liability for the future payments to state and local Legion organizations. Likewise, management has deferred recognition of the national dues portion of the members' payment. Deferred PUFL dues are recognized in annual amounts equal to the national dues in effect each year. The liability and deferred revenue amounts are estimated by the Legion's actuaries using PUFL membership summaries and discount rates comparable to the Legion's recent investment performance.

NOTE 10 – RESTRICTED AND RESERVE DESIGNATED FUNDS

The restricted fund is designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee and reported as unrestricted, board designated net assets. Earnings of the restricted fund, along with the principal, can be expended only upon recommendation of the National Finance Commission and a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee at two successive meetings. It is the policy of the Legion to transfer 10% of the prior year's defined net income from operations to the restricted fund. The Legion made no transfers to the restricted fund in 2017 and 2016.

The reserve fund is also designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee and reported as unrestricted, board designated net assets. However, earnings of the reserve fund may be used for the general operations of the Legion. The principal can be expended only by action of the Legion at its national convention, or by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee in two successive meetings not less than 60 days apart.

NOTE 11 – TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Temporarily restricted net assets are donor-restricted for specific purposes. At December 31, 2017 and 2016 the restricted purposes are as follows:

	2017	2016
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	\$ 973,346	\$ 987,387
Samsung scholarship	1,964,846	1,909,276
American Legacy Fund	13,360,721	12,429,174
National Emergency Fund	5,863,619	4,971,624

Boy Scouts	467,899	467,899
Operation Comfort Warriors	3,074,711	2,550,222
John DeVore	325,227	316,089
Edwin J. Drentz VA Boy's State	654,385	662,226
Samsung American Legion		
Alumni Association	184,676	280,227
Others	566,150	154,534
	<u>\$ 77,434,580</u>	<u>\$ 24,729,158</u>

NOTE 12 – NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM RESTRICTION

Net assets were released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes or by occurrence of other events specified by donors.

	2017	2016
Purpose restrictions accomplished		
Overseas graves decoration	\$ 25,298	\$ 23,345
Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)	1,215,669	575,196
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth programs	660,089	685,694
	<u>\$ 1,901,056</u>	<u>\$ 1,284,235</u>

NOTE 13 – PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Permanently restricted net assets represent donor-restricted gifts that have been invested and are to be maintained in perpetuity. Income from the Samsung scholarship fund is to be used to fund undergraduate scholarships for descendants of Korean War veterans and other wars in which U.S. servicemen and servicewomen participated. Income from the American Legion Endowment Fund is to be used to support the veterans affairs and rehabilitation and children and youth activities of the Legion.

At December 31, 2017 and 2016 the permanently restricted net assets are as follows:

	2017	2016
Samsung scholarship	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	8,054,707	7,996,779
	<u>\$ 13,054,707</u>	<u>\$ 12,996,779</u>

NOTE 14 – ENDOWMENT COMPOSITION

The Legion's endowments include donor restricted endowment funds and are comprised of two separate funds, the American Legion Endowment Fund and the Samsung scholarship fund. In accordance with GAAP, net assets associated with endowment funds, including funds designated by the National Executive Committee to function as endowments, are classified and reported based on the existence or absence of donor imposed restrictions.

Interpretation of Relevant Law: The National Executive Committee has interpreted the State of Indiana's Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act ("SPMIFA") as requiring the preservation of the fair value of the original gift as of the gift date of the donor restricted endowment funds absent explicit donor stipulations to the contrary. As a result of this interpretation, the Legion classifies as permanently restricted net assets (a) the original value of gifts donated to the permanent endowment, (b) the original value of subsequent gifts to the permanent endowment, and (c) net accumulations to the permanent endowment made in accordance with the governing documents of the Legion. The remaining portion of the donor restricted endowment fund that is not classified in permanently restricted net assets is classified as temporarily restricted net assets until those amounts are appropriated for expenditure by the Legion in a manner consistent with the standard of prudence prescribed by SPMIFA. In accordance with SPMIFA, the Legion considers the following factors in making a determination to appropriate or accumulate donor restricted endowment funds:

- (1) The duration and preservation of the fund
- (2) The purposes of the Legion and the donor restricted endowment fund
- (3) General economic conditions
- (4) The possible effect of inflation and deflation
- (5) The expected total return from income and the appreciation of investments
- (6) Other resources of the Legion
- (7) The investment policies of the Legion

Endowment net asset composition by type of fund as of December 31, 2017:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Donor restricted endowment funds	\$ 457	\$ 2,036,187	\$ 13,054,707	\$ 15,091,351
Total Funds	457	\$ 2,036,187	\$ 13,054,707	\$ 15,091,351

Endowment net asset composition by type of fund as of December 31, 2016:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Donor restricted endowment funds	\$ (29,252)	\$ 1,909,776	\$ 12,996,779	\$ 14,877,303
Total Funds	\$ (29,252)	\$ 1,909,776	\$ 12,996,779	\$ 14,877,303

Changes in endowment net assets for the year ended December 31, 2017:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ (29,252)	\$ 1,909,776	\$ 12,996,779	\$ 14,877,303
Investment gain/(loss):				
Investment income, net of fees	52,214	420,684	-	472,898
Net depreciation (realized and unrealized)	(12,807)	(628)	(72,562)	(85,997)
Total investment gain/(loss)	39,407	420,056	(72,562)	386,901
New gifts	-	-	130,490	130,490
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	(9,698)	(293,645)	-	(303,343)
Net assets, end of year	\$ 457	\$ 2,036,187	\$ 13,054,707	\$ 15,091,351

Changes in endowment net assets for the year December 31, 2016:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ -	\$ 1,976,952	\$ 13,060,100	\$ 15,037,052
Investment gain/(loss):				
Investment income, net of fees	53,977	422,865	-	476,842
Net appreciation (depreciation) (realized and unrealized)	(11,974)	2,912	(118,553)	(127,615)
Total investment gain/(loss)	42,003	425,777	(118,553)	349,227
New gifts	-	-	55,232	55,232
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	(71,255)	(492,953)	-	(564,208)
Net assets, end of year	\$ (29,252)	\$ 1,909,776	\$ 12,996,779	\$ 14,877,303

Return Objectives and Risk Parameters: The Legion has adopted investment and spending policies for endowment assets that attempt to provide a predictable stream of funding to programs supported by its endowment while seeking to maintain the purchasing power of the endowment assets. Endowment assets include those assets of donor-restricted funds that the Legion must hold in perpetuity or for a donor-specified period(s). Under this policy, as approved by the National Executive Committee, the endowment assets are invested in a manner that is intended to produce income while assuming a low level of investment risk.

Strategies Employed for Achieving Objectives: To satisfy its long-term rate-of-return objectives, the Legion relies on a total return strategy in which investment returns are achieved through both capital appreciation (realized and unrealized) and current yield (interest and dividends). The Legion targets fixed income securities to achieve its long-term return objectives within prudent risk constraints.

Spending Policy and How the Investment Objectives Relate to Spending Policy: Realized and unrealized gains/losses are added to the principal of the American Legion Endowment Fund and distributions are limited to cumulative interest, net of fees. On the Samsung scholarship fund, the capital appreciation is temporarily restricted and can be spent, along with the interest, net of fees, according to the spending policy. Endowment fund principal, unless

NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Dec. 31, 2017 and 2016

NOTE 14 – ENDOWMENT COMPOSITION (continued)

otherwise directed by the donor, shall not be disbursed except for emergency situations. In order to make a principal disbursement, a majority vote by the Legion National Executive Committee will be required.

Funds with Deficiencies: From time to time, the fair value of assets associated with individual donor restricted endowment funds may fall below the level that the donor of SPMIFA requires the Legion to retain as a fund of perpetual duration. In accordance with GAAP, deficiencies of this nature that are reported in unrestricted net assets which totaled \$29,252 as of December 31, 2016. This deficiency resulted from AIEF expenditures outpacing interest and dividend income available for spending during 2016. As of December 31, 2017, the Legion did not have any funds with deficiencies.

NOTE 15 – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

The Legion has a 401(k) savings plan with a qualified automatic contribution arrangement that was effective July 1, 2008. The plan calls for a 100% match of the first 1% contributed by the employee and a 50% match of the next 5% contributed by the employee. Thus, the maximum matching percentage an employee will receive is 3.5%. The Legion made contributions of \$391,965 and \$387,851 in 2017 and 2016, respectively.

The Legion has two defined benefit pension plans. The first plan (Plan A) covers substantially all of its employees as well as those of certain affiliated and subordinated groups. The plan was established in 1944 by vote of the Legion's National Convention. Contributions to Plan A are made by the Legion and other participating groups on the basis of annual actuarial valuations. The second plan (Plan B) covers substantially all of its employees. The plan was established in October of 2016 and was effective January 1, 2017. Contributions to Plan B are made by the Legion on the basis of annual actuarial valuations.

In May 2008, the Legion voted to freeze the Plan A effective June 30, 2008. The result of the freeze is that current employees still received the benefits they had earned as of June 30, 2008, but no future benefits were earned and no new employees were added.

The following table sets forth the Legion's portion of Plan A's funded status and amounts recognized in the Legion's consolidated statement of financial position at December 31, 2017 and 2016:

	2017	2016
Benefit obligation	\$(61,779,828)	\$ (57,280,490)
Fair value of plan assets	46,806,040	45,221,772
Funded status	\$ (14,973,788)	\$ (12,058,718)
Interest cost	2,111,952	2,246,369
Actual return on assets	(4,644,872)	(2,944,092)
Amortization of prior service costs	121,085	121,085
Amortization of loss	2,199,456	2,506,774
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	1,608,755	(96,857)
Net periodic pension cost	\$ 1,396,376	\$ 1,833,279
Net gain (loss)	\$ 1,639,779	\$ (2,794,943)
Prior service cost	(121,085)	(121,085)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	\$ 1,518,694	\$ (2,916,028)
Prepaid benefit cost	8,482,430	\$ 9,878,806
Accumulated benefit obligation	61,779,828	57,280,490
Vested benefit obligation	60,623,063	57,280,490
Net periodic pension cost	1,396,376	1,833,279
Benefits paid	3,060,604	3,013,128
Measurement date	12/31/2017	12/31/2016

Estimated future benefit payments:

2018	\$ 3,643,798
2019	3,625,510
2020	3,667,782
2021	3,718,102
2022	3,812,284
2022-2026	18,581,093

The asset investment policy is a lower risk strategy with the primary objective of preservation of capital with an emphasis on long-term growth and generation of current income to provide adequate cash flow needed for benefit payments. The target asset allocation is 0-20% in cash or cash equivalents, 40-60% in fixed income and 40-60% in equities. Prohibited investments include real estate investment trusts, real estate partnerships, mutual funds, private equity, hedge funds and guaranteed investment certificates.

The fair value of Plan A assets at December 31, 2017 and 2016 are as follows. See Note 5 for descriptions of inputs for each type of asset.

	Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2017, using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Accrued interest	\$ 241,032	\$ -	\$ -
Money market accounts	935,139	-	-
U.S. Government and agency obligations	-	8,551,030	-
Asset backed securities	-	776,636	-
Municipal bonds	-	3,146,546	-
Corporate bonds	-	14,956,524	-
Common stock:			
Materials	-	-	-
Industrials	3,409,523	-	-
Consumer discretionary	2,148,353	-	-
Consumer staples	1,736,608	-	-
Energy	780,075	-	-
Health care	3,099,653	-	-
Financials	3,170,298	-	-
Telecommunication	-	-	-
Technology	3,292,621	-	-
Utilities	562,002	-	-
	\$ 19,375,304	\$ 27,430,736	\$ -

NOTE 15 – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS (continued)

	Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2016, using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Money market accounts	\$ 1,517,962	\$ -	\$ -
U.S. Government and agency obligations	-	8,914,844	-
Asset backed securities	-	1,284,457	-
Municipal bonds	-	2,890,339	-
Corporate bonds	-	16,027,526	-
Common stock:			
Materials	502,790	-	-
Industrials	2,075,214	-	-
Consumer discretionary	1,710,141	-	-
Consumer staples	1,231,831	-	-
Energy	1,269,167	-	-
Health care	1,609,698	-	-
Financials	1,987,249	-	-
Telecommunication	385,962	-	-
Technology	3,322,340	-	-
Utilities	492,252	-	-
	\$ 16,104,606	\$ 29,117,166	\$ -

Historical returns of multiple asset classes were analyzed to develop a risk free real rate of return and risk premium for each asset class. The overall rate for each asset class was developed by combining a long-term inflation component, the risk free real rate of return, and the associated risk premium. A weighted average rate was developed based on those overall rates and the target asset allocation of the plan.

Weighted-average assumptions	2017	2016
Discount rate	3.37%	3.81%
Expected return on plan assets	7.00%	7.00%
Rate of compensation increase	0.00%	0.00%

The amounts of net loss and net prior service cost expected to be recognized as components of net periodic benefit cost for the year ending December 31, 2017 are \$1,396,376 and \$121,085, respectively.

The following table sets forth Plan B's funded status and amounts recognized in the Legion's consolidated statement of financial position at December 31, 2017:

	2017
Benefit obligation	\$ (5,137,839)
Fair value of plan assets	662,170
Funded status	\$ (4,475,669)
Service cost	\$ 541,379
Interest cost	147,058
Actual loss (return) on assets	(13,476)
Amortization of prior service costs	370,027
Amortization of loss	-
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	(9,274)
Net periodic pension cost	\$ 1,035,714
Net loss	\$ 53,809,982
Prior service cost	(370,027)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	\$ 3,439,955
Prepaid benefit cost	\$ (385,503)
Accumulated benefit obligation	1,356,908
Vested benefit obligation	1,356,908
Net periodic pension cost	1,035,714
Benefits paid	1,517
Measurement date	12/31/2017

Estimated future benefit payments:

2018	\$ 22,353
2019	32,715
2020	46,715
2021	65,587
2022	101,879
Years 2023-2027	1,110,148

The asset investment policy is a lower risk strategy with the primary objective of preservation of capital with an emphasis on long-term growth and generation of current income to provide adequate cash flow needed for benefit payments. The target asset allocation is 0-20% in cash or cash equivalents, 40-60% in fixed income and 40-60% in equities. Prohibited investments include real estate investment trusts, real estate partnerships, mutual funds, private equity, hedge funds and guaranteed investment certificates.

The fair value of Plan B assets at December 31, 2017 and 2016 are as follows. See Note 5 for descriptions of inputs for each type of asset.

NOTES TO CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Dec. 31, 2017 and 2016

NOTE 15 – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS (continued)

	Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2017 using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Money market accounts:	\$ 18,769	\$ -	\$-
U.S. government and agency obligations	-	75,000	-
Municipal bonds	-	50,365	-
Corporate bonds	-	288,822	-
Common stock:			
Industrials	42,501	-	-
Consumer discretionary	24,168	-	-
Consumer staples	30,483	-	-
Energy	18,576	-	-
Health care	38,109	-	-
Financials	44,118	-	-
Technology	31,259	-	-
	<u>\$ 247,983</u>	<u>\$ 414,187</u>	<u>\$-</u>

	Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2016 using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Money market accounts:	\$-	\$-	\$-
U.S. government and agency obligations	-	-	-
Municipal bonds	-	-	-
Corporate bonds	-	-	-
Common stock:			
	<u>\$-</u>	<u>\$-</u>	<u>\$-</u>

Historical returns of multiple asset classes were analyzed to develop a risk free real rate of return and risk premium for each asset class. The overall rate for each asset class was developed by combining a long-term inflation component, the risk free real rate of return, and the associated risk premium. A weighted average rate was developed based on those overall rates and the target asset allocation of the plan

Weighted-average assumptions	2017	2016
Discount rate	4.21%	3.62%
Expected return on plan assets	7.00%	0.00%
Rate of compensation increase	3.00%	3.00%

The amounts of net loss and net prior service cost expected to be recognized as components of net periodic benefit cost for the year ending December 31, 2017 are \$1,035,714 and \$370,027, respectively.

NOTE 16 – FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

The following represents a functional breakdown of the Legion's expenses by program and supporting services:

	2017	2016
Program services		
Veterans programs and services	\$ 38,551,781	\$ 38,798,600
Americanism, Children & Youth activities	3,754,981	2,900,234
	<u>\$ 42,306,762</u>	<u>\$ 41,698,834</u>
Supporting services		
Management and general	\$ 20,819,203	\$ 17,166,955
Member development	10,471,144	9,122,226
Fundraising	11,232,813	11,740,441
	<u>\$ 42,523,160</u>	<u>\$ 38,029,622</u>
	<u>\$ 84,829,922</u>	<u>\$ 79,728,456</u>

Member development includes direct response advertising expense of \$6,147,872 and \$5,082,548 for the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016.

NOTE 17 – LITIGATION

The Legion is currently involved in and/or has been mentioned as a defendant or co-defendant in several legal actions. It is the opinion of the National Judge Advocate that these claims are without merit and any ultimate liability of the Legion with respect to these actions will not materially affect the financial statements of the Legion.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:
CONSOLIDATING STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
Dec. 31, 2017

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,685,335	\$ 405,725	\$ 65,355	\$ 18,491	\$ -	\$ 2,174,906
Accounts receivable	4,961,035	168,838	-	4,932	(94,227)	5,040,578
Interest receivable	752,705	34,470	68,731	48,766	-	904,673
Prepaid expenses and deposits	953,487	-	-	-	-	953,487
Deferred membership expense	4,596,295	-	-	-	-	4,596,295
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventory	2,761,406	-	-	-	-	2,761,406
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	11,511	-	-	-	-	11,511
Beneficial interest in trust	-	-	114,200	-	-	114,200
	<u>17,721,775</u>	<u>609,033</u>	<u>248,286</u>	<u>72,189</u>	<u>(2,094,227)</u>	<u>16,557,056</u>
Investments						
General	16,334,237	-	-	-	-	16,334,237
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	35,277,631	-	-	-	-	35,277,631
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	28,107,482	-	-	-	-	28,107,482
Samsung scholarship fund	7,768,802	-	-	-	-	7,768,802
Building funds	6,380,417	-	-	-	-	6,380,417
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	13,181,694	-	-	-	-	13,181,694
Special account – Endowment Fund	-	-	2,270,210	-	-	2,270,210
General account – Endowment Fund	-	-	7,610,997	-	-	7,610,997
National Emergency Fund	-	-	-	5,791,430	-	5,791,430
American Legion Charities	-	4,749,866	-	-	-	4,749,866
Other	3,853,224	-	-	-	-	3,853,224
	<u>110,903,487</u>	<u>4,749,866</u>	<u>9,881,207</u>	<u>5,791,430</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>131,325,990</u>
Property, plant and equipment, net	4,489,117	-	-	-	-	4,489,117
	<u>\$ 133,114,379</u>	<u>\$ 5,358,899</u>	<u>\$ 10,129,493</u>	<u>\$ 5,863,619</u>	<u>\$ (2,094,227)</u>	<u>\$ 152,372,163</u>
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	\$ 3,416,388	\$ 2,268	\$ 2,988	\$ -	\$ (94,227)	\$ 3,327,417
Scholarships payable	1,346,892	-	-	-	-	1,346,892
Due to American Legion National Headquarters	-	-	2,000,000	-	(2,000,000)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	283,453	-	-	-	-	283,453
Deferred income	929,571	-	-	-	-	929,571
Deferred dues income	25,316,796	-	-	-	-	25,316,796
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	3,708,642	-	-	-	-	3,708,642
Accrued vacation benefits	947,080	-	-	-	-	947,080
Accrued pension expense	19,449,457	-	-	-	-	19,449,457
Other liabilities	860,355	-	-	-	-	860,355
Notes payable	631,749	-	-	-	-	631,749
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Membership	23,664,141	-	-	-	-	23,664,141
Life memberships due to state and local posts	26,239,151	-	-	-	-	26,239,151
	<u>106,793,675</u>	<u>2,268</u>	<u>2,002,988</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(2,094,227)</u>	<u>106,704,704</u>
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted	3,330,550	1,847,165	457	-	-	5,178,172
Temporarily restricted	17,990,154	3,509,466	71,341	5,863,619	-	27,434,580
Permanently restricted	5,000,000	-	8,054,707	-	-	13,054,707
Total net assets	<u>26,320,704</u>	<u>5,356,631</u>	<u>8,126,505</u>	<u>5,863,619</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>45,667,459</u>
	<u>\$ 133,114,379</u>	<u>\$ 5,358,899</u>	<u>\$ 10,129,493</u>	<u>\$ 5,863,619</u>	<u>\$ (2,094,227)</u>	<u>\$ 152,372,163</u>

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:
CONSOLIDATING STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
Dec. 31, 2016**

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 998,019	\$ 172,414	\$ 19,567	\$ 66,591	\$ -	\$ 1,256,591
Accounts receivable	5,290,669	-	8,234	20,674	(33,668)	5,285,909
Interest receivable	704,456	23,088	68,945	42,372	-	838,861
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,909,365	-	1,868	-	-	1,911,233
Deferred membership expense	4,950,405	-	-	-	-	4,950,405
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventory	2,847,503	-	-	-	-	2,847,503
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	13,575	-	-	-	-	13,575
Beneficial interest in trust	-	-	151,994	-	-	151,994
	<u>18,713,992</u>	<u>195,502</u>	<u>250,608</u>	<u>129,637</u>	<u>(2,033,668)</u>	<u>17,256,071</u>
Investments						
General	15,421,583	-	-	-	-	15,421,583
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	34,066,122	-	-	-	-	34,066,122
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	29,615,976	-	-	-	-	29,615,976
Samsung scholarship fund	7,609,593	-	-	-	-	7,609,593
Building funds	5,938,455	-	-	-	-	5,938,455
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	12,065,719	-	-	-	-	12,065,719
Special account – Endowment Fund	-	-	2,252,939	-	-	2,252,939
General account – Endowment Fund	-	-	7,463,980	-	-	7,463,980
National Emergency Fund	-	-	-	4,841,986	-	4,841,986
American Legion Charities	-	3,791,850	-	-	-	3,791,850
Other	3,839,637	-	-	-	-	3,839,637
	<u>108,557,085</u>	<u>3,791,850</u>	<u>9,716,919</u>	<u>4,841,986</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>126,907,840</u>
Property, plant and equipment, net	4,679,174	-	-	-	-	4,679,174
	<u>\$ 131,950,251</u>	<u>\$ 3,987,352</u>	<u>\$ 9,967,527</u>	<u>\$ 4,971,623</u>	<u>\$ (2,033,668)</u>	<u>\$ 148,843,085</u>
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	\$ 3,406,252	\$ 32,664	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (33,668)	\$ 3,405,248
Scholarships payable	1,091,879	-	-	-	-	1,091,879
Due to American Legion National Headquarters	-	-	2,000,000	-	(2,000,000)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	290,318	-	-	-	-	290,318
Deferred income	1,394,884	-	-	-	-	1,394,884
Deferred dues income	27,449,484	-	-	-	-	27,449,484
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	3,696,407	-	-	-	-	3,696,407
Accrued vacation benefits	1,002,001	-	-	-	-	1,002,001
Accrued pension expense	12,058,718	-	-	-	-	12,058,718
Other liabilities	1,528,684	-	-	-	-	1,528,684
Notes payable	831,449	-	-	-	-	831,449
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Membership	23,532,607	-	-	-	-	23,532,607
Life memberships due to state and local posts	26,093,304	-	-	-	-	26,093,304
	<u>102,375,987</u>	<u>32,664</u>	<u>2,000,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(2,033,668)</u>	<u>102,374,983</u>
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted	7,461,030	1,310,387	(29,252)	-	-	8,742,165
Temporarily restricted	17,113,234	2,644,301	-	4,971,623	-	24,729,158
Permanently restricted	5,000,000	-	7,996,779	-	-	12,996,779
Total net assets	<u>29,574,264</u>	<u>3,954,688</u>	<u>7,967,527</u>	<u>4,971,623</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>46,468,102</u>
	<u>\$ 131,950,251</u>	<u>\$ 3,987,352</u>	<u>\$ 9,967,527</u>	<u>\$ 4,971,623</u>	<u>\$ (2,033,668)</u>	<u>\$ 148,843,085</u>

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:
CONSOLIDATING STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES
Year ended Dec. 31, 2017**

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	\$ 31,799,455	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 31,799,455
Direct membership solicitation	6,191,175	-	-	-	-	6,191,175
Member service fees income	579,943	-	-	-	-	579,943
Affinity income	2,128,372	-	-	-	-	2,128,372
Sales of emblem items	13,649,875	-	-	-	-	13,649,875
Advertising	9,353,077	-	-	-	-	9,353,077
Contributions	14,931,713	1,765,402	130,489	1,010,094	(256,657)	17,581,041
Label and printing fees	1,600,308	-	-	-	-	1,600,308
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,383,318	112,009	234,631	156,106	-	2,886,064
Net realized gains (losses)	(60,210)	(7,129)	(58,578)	(850)	-	(126,767)
American Legion Endowment Fund income	89,400	-	-	-	(89,400)	-
Other	4,419,398	-	-	-	-	4,419,398
	<u>87,065,624</u>	<u>1,870,282</u>	<u>306,542</u>	<u>1,165,350</u>	<u>(346,057)</u>	<u>90,061,941</u>
Expenses						
Salaries	16,829,990	-	-	-	-	16,829,990
Employee benefits	5,839,456	-	-	-	-	5,839,456
Cost of sales - Legion	7,364,200	-	-	-	-	7,364,200
Department and magazine costs	2,673,921	-	-	-	-	2,673,921
Direct publications	10,458,470	-	-	-	-	10,458,470
Executive, staff and program travel	4,056,303	-	4,249	-	-	4,060,552
Commission and committee	1,737,332	-	-	-	-	1,737,332
Printing and postage	14,148,656	-	-	-	-	14,148,656
Scholarships, grants and awards	2,255,951	485,723	89,400	365,830	(346,057)	2,850,847
Office and other operating	14,096,878	20,622	18,840	9,089	-	14,145,429
Occupancy and usage	2,404,297	-	-	-	-	2,404,297
Special projects and programs	2,250,691	66,081	-	-	-	2,316,772
	<u>84,116,145</u>	<u>572,426</u>	<u>112,489</u>	<u>374,919</u>	<u>(346,057)</u>	<u>84,829,922</u>
Change in net assets from operations	2,949,679	1,297,856	194,053	790,431	-	5,232,019
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investments	720,117	104,087	(35,075)	101,565	-	890,694
Net change in PUFs	234,749	-	-	-	-	234,749
Amortization of pension loss	(2,199,456)	-	-	-	-	(2,199,456)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	(4,958,649)	-	-	-	-	(4,958,649)
Change in net assets	(3,253,560)	1,401,943	158,978	891,996	-	(800,643)
Net assets, beginning of year	29,574,264	3,954,688	7,967,527	4,971,623	-	46,468,102
Net assets, end of year	\$ 26,320,704	\$ 5,356,631	\$ 8,126,505	\$ 5,863,619	\$ -	\$ 45,667,459

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:
CONSOLIDATING STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES
Year ended Dec. 31, 2016**

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	\$ 25,782,809	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 25,782,809
Direct membership solicitation	6,165,333	-	-	-	-	6,165,333
Member service fees income	631,106	-	-	-	-	631,106
Affinity income	2,506,181	-	-	-	-	2,506,181
Sales of emblem items	13,020,287	-	-	-	-	13,020,287
Advertising	9,563,462	-	-	-	-	9,563,462
Contributions	14,131,421	1,628,800	55,232	465,602	(532,856)	15,748,199
Label and printing fees	1,568,817	-	-	-	-	1,568,817
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,298,062	93,631	239,800	139,186	-	2,770,679
Net realized gains (losses)	182,928	400	(41,874)	25,514	-	166,968
American Legion Endowment Fund income	235,551	-	-	-	(235,551)	-
Other	2,772,247	-	-	-	-	2,772,247
	<u>78,856,204</u>	<u>1,722,831</u>	<u>253,158</u>	<u>630,302</u>	<u>(768,407)</u>	<u>80,694,088</u>
Expenses						
Salaries	16,198,035	-	-	-	-	16,198,035
Employee benefits	4,207,101	-	-	-	-	4,207,101
Cost of sales - Legion	7,036,004	-	-	-	-	7,036,004
Department and magazine costs	2,943,026	-	-	-	-	2,943,026
Direct publications	10,863,367	-	-	-	-	10,863,367
Executive staff and program travel	3,630,516	-	2,745	-	-	3,633,261
Commission and committee	1,758,486	-	-	-	-	1,758,486
Printing and postage	12,910,600	-	-	-	-	12,910,600
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,572,325	689,983	235,551	184,944	(693,407)	1,989,396
Office and other operating	13,299,378	19,110	19,097	7,861	-	13,345,446
Occupancy and usage	2,049,531	-	-	-	-	2,049,531
Special projects and programs	2,747,803	121,400	-	-	(75,000)	2,794,203
	<u>79,216,172</u>	<u>830,493</u>	<u>257,393</u>	<u>192,805</u>	<u>(768,407)</u>	<u>79,728,456</u>
Change in net assets from operations	(359,968)	892,338	(4,235)	437,497	-	965,632
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investments	(515,048)	41,126	(88,652)	(88,040)	-	(650,614)
Net change in PUF/L	(1,886,814)	-	-	-	-	(1,886,814)
Amortization of pension loss	(2,506,774)	-	-	-	-	(2,506,774)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	2,916,028	-	-	-	-	2,916,028
Change in net assets	(2,352,576)	933,464	(92,887)	349,457	-	(1,162,542)
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>31,926,840</u>	<u>3,021,224</u>	<u>8,060,414</u>	<u>4,622,166</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>47,630,644</u>
Net assets, end of year	\$ 29,574,264	\$ 3,954,688	\$ 7,967,527	\$ 4,971,623	\$ -	\$ 46,468,102

