

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 102ND ANNUAL NATIONAL  
CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

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COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE  
DIVISION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

TRANSMITTING

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 102ND ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION  
OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, HELD IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA FROM  
AUGUST 31-SEPTEMBER 2, 2021



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**LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL**

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THE AMERICAN LEGION,  
*Washington, DC, January 26, 2022.*

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 House documents The American Legion's 101st Annual Report, The American Legion's Proceedings of the 101st Annual National Convention, and The American Legion's Proceedings of the 102nd Annual National Convention.

LAWRENCE MONTREUIL,  
*Legislative 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 Hundred and Second Annual National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021.

The final report of the national organization for the period ending December 31, 2020, and balance sheet as of December 31, 2020, and surplus analysis, January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, 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: Bruce C. Feuerbach, Iowa; David L. King, Kentucky; Francis J. MacDonald, Jr., Massachusetts; Richard A. Heigert, Missouri; Robert D. Liebenow, Oregon.



**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. Wagonseller\*, 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 'Bobbe' 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, Jr.\*, 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, Jr.\*, 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\*, Colorado; 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, Jr. \*, 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, Jr. \*, 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, Jr. \*, 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, Jr. \*, 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, Jr. \*, 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, Jr. \*, Indiana  
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. \*,  
Maryland

**91st NATIONAL CONVENTION**

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

**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, Jr. \*, 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, Jr. \*, 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, Jr. \*, 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, Jr. \*, Indiana  
Judge Advocate: Kevin J. Bartlett, Michigan

**101<sup>st</sup> NATIONAL CONVENTION**

Indianapolis, IN, Aug. 27-29, 2019  
Commander: Brett P. Reistad, Virginia  
Vice Commanders: James E. Pisa, Alaska;  
Paul I. Spedalieri, Connecticut; John F.  
Milburn, Maryland; James E. Wallace,  
Michigan; Steve Sweet, Mississippi  
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia  
Chaplain: Phillip G. Salois, Rhode Island  
Historian: Frederick S. Doten, Nevada  
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana  
Judge Advocate: Kevin J. Bartlett, Michigan

**102<sup>nd</sup> NATIONAL CONVENTION**

Phoenix, AZ, Aug. 31, Sept. 1, 2, 2021  
Commander: James W. "Bill" Oxford, North  
Carolina  
Vice Commanders: Bruce C. Feuerbach,  
Iowa; David L. King, Kentucky; Francis J.  
MacDonald, Massachusetts; Richard A.  
Heigert, Missouri; Robert D. Liebenow,  
Oregon  
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia  
Chaplain: Edward L. Harris, Jr., Indiana  
Historian: James A. Mariner, New Mexico  
Treasurer: Shawn T. Long, Indiana



**PROCEEDINGS**  
**of the**  
**102<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention**  
**of**  
**The American Legion**  
**Tuesday, August 31, 2021**

*...At 9:00 a.m., the members assembled for the 102nd Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Ladies and gentlemen, as we begin our program, please join me in a round of applause for Rick Pedro on the keyboard. *(Applause)*

**Call to Order**

**James W. "Bill" Oxford, North Carolina, National Commander**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The 102nd National Convention will come to order. Ladies and gentlemen, please rise as the color guard of American Legion Harrisburg Post 472 in Houston, Texas, presents the Colors, and then remain standing while rendering a salute for the singing of the National Anthem by the country music artist and Army veteran Craig Morgan.

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: For the invocation I call on National Chaplain Edward L. Harris, Jr. of the Department of Indiana. Please uncover.

**Invocation**

**Chaplain Edward L. Harris, Indiana, National Chaplain**

Dear God, thank you for this day, and as this petitioner will always plead, thank you for allowing us to be a part of this day. Dear God, we come to the opening of our 102nd American Legion Convention. Bless those of us who have traveled to be a part of this grand occasion. Bless our national commander, our national adjutant, and the national officers that keep our organization running. Bless our sick, our infirm, and our bereaved. All this we ask in Your name, amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Thank you, Chaplain Harris. Please remain uncovered as National Sergeant-at-Arms David S. Shore of North Carolina leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**David S. Shore, North Carolina, National Sergeant-at-Arms**

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SHORE: Please join me as we recite the Pledge of Allegiance to our Nations Colors.

*...The convention recited the Pledge of Allegiance.*

*Proceedings of Tuesday, August 31, 2021*

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**POW/MIA Empty Chair Ceremony**  
**Steve A. Brennan, Maryland, Chairman, National Security Commission**  
**Kenneth J. Trumbull, Illinois, Vice Chairman, National Security Commission**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Thank you, David. 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 those who served and those who are no longer with us. We will not ease the pressure on our government to do the right thing and continue to work for an accounting of all those missing. I now call on the chairman of the National Security Commission, Steve A. Brennan of Maryland, and Vice Chairman Kenneth J. Trumbull of Illinois, to place the POW/MIA flag on the empty chair.

**Preamble to Constitution**  
**James W. "Bill" Oxford, North Carolina, National Commander**

Legionnaires, please cover and 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.*

**Remembrance Ceremony**  
**James W. "Bill" Oxford, North Carolina, National Commander**

I ask at this time that we all pause for a moment of reflection. On November 10, 2020, The American Legion lost a special breed of national commander. I say special breed because Clarence M. Bacon was the last World War II veteran that we had among our past national commanders. Clarence was not just a friend to me, but he was a great man from the Greatest Generation. A Navy veteran, he witnessed history up close as he served on the presidential yachts of Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman. A true advocate for veterans and the military in his home state of Maryland, Commander Clarence was as proud of his blue cap as he was his red cap. "It is the grassroots volunteers who make this organization go," he said at our 1985 National Convention. "We all owe them every ounce of support we can muster." Let's listen to Clarence in his own words.

*...The Convention viewed a video.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Please uncover and join me in a moment of silence for Past National Commander Clarence M. Bacon. Thank you.

**Opening Ceremony**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: At this time, I would like to welcome Craig Morgan to the platform. Please be seated.

CRAIG MORGAN: I reckon you want me to sing a song. Is that what you want me to do right now?

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Unless you want me to join you.

CRAIG MORGAN: Come on. Feel free. Let me hear that guitar. We're in the middle of touring right now. Every night when I do this song, I dedicate it to all the men and women that serve, their families, and I also include our men and women in blue here at home, a lot of which are veterans, I have found. So, this one is for all of y'all. I know we've got all branches of service. I'm an Army guy. All you Marines, I know you don't like being called soldier, you like being called Marines, but you'll just have to get over it for this song because, to me, they're all soldiers. *...Singing "Soldier" (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: We've just got a small presentation, just a pin, but just in case you're not a Legionnaire, by the end of the program, you will be. Are you a Legionnaire?

CRAIG MORGAN: I am now.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: You are now. Great. Thank you.

CRAIG MORGAN: Thank you very much. God bless you. I do want to say how honored I am to be here. There's nothing like spending time with like-minded individuals, who all share in the same love of our country. So, I thank you for allowing me to be a part of that. *(Applause)*

My career in the Army started in 1985, and I say that proudly because for the first time in a long time I'm not the old guy. *(Laughter)*

It's been fun being around all of y'all. One of the most important missions of The American Legion is the mentoring and teaching of young people. By emphasizing the rights and responsibilities of citizenship through their many youth programs, you are fulfilling one of the four pillars, and continuing a legacy. I want to introduce you to a group of young people who epitomize the future of this great country. Your American Legion Youth Champions! *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The 2019 American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team Captain hails from Grifton, North Carolina. Kenshawn Malik Dixon graduated from North Lenoir High School with a 4.1 GPA where he demonstrated leadership both on the field and off the field. Malik attends the University of Mount Olive where he plays baseball and is working toward a degree in business management, and hopes to one day work in the marketing department of a sports related company. Malik is sponsored by Post 43 in Kingston Platte, North Carolina. Due to his collegiate obligations, Malik is unable to attend today; however, please turn your attention to the monitors for his brief remarks.*

**The American Legion Youth Champions  
2019 American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team Captain  
Kenshawn Malik Dixon, Grifton, North Carolina**

Hello, everyone. My name is Malik Dixon, and I was the 2019 American Legion All-Academic Team captain and a recipient of their scholarship, and I just wanted to give a speech to talk about how much this scholarship has meant to me the past couple of years since I've been at college.

First, I would like to thank the entire American Legion scholarship committee and Kinston Post 43 in Kinston, North Carolina, for two amazing summers of playing baseball. The second season we were able to make history as the first team in our area to make the state championship, which was pretty amazing. To everyone who made this possible for me to receive this scholarship, Coach Ty Eason, Coach Josh Harris, Mr. Terry Boyles, all my teammates, the parents, the fans, my family, and my entire support system, this couldn't have been possible without you either, so I would like to thank you as well. But there are two people I would like to give pretty significant recognition too, and they are Miss Berta Battle and Coach Ronny Battle. I have a story about me and Coach Battle's relationship.

Coach Battle was a spearhead in the community. He was a great figure. He was actually the coach of our American Legion baseball team for a long time, and I remember, as a young kid, him talking to me about me wanting to play for his team, and he could see how much I loved baseball, and we share that bond. Every time we talk, we talk baseball. I was so excited to do it. I was so excited to play for him. It was one of my goals as an amateur baseball player to do this, but unfortunately, I never got the opportunity to. In January 2018, he actually passed away. He lost his battle to cancer. A couple months later, I finally got the call that I had the opportunity to play for the Legion team. I was pretty devastated, but I had made up my mind that every single game that I was going to play in

that uniform that I would play for him, and it ended up being two of the best summers I ever played of baseball.

One thing that Coach Battle did always hammer home to me and so many other people in our community was the importance of education and getting a good one and taking it seriously. I knew that was something that I wanted to pursue after high school. So, when it was time for me to decide like where to go, I knew I had to make a good decision, but just like any other college kid, I struggled at first to pay my tuition, but with the help of your scholarship, I was able to survive the first year, and I made it here to my junior year. As of now, I'm a member of the SGA, a member of the honor society. I actually play baseball here at the University of Mount Olive. I'm on the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee here on campus, and I have a 3.6 GPA. So, I feel like I've done a lot of good things here since I've arrived, and I don't think any of that would have been possible without you and the committee giving me the scholarship.

So, I'd like to thank you, but I would also like to thank Coach Battle for driving it home and giving me this opportunity to pursue this and giving me the vision to pursue this. Just, again, I would like to say thank you. From the bottom of my heart, I know everybody from my family to all my friends, they really appreciate everything that the scholarship has done for me. So, thank you once again, and I hope you have a great day. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Our next Youth Champion was elected American Legion Boys Nation president last month in Washington. He hails from Irvine, California, and attends Portola High School. At Boys Nation, he exhibited the important leadership behaviors of integrity and humility, with a goal to restore the youth's belief in democracy. He plans to attend Harvard University to study philosophy with hopes to pursue a career in law and national politics. Sponsored by Post 291 in Newport Harbor, California, please welcome your 2021 American Legion Boys Nation President, Ryan Hanho Jung. (Applause)*

**2021 Boys Nation President  
Ryan Hanho Jung, Irvine, California**

Good Morning. So, my eyesight isn't that good. I see Delaware, North Carolina, but just as a point of personal privilege, where exactly is the delegation from California? *(Cheers)*

There we go. I'm glad to represent Post 291 from Newport Harbor, and more importantly, California Boys State. Let's get into it.

On the campaign trail at Boys Nation, I asked my fellow senators to confront the fundamental question, and that was: Which America will you choose? You ask that question to 100 of the nation's most politically minded young men, and you're sure to get about 200 different answers, many of which are conflicting. Yet we all agree on an America which vows to better serve the men and women who put themselves in harm's way for us to enjoy our unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Through the Boys Nation program, The American Legion affirms that our great nation is a land of opportunity. It gives a platform to a kid like me, a starry-eyed son of South Korean immigrants. My grandparents first heard of a faraway land called America, from soldiers fighting in the Korean War. Serving as the president of the 75th session of Boys Nation where I had the utmost privilege of bearing witness to energetic young men steering the direction of our country, not left, not right, but forward, is the least I could do to express my gratitude. You open the book of Matthew 10:16, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. urged his congregation to face the world with a tough mind and a tender heart. That is precisely what The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary calls upon us to do. Equipped with a tough mind to selflessly improve America, the fabled land my grandparents saw from the coast of Korea. And to love one another, united, as Americans, guided by a tender heart. Thank you for giving me this opportunity. *(Applause)*

*Proceedings of Tuesday, August 31, 2021*

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*ANNOUNCER: This year is special as we are joined by two winners of the Eagle Scout of the Year Award. The 2020 Eagle Scout of the Year is a member of Boy Scout Troop 2020. He was awarded this honor for his Eagle Scout project memorializing the stories of California veterans through the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress. Additionally, Michael participated in the California Boys State program and is assistant junior scoutmaster for his home troop. Please give a round of applause for the 2020 American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year, Michael McPhie. (Applause)*

**2020 Eagle Scout of the Year  
Michael McPhie, Irvine, California**

I am so humbled to be here today and to receive this scholarship. When I consider why members of the American Legion, who have already given so much for our country, continue to give of their time and their means to support youth programs like scouting, I am reminded that the work of America is never finished. For my Eagle project, I trained volunteers to interview veterans about their experiences in war. Those interviews are now archived as part of the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., so that future generations of Americans can hear directly from those veterans about their service in defense of our nation. I remember sitting in the living room of one veteran in particular, who let me hold his helmet. He showed me the hole where a bullet had gone in and a second hole where that same bullet had gone out. Thankfully, it had only grazed the side of his head. This veteran told me many stories, stories of his fellow soldiers and the camaraderie they shared. I hope everyone gets a chance to hear these veterans' stories and to understand what our country means to them. We all must do everything we can to make our communities the best that they can be and to pass on to future generations of Americans the values and ideals that have made America the unique force for good that it is. I am grateful to be your Eagle Scout of the Year, and I want you to know that I will do my best to fulfill my duty to God and my country. Thank you. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: The 2021 Eagle Scout of the Year is Michael's brother, John McPhie. John is also a member of Boy Scout Troop 2020 and was awarded this honor for his project in benefit of Operation Gratitude. John serves as senior patrol leader for his home troop and is active in his church and youth group. Please give a round of applause for the 2021 American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year, John McPhie. (Applause)*

**2021 Eagle Scout of the Year  
John McPhie, Irvine, California**

I am honored to be here with each of you today. At this time, I would like to thank all of the people that got me here. I would like to thank my scout leaders for their help along the scouting journey, my family, and my friends, without whom I would not be here, and of course, I would like to thank The American Legion. Thank you all for this wonderful opportunity and this great honor. As an American, I would like to thank you for all that you have done for our country. I am eternally grateful for the freedoms that you enable all of us to enjoy. The goal of my eagle project was to narrow the military-civilian divide among my peers and help them remember that freedom is not free. The only reason that we are free, and ultimately the only reason that anyone anywhere on this earth is free, is because of the incredible work that the American military does day in and day out, year after year after year. So, I presented patriotic programs in elementary and middle schools and at community interfaith service days and to youth action teams. All across my community, we wrote hundreds and hundreds of thank you letters and made hundreds of emergency paracord bracelets, which were included in hundreds and hundreds of care packages for our deployed troops and first responders. I truly believe that we are the luckiest people in the world to be Americans. May we live to be worthy of our freedoms

and always be grateful of remembering that we are the land of the free because of the brave. I am reminded of the words of the fourth verse of our National Anthem, which says, "Oh, thus be it ever when free men shall stand between their loved homes and the war's desolation, blessed with victory and peace, let the heaven rescued land praise the power that hath made and preserved us a nation." I want each of you to know that your service and your sacrifice are not forgotten. You are truly an inspiration to all of us. Thank you again, and may God bless the United States of America. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: In competition in Colorado Springs a few weeks ago, two youth champions took top prize in the 30th Junior Air Rifle Championships. Natalie Perrin from Coopersville, Michigan, claimed the precision champion title with an overall score of 2,481.2 out of a possible 2509. She is a three-time Junior Olympic State Gold Medalist, member of the U.S. National Junior Team. Please welcome our American Legion 2021 Precision Champion, Natalie Perrin. (Applause)*

**2021 Junior Shooting Sports Precision Champion  
Natalie Perrin, Coopersville, Michigan**

Good morning, everyone. I'm Natalie Perrin, the 2021 Precision Air Rifle National Champion. Words simply cannot express how grateful I am to the American Legion for hosting this national championship match and for providing a scholarship that will help me in the future. I have just started my freshman year at West Virginia University studying public relations and advertising while competing on the school's Division I rifle team. Because of all your generosity, the remaining costs of my education will be eased.

I also wanted to express my gratitude for the atmosphere that was provided at this match. I have competed all over the country and even internationally, and the environment both on and off the range at the 30<sup>th</sup> National Championships was one that I have never experienced before. From the kindness of the range officers and staff to the fun activities they provided, it was truly a match to remember. This was my first time competing in this championship, and at first, I was skeptical. The summer leading into the first year of college is a stressful time for anyone, but as an athlete, I have to use this time to mentally and physically prepare for the season ahead. However, I am so glad that I pushed myself to compete in this match. For those of you who don't know, three position air rifle events end once you start college, and I've been competing in this event since I first started shooting my freshman year of high school, and I could think of no better way to round out my high school shooting experience than as the 2021 American Legion three position air rifle national champion.

While all I can say is thank you, I hope you all know how grateful I am to your amazing organization for giving me this experience. I want to also give a special shout out to Post 154 from back home in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for supporting me and having faith in me every step of the way. I hope to make you all proud as I continue my rifle career and thank you all for your service and dedication to this organization and our country. Thank you. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: In the Sporter category, our final Youth Champion is a young shooter representing Nation Ford MCJROTC Rifle Team in Fort Mill, South Carolina. She finished the competition with a final aggregate score of 2,316 out of a possible 2,400. Please welcome our American Legion 2021 Sporter Shooting Champion, Maya Leigh Cameron. (Applause)*

*Proceedings of Tuesday, August 31, 2021*

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**2021 Junior Shooting Sports Sporter Champion  
Maya Leigh Cameron, Fort Hill, South Carolina**

Good morning. My name is Maya Cameron. I'm proud to stand before you representing Nation Ford High School's Marine Corps JROTC program and their rifle team. Firstly, I'd like to thank my team, my coach, and my family for always supporting me through thick and thin, putting up with my antics, and allowing me to start shooting in the first place. I would also like to thank The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and Post 34 for giving me the opportunity to compete at the national level. Words cannot express how much this opportunity has meant for me.

The competition was definitely a marathon, the likes of which I had never experienced before and an experience I'll be able to take with me for years to come. If you were to go back and show my younger middle school self where I would be today, I would not believe you, not in a million years. To paint a picture for you, in middle school I was a shy, anxious kid, terrified to speak in front of my class, let alone a crowd of people. That started to change at the beginning of high school when I joined my high school's Marine Corps JROTC program, and I saw myself slowly start to change for the better. Subsequently, I joined the rifle team, and my personal transformation was immense. Everything from the way I stand and hold myself to even the way I think of myself was shifted. Shy little me was no more. And this is why I'm so grateful for The American Legion for this opportunity and the opportunity to compete because it's through opportunities like this that young people my age are able to grow and become a better person and more productive member of society.

As I move through my senior year and the next chapter of my life, I'll always be able to hold the experiences that I've had through The American Legion fondly. As I plan to go study computer security, I'll be able to use this generous scholarship to be able to afford my education. I really appreciate this golden opportunity and the lessons it has taught me, and I look forward to seeing where it will take myself and my peers. Thank you. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, your 2021 American Legion Youth Champions! (Applause)*

**Presentation of Spirit of Service Awards  
Vice Admiral Yancy Lindsey, Commander  
United States Navy Installations Command  
Bruce Crandall, Medal of Honor Recipient**

*ANNOUNCER: Our next awards exemplify the best of military volunteerism. The American Legion Spirit of Service Awards are given to men and women on active duty for their contributions to their communities and fellow citizens above and beyond the call of duty. Assisting National Commander Oxford in presenting the awards is commander of Navy Installations Command, Vice Admiral Yancy Lindsey, and Medal of Honor recipient Bruce Crandall. Please rise as the commander leads us in rendering appropriate honors to Mr. Crandall.*

*NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Present arms! Order arms! (Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Our first Spirit of Service Award recipient's impact to the local community is unmatched. He has garnered over 336 volunteer hours while being stationed at Fort Bragg. His volunteer efforts helped raise over \$38,000 to Fort Bragg families which impacted over 2,000 area families. Due to his love for military history, he routinely volunteers as a museum tour guide at the Airborne and Special Operations Museum. Representing the United States Army, please welcome Spirit of Service Award recipient, Sergeant Joselito Cabang. (Applause)*

SERGEANT JOSELITO CABANG: Good morning. First, I would like to thank God for the gift of life, for giving me another day, another chance to become a better individual and another chance to give. Second, I would like to thank my wife for being here today on this special day. Thank you for taking care of our kid and dedication to our family and for your unending support and understanding. *(Applause)*

I say that because I have spent more time volunteering than with them over the past year. My wife and kid stayed back in Hawaii when I PCS'd to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and I have spent all my free time and weekends volunteering. Lastly, thank you American Legion. What an honor, privilege, and a great opportunity to be here today to represent the Army, the 18<sup>th</sup> Airborne Corps and the 83<sup>rd</sup> Civil Affairs Battalion. Thank you, American Legion, for your continued selfless service since 1919. You have influenced abundant social change in America, provided limitless benefits for veterans and their families, and produced many important programs for the children and youth from providing scholarships and health care, to providing homes to homeless veterans. American Legion, thank you for giving more. I am reminded daily that I have been extremely blessed and I will remain a giver as well. I would like to close with a quote by Harriet Jackson Brown, Jr., "Remember that the happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more." Thank you. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Our next American Legion 2021 Spirit of Service Award recipient exemplifies the Navy's core values of honor, courage, and commitment. Always generating a spirit of cooperation and camaraderie, he attributes all of his success to family, his mentors, and his fellow sailors. Please welcome United States Navy Petty Officer Michael Monahan. (Applause)*

PETTY OFFICER SECOND CLASS MICHAEL MONAHAN: Ladies and gentlemen of The American Legion, esteemed guests, it is an extreme honor to be here today. I cannot express the ineffable gratitude that I have for this organization and its national leadership for recognizing not only myself but my shipmates and my fellow servicemembers, as well as these youth leaders that we spoke with previously. Just thank you, everybody, so much. It means a lot to me.

I want to recognize my command, Electronic Attack Squadron 138, home of the Yellow Jackets, Team Rampage. I'm here today because last September my hometown of Talent, Oregon, in Southern Oregon, was racked by devastating wildfires that many of you may be familiar with from the news. I was extremely anxious and distraught regarding these events, and so on a Wednesday, I approached my lead petty officer, AT1 Veazey, and I told him about my feelings and how I felt I needed to go home to help my community. I was marched straight upstairs to my Command Master Chief Laird, and he committed to doing everything in his power to help me achieve my goals. He himself spoke to my Wings Commodore to route my leave package in two days, and I was able to leave that Friday after work in an extremely unorthodox and extremely blessed fashion.

So, for the next two weeks, I went home and fought some fires and rebuilt some properties and donated and orchestrated the dispersal of all sorts of materials and aid and supplies to those affected in my community, and I was just one of hundreds of people helping. I know that all together we achieved some great relief.

It makes me happy that The American Legion recognizes first responders and law enforcement officers as well because every single year our country faces greater and greater threats from wildfire, and those first responders protect all of us no matter our circumstances, and they go out there, and that's just their full-time job. My senior chief called me a hero, and I don't feel like a hero. I just feel like I did what was right for my community, and I just would like to point out that those firefighters, they make okay money putting their lives on the line and brutally slaving away for 18 hours a day to protect us from utter devastation, but to me, they're the real heroes. So, I just want to say thank you

to all of them and the rest of our first responders. Thank you for your time, everybody. (Applause)

*ANNOUNCER: This year's American Legion Marine Corps Spirit of Service recipient has demonstrated exceptional professionalism and commitment to education. A graduate of Valdosta State University, she received her bachelor's degree in journalism and a minor in women's and gender studies. A green belt in the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program, Corporal Dunning received her master's degree in communication and plans to pursue a law degree to work as a lawyer for the Marine Corps. She is a certified yoga instructor and recently received her yoga certification in Mindful Resilience Training with the Veterans Yoga Project to help veterans and active-duty military cope with chronic and post-traumatic stress. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Corporal Darla L. Dunning, United States Marine Corps. (Applause)*

CORPORAL DARLA L. DUNNING: Good morning, everyone. This is an incredible honor to be here today and to receive this award. Volunteering and helping the community in a collective effort has always been something that I have held in the highest esteem. To be recognized goes beyond words, and I cannot thank you enough. I believe that it is our humanitarian duty to serve not only in distant countries but even more so here at home. I would like to thank everyone that has helped me foster the love for volunteer work, starting with my mother and father and my leadership at the staff noncommissioned officer academy. And a thank you to each individual here. Thank you again. (Applause)

*ANNOUNCER: Our next Spirit of Service Award recipient is representing the National Guard. A married father of three children, he has worked as a volunteer for HEART 9/11, a humanitarian organization that builds schools and shelters for populations in distress, and Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners to help feed the hungry. His short-term goal is to graduate from Basic Leader Course and become a non-commissioned officer, and his long-term goal is to become a sergeant major. Representing the National Guard, please welcome, Private First Class Alejandro Sanchez.*

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ: Good morning, American Legion. I feel both honored and humbled to be here today. I want to thank God for giving me the strength and determination to pursue my goals. I want to thank my family for supporting me in all my projects, and I want to thank my command for nominating me for this award. I also want to thank The American Legion for giving me this extraordinary honor and for giving me the opportunity to represent the National Guard, the New York Division, and the Fighting 69. I never thought that I would be standing here 20 years ago when I came to the United States from Mexico, or when I raised my hand to volunteer and help the good people of the Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian destroyed their country. I will always continue to give back to this country that adopted me and I love. Thanks so much. (Applause)

*ANNOUNCER: Our final American Legion Spirit of Service Award recipient made an impressive habit of giving back to the local community in Illinois. He constructed and developed the Mustard Seed Jam House where he serves as the music pastor, providing spiritual growth to 50 at-risk teenagers. Additionally, Staff Sergeant Austin volunteered as the foster placement assistant manager, helping source foster families for displaced and stray pets from the local animal shelter. His efforts led to the successful placement of 320 pets in foster homes and prevented the euthanasia of 200 animals. Please give a warm round of applause to Staff Sergeant Zachariah D. Austin, U.S. Air Force. (Applause)*

STAFF SERGEANT ZACHARIAH D. AUSTIN: Good morning, y'all. I'm going to start this off thanking my wife because, if I forget, I still have to fly home and live with

her. Thank you to my pregnant wife Brie. You just heard everything I volunteer for. Everything that I do, she's right there with me, if not leading it, definitely helping. Secondly, you heard that I work for a church. So, of course, God is always number one, right. If it wasn't for God, I couldn't even get myself out of bed. The holy spirit is what gets us going every morning. We can't do this on our own. *(Applause)*

This award means a lot to me, but at the end of the day, we're all going to pass away and go somewhere. It doesn't matter how many awards you won, what you did on Earth. What matters is your faith in Jesus Christ, and what he calls for us to all do is repent, turn to him. He bled for all of us. He bled to save every single person in this room, and I just pray that you all will reflect on that if there's one thing that I take home from this, I hope that you all reflect on the sacrifice that Christ made for all of us. Thank you. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, again please show your appreciation to the 2021 American Legion Spirit of Service Award winners. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Outstanding young people. Our future is bright.

Our next speaker has had a truly distinguished Navy career. A native of Phoenix, he is a 1986 graduate of the University of California at Berkeley. He holds master's degrees from Marine Corps University and the University of San Diego. He also completed an executive fellowship at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and was designated a Naval Aviator in December 1987.

He has held a number of sea duty assignments including three deployments to Antarctica and three deployments to the Arabian Gulf. Ashore, he served on the Joint Staff at Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet; with the European Command Staff in Stuttgart, Germany; as chief of staff to Commander, Navy Region Southwest; as executive assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations and Environment and in commander of Naval Base Coronado.

As a flag officer, he was the 89th commandant of Naval District Washington; commander, Navy Region Southwest; and commander, Navy Region Europe, Africa, Central. He has been serving as the commander of Navy Installations Command since May 29, 2020. Ladies and gentlemen, Vice Admiral Yancy Lindsey. *(Applause)*

**Address: Vice Admiral Yancy Lindsey, Commander  
Navy Installations Command**

Thanks so much. Man, you did a good job with that. All that to say I've probably been in the Navy way too long. That's probably what that says. Now, if I fidget with my uniform a little, please give me a break. I don't wear this uniform very often, at least not lately, and I don't know about you all, but the pandemic has not been very kind to my waistline. Let's just put it this way. I've permanently retired my skinny jeans. I will not be wearing those anymore. But, wow, what an honor to share the stage with such an amazing group of young people. In fact, as a Navy pilot, I feel like, after I heard them speak and saw how polished they are, I feel like I lowered the average IQ of the folks up here on the platform significantly. I'll try to struggle through with my remarks. It will not be as polished and as sharp and as poised as they were. If you don't know that the future of our country is in good hands, then you missed about the last 20 or 30 minutes here. That is remarkable. Both in uniform and the young ones that are coming up.

I'm in my hometown for an executive engagement visit. The Navy does this periodically, sends senior Navy leaders to cities and communities that don't have a large Navy presence. Last time I checked, there was no oceanfront property in Arizona and no ships parked out here along Salt River, but it's a great opportunity to come out and mix it with leaders of academia, leaders of our government, and of business, and just talk about the Navy, what the Navy's doing, why the Navy's important, and just share the opportunity

to engage in those types of conversations. I'm fortunate that it can coincide with The American Legion National Convention because what a pleasure to be surrounded by amazingly patriotic Americans. Can I come back next year? Is that good? Man, I'll tell you what, this is amazing. *(Applause)*

Now, we heard from California. *(Cheers)* I'm from Phoenix, Arizona, but I've probably lived more of my life in that state. But we haven't heard from Arizona, and they're our hosts. Any Phoenicians or Arizonans. *(Cheers)* Okay, good. There for a minute I thought maybe I went to sleep last night and woke up in a different state. Good, glad you're all here. It's also amazing to share the stage with one of our nation's true heroes in Colonel Bruce Crandall. Oh, my gosh, the opportunity to just shake the hand of a Medal of Honor recipient is a life experience. *(Applause)*

Sir, you do us proud, and it's an honor just to be on the stage with you. I made a little joke of the pandemic, but I think it's important that we remember it's been a very tragic experience and it's a serious disease. I don't want us to lose track of that. I think our military's done pretty good through this pandemic. In fact, I'm pretty proud of our Navy. Your armed forces, really all the armed forces have continued to operate. They've continued to deploy. They've continued to take our nation's business and do its bidding literally around the world in the face of a very challenging pandemic. I don't want to make light of it and make jokes of it because it is a serious disease, but I do want to say that I'm really proud of our Navy and what we've been able to do.

In fact, as we sit here in this beautiful auditorium, nice cool auditorium, our Navy is deployed. Over 86 ships of our 296 ships are currently under way. Three carrier strike groups, the George H.W. Bush is off the East Coast, USS Carl Vinson is off the West Coast, and USS Ronald Reagan is in the U.S. Central Command area of operations, was supporting what was happening in Afghanistan and then taking care of other business there. We have two amphibious readiness groups, the Iwo Jima is there where the Ronald Reagan is in Central Command, and the Essex is off the West Coast training. With 86 ships underway, and that's out of a total force of 296 ships, that's about the same number we would have under way at any point in time when we were a 600-ship Navy. That just tells you how busy your Navy is, where it is, and what it's doing.

Now, 35 years ago, when I joined the Navy, I was just a knucklehead college student, not really knowing what I wanted to do, and military service was the farthest thing from my mind, but I was fortunate in that I had some folks that advised me, hey, if you just go right down here, Monroe Street School building is literally right around the corner there. I went down to the basement, and it was a military entrance processing station, took some tests, and they said, "Hey, you passed. You can go fly airplanes in the Navy." I went, "Really, you're going to let me do that." I'll tell you what, what an adventure it's been. 35 years now, and I'm not looking back. In fact, I tell a lot of people, I got married along the way, as most of us do. I tell people that I think my wife enjoys the Navy more than I do, and I think that's probably why I stayed in 35 years. But what an adventure it's been, the places I've gone, the things I've seen, the good I've done of those that I've helped literally around the world. But more importantly, what I've been able to represent, what I've been able to stand for as an American wearing this uniform to those literally around the world.

Now, don't let what you see on television and in the media, and I don't think you do, this crowd doesn't, let it influence your judgment on what's happening or the importance of those who wear our uniform and the importance of their mission. I'm going to talk about Afghanistan in a little bit. It's been in the news. I know many of you served there or you have a relative or a friend or a colleague who served there. Don't judge Afghanistan by what you've seen in the news and on television for the last couple weeks. Judge it by the work that's been done over the last 20 years. *(Applause)*

One day, one week, one month does not change the amazing difference we made in that country in the hearts of literally millions of people that otherwise would not have known what America is and what America stands for. Judge it by the lives we've changed, the freedoms we've protected, and the liberties that the Afghanistan people have enjoyed

over those 20 years. Judge it by the millions who had the opportunity to live free. Judge it by the hundreds of thousands that are now leaving that country in search of what they had a taste of over the last 20 years. Yeah, they're running from something, but they're also running to something, something we represent, something you represented, something we represent as Americans. Let's not forget that. Let's judge them by parents who will hand their infant child over a barbed wire wall to complete strangers. What parents do that? I'll tell you who it is, it's parents that know and trust and believe in what those people wearing a uniform are standing for and why they're there. *(Applause)*

And I say all that because those of you that served in our uniform, you made a difference, and the people that were there in uniform on the ground in Kabul for the last two weeks made a difference. We made a difference. *(Applause)*

Those 13 fallen servicemembers who last Sunday came back to U.S. soil at Dover Air Force Base made a difference. *(Applause)*

That's how we'll honor their service. You honor them, American Legion, when you support them and their families, when you lift them up, and when you come alongside them to help them and to support them. American Legion's support and advocacy gives meaning to our service. We stand on your shoulders. Those who went before us created a military that we now get to enjoy. We have a country that supports us in every way, shape, or form, that honors us, that respects what we do, those of us in uniform, and it's because of what you did and the service that you contributed, and it's what you do now after your service in communities across our nation and literally around the world. Let's never forget that we had the privilege to wear this uniform and to represent our country and never forget the privilege of serving this amazing nation we get to call home. God bless our Navy and God bless these United States of America. Thank you, American Legion. Appreciate it. Thanks for the opportunity to be here. It's an honor. *(Applause)*

...*The Convention viewed a video. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Ladies and gentlemen, a life member of American Legion Post 166 in Tumwater, Washington, our next speaker earned the Medal of Honor for his amazing bravery and valor during the Battle of Ia Drang. The battle, which was later famously portrayed in the Mel Gibson film, "We Were Soldiers," occurred in November 1965 and was the first major division operation of the Vietnam War. A pilot with Company A, 229<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, our distinguished guest flew his unarmed UH1 Huey for 22 missions into enemy fire, evacuating more than 70 wounded and bringing vital ammunition and supplies to U.S. forces during the intense battle.

"Major Crandall's voluntary decision to land under the most extreme fire instilled in the other pilots the will and spirit to continue to land their own aircraft, and in the ground forces the realization that they would be resupplied and friendly wounded would be promptly evacuated. This greatly enhanced morale and the will to fight at a critical time," his Medal of Honor citation states. Our guest continued to serve his country and retired from the Army as a colonel in 1977. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome a true American hero, Colonel Bruce Crandall. *(Applause)*

**Address: Colonel Bruce Crandall  
Medal of Honor Recipient**

Thank you. Thank you. My mother-in-law didn't think so highly. I was a very lucky man in my career, and before it. I proposed to my wife when she was 16 and I was 19. She said yes. And I held her to it. We got married when she was 23. And she gave me three sons. They were all Eagle Scouts. And I learned the most important lesson I learned in the military after we were married, and that was to say, "Yes, dear." I never said, "Yes, dear" to a general. I thought about it to an admiral. *(Laughter)*

I'm only kidding. I had the only unit in the United States Army that was carrier qualified. My unit went down to the Dominican Republic and there was a carrier, the Guam, sitting out there. I was occupying a brewery on the land, and I thought maybe some trades could be made. And that's what we did. I would land on the carrier with some beverages in the hold of the helicopter, and one of their men would come out and put steaks on the other side. So, we were eating well, and they were drinking well.

I was married to my wife for 54 years. We had 53 homes. Our youngest son is sitting down here. He was born in Costa Rica. And we, my wife and I traveled all over the world doing Army things and flying helicopters and airplanes. I had one bad experience in Vietnam, my first tour. I had a helicopter come up missing and it was missing for 45 years. We finally, the group from Hawaii found it. And in my opinion, I wish it hadn't. There was a divorce caused in the family. The baby that was three months old was now 45 and three months. And it brought back a lot of pain, not just to the family but to all of us who served with them. They were outstanding young men, great aviators. And that's pretty hard to be sometimes.

When I went back to Vietnam, after I had been home 12 months and 12 days, I went back to the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav again, and that's what the lid is about. I was very upset to find out I couldn't command the unit that I had been in before because they were brand new units in the Army and they all started with a two. At the same time, we had Caribous and Mohawks that we had agreed with the Air Force when they went from the Army Air Corps to being in the Air Force, that we would not get into larger aircraft. They took those away from us in Vietnam. That was not very pleasing to most of us. Most of us were trained by the Air Force, Gary Air Force base in San Marcos, Texas. So, we all supported there being an Air Force. We had some crummy jobs that we wanted them to take. And they did it. We didn't even have to ask them. *(Laughter)*

When I came back to the Cav, I was going to command the 1<sup>st</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Cav, which has its own infantry, its own armor, its own gunships. I was supporting a unit in the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup>, and the U.S. Air Force dropped two bombs on my helicopter while I was in flight. So, I've been a little bit cautious about bad mouthing them. *(Laughter)*

I moved just recently. Anyhow, I became victim of friendly fire. When I woke up, I was in the Philippines, and I spent a couple of months there. Then I went to Japan and I came home to Fort Lewis, Madigan. I spent seven months there. I have 13 vertebrae wired together. I don't get any messages from the WRM. I am very old. I recognize it and I have apologized to the Air Force for anything I said or did that offended them. I didn't mean it. *(Laughter)*

If you see the dog behind me, his name is Huey. He's a service dog. He's been in the White House three times with three different presidents. One of them said it's the best looking dog that's ever been in the White House. And I said, does that include you. And he didn't think that was funny. *(Laughter)*

This little dog is my best friend. And he goes everywhere with me. He's a service dog. He answers doorbells, cell phones, firearms, smoke alarms. He warned me when my mother-in-law was at the door. *(Laughter)*

My wife understood that the relationship that I had with her mother. I've taught the dog, if I say "Agnes," he goes and gets into his carrying case. You knew who Agnes was. My wife was very good about forgiving me for all of my sins before I did them. And I did them. So, when we had the boys, when we traveled around the world, one of the organizations that I saw was your group. I am very proud of all of you. I'm happy to see the young folks that you honored. They're outstanding. I congratulate them. *(Applause)*

I have spent a month in Afghanistan. I went in just to be with the troops. And actually I wanted to fire that damn Apache helicopter. I never had that opportunity. If you go down a highway here 20 miles, you'll see the helicopters being built. My first job there was in public works management, and I brought in the Apache helicopter out of California. It was being built by Hughes Aircraft. We wanted to have 40 percent of their workforce come in and 80 percent tried to. The city of Mesa, in its wisdom, got them back down to around 40

percent. But that helicopter's been built there since 1980. It has had \$3 billion worth of economic impact on the local area. So, it's not only the best combat helicopter in the service, it's doing damn well at home, too. *(Applause)*

I just moved back to the state of Arizona from the great state of Washington. And it rains there more than it shines here. But we had 19 days in a row that didn't get below 90 degrees at night when I left here the first time. So, I'm watching carefully and looking to the heat. I want to thank all of you for honoring the young folks and the military. It's great, and it's something we need to continue doing. And outfits like you carry the ball. So, thank you very much. I appreciate everything you do. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Colonel Crandall, don't leave yet. I know you are a life member of The American Legion Department of Washington. We would like to present you with a medallion and diamond lapel pin and say to you, we are extremely happy to serve with you in The American Legion. We're glad to be on your team and happy to have you on our team. *(Applause) ...The Convention viewed a video.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Ladies and gentlemen, the woman elected in Indianapolis to lead the nation's largest veterans auxiliary organization is eligible for membership in the Auxiliary through the service of her grandfather, World War II Navy veteran Roger Schroder. She proudly served as national president for two years and brought a wealth of experience to our American Legion Family. She holds a master's degree in nursing administration and has been a president and CEO of a hospital. She is a member of ALA Unit 127 in Gladbrook, Iowa. Please give a warm welcome to the national president of the American Legion Auxiliary, Nicole Clapp. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Nicole Clapp, Iowa  
National President, American Legion Auxiliary**

Good morning. Please be seated. It is a pleasure to be with you in person. We are here. We have been waiting for this for two whole years. I have to tell you, growing up I loved cartoons. And I still like to pick up a newspaper when I get a chance. My favorite cartoons were Family Circus and Dennis the Menace. I hope you laugh, too, because that's why I enjoy them. It's out of the mouths of babes and they give you a fresh start to your day.

Well, two years ago, in July, which seems like a long time ago now, back in 2019, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, I was preparing my installation speech to become national president. And I picked up the newspaper as I try to do and there was Family Circus. They were all sitting on a hill watching fireworks. And Billy, the oldest, tugged on his dad's shirt and the caption is "Dad, can't we just DVR these fireworks so that we can have them into perpetuity." Well, for me I know I've met the majority of you and I know there are some I haven't met. So, we'll have my national president pin still available for anyone who would like them because that's the story of the fireworks and the reason I'm standing here today.

Because of the poppy, when I was four years old, I saw people distributing the poppy in my small town of Gladbrook, in the state of Iowa, and I didn't know what it meant. I didn't even know it wasn't real. I just knew that it brought smiles to people's faces, and I wanted to be a part of that. So, I went up to my mom and I said, "Mom, can I do that?" I don't know about you, but I know when mom said it was okay, it's okay. And we found at that point that not only was I eligible to be a member of The American Legion Auxiliary, my mom, my aunt, my cousins, and I don't know about you, but in Gladbrook, Iowa if you make goal that year, it's a pretty big deal. So, Gladbrook did make goal for that year to honor my grandpa, Roger Schroeder, who served in the United States Navy during World War II.

Now, as I look back on that poppy experience, that is the poppy fields also that represent World War I. The reason our organizations exist. For the Legion to be celebrating 102 years, and for us as the Auxiliary, just a mere nine months later, at 101 years. So, for

me celebrating a century of service has been our theme, because how many organizations do you know have a legacy to last 100 years, let alone to get to celebrate your 100<sup>th</sup> birthday for two whole years straight? So, I have told everyone we have been celebrating since the pandemic started all the way to Phoenix. And we are here now, and we are celebrating.

So, roll the calendar ahead two years. It's 4<sup>th</sup> of July once again. And I pick up the newspaper. And on the big spread is the Family Circus once again. Same basic picture. Family sitting on a hill watching fireworks. And Billy's tugging on his dad's shirt once again. And he said, "Dad, this was sure worth the year-long wait." And that's what we have now, is the National Convention here in Phoenix. Yes, sometimes I wanted to say Louisville this week, but we know Phoenix is our home for this wonderful convention. And again, we have so much to be proud of. When you talk about the military way of adapt and overcome, I think the American Legion Family has exemplified that better than ever in the pandemic.

Having the pandemic the first couple of weeks you kind of felt it was like Ground Hog Day. The same thing was happening day after day after day. Bill and I finally got home from New Jersey, because we were there when the pandemic closed the world down. And if you've ever seen the "Groundhog Day" movie, it's where the same thing does happen day after day after day. And you're not sure why. But I knew the light at the end of the tunnel would be coming, and each day it's gotten brighter and brighter. And I have to say the Phoenix sun is as bright as I've ever seen.

So, as we move forward, I spent that time looking at some history. President Abe Lincoln made the comment that, "We live in the midst of alarms. Anxiety clouds the future. We expect some disaster with each newspaper we read." And I think if we all take a step back, that's probably how we were feeling at the beginning of March of '20 and continuing on through the pandemic. But he also said, "Common looking people are the best in the world. And that's the reason the Lord made so many of them." I equate that to the American Legion Family, approximately 3 million strong. It has been an honor and a privilege to represent The American Legion Auxiliary's 600,000 members. Not only for one year. I don't mind having an asterisk by my name that gives us a two-year term.

As I look back at being raised in this organization, as I mentioned since the age of four, the opportunities that The American Legion has afforded me, be it oratorical contests and looking to the future and with the American Legion Auxiliary, and having the opportunity of a lifetime to have a second asterisk by my name to be the only national junior president at the sweet age of 16 with Past National Commander Jake Comer at my side, to 32 years later to be able to stand here today and to look out in the front row of the audience and I see my first commander. I love you, Jake. Thank you.

So, as we look to where we're going in the future, we've got a lot of work to do. And, Legion, we need your help. Commander Bill and I did a public service announcement, about 4,600 posts across the country that don't have an Auxiliary unit. So, if we think back to all the hard work we have done in the pandemic and all the creative ways, I think my favorite is when I see the commercial of the little girl playing tic-tac-toe on the window of the nursing home on the other side of the window into a residence. All the birthday parades, all the drive-byes, the blood drives, anything we did out of the norm. But it showed we are resilient. But we need you. If we had those 4,600 Auxiliary units right by your side, just think how much lighter the work could have been and much more we could have done. So, I would challenge you, when you go back home, in your departments, to consider why don't we have an Auxiliary unit. I wouldn't be standing here today if it wasn't because of my grandpa and the poppy. But more importantly, the question was, nobody asked my mom if she could join. Or me. And in a town of 900, everybody knows everybody's business, as we all know. So, it took my mom's effort to go ask and her initiative to make me a member. Shame on my personal little unit. They should have known. Because now we have over 265 Auxiliary members in a town of 900. *(Applause)*

Thank you. Now, I would be Pinocchio, though, if I told you they're all active or they all live in Gladbrook, because if they did when you came to homecoming at Gladbrook you

would probably see a McDonald's and a stoplight. We don't have any of those. But of those 265, we have 58 future leaders as junior Auxiliary members. So please continue to culture our future because once again that is what it has meant to me as an Auxiliary member. It has been a privilege to serve with Commander Bill and Commander Clint. If we didn't have collective resolve, we wouldn't be standing here at the end of a calendar that I used to think had 12 months in it. But now it obviously has 24. So, commander, if you'll please come to the podium, please, I have a presentation for you. Good morning. On behalf of the American Legion Auxiliary, I would like to present you, on behalf of The American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation, a check for \$10,000. *(Applause)*

Thank you, everyone. It's been an honor and a privilege to serve. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Ladies and gentlemen, our next guest is a professor of politics and history. He's the author of three books. He's on the board of directors at the Heritage Foundation, the Claremont Institute, and the Philadelphia Society. He served on the U.S. Army War College Board of Visitors or two years, for which he earned the Department of the Army's Outstanding Civilian Service Medal. He currently serves as president of Hillsdale College. He's an alumni of American Legion Baseball and American Legion Boys State. Please welcome Larry Arnn. *(Applause)*

**Address: Larry P. Arnn, President  
Hillsdale College**

Good morning. I'm very honored to be with you because I'm in your debt. If I had been a better American Legion baseball player, I would have been a Major Leaguer because it was my first love and I then would be ignorant as sin today, but more glorious. And I love Boys State. I had nothing but fun there. The Legion is a thing in my life. And I'm grateful to you.

I'm asked to say, how do you support and defend the Constitution of the United States, which you take an oath to do. I think the oath is the key to understanding that. It's an interesting thing about oaths, isn't it? If you swear something, you have to internalize it. And you become responsible. And it doesn't matter what you're told to do then. You have an oath. And the oath that you have taken to join the service and to join The American Legion, you agree first to support and defend the Constitution before you agree to obey anybody. And the ultimate person that the military obeys also takes an oath that requires him to support and defend the Constitution. The Constitution is then a thing that exists outside our will, but we enroll our will in the support of it. And that means, by the way, the Army is in potential every American citizen. And that is the most powerful thing on earth.

The Constitution is full of oaths. The one for the president is stated verbatim, but it also says the minor, the legislators and other officers, have to take an oath. I took an oath. I was a member of the 1776 Commission appointed by President Trump. And that's the first time I took that oath. I didn't have to take it to be on the Board of the Army War College for some reason. And that makes me a commissioned officer of the United States. And that means I have to be good, the best I can.

Now, oaths are an alternative to rules. When I came to Hillsdale College, we had 130 pages of student rules. That was handy, I think, to the people who ran the college, because rules were complicated and the kids never really quite knew what they meant and there was always one for every situation. On the other hand, what part did the students have in the management of the college? College means partnership. That's what the word means. It's not a place where people go to be at odds with each other. They cooperate to find the truth. So, we have reduced that to 17 rules. Not pages of rules, rules. But those 17 rules, I can't remember what they are. Most of us can't because the rule that matters is in the honor code. We have an honor code, revived from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And we started demanding the students swear to this honor code as a condition of entry to the college. And once we started doing that, it was a very good college when I came there, but it turns out that about

25 percent of our freshmen left the college and didn't come back. And that's a good number. The national number in colleges is 40 percent. I have this favorite sport of eating in the dining hall with the students. And I found out all about them and what made them mad. And it took time to figure it out. But it could be summarized in the expression, "Nobody told me. Nobody told me I would have to do this."

So, we tell them, here's this thing. You should equate yourself to the way the college works and what it requires, because you're going to have to promise to uphold that. Last year one percent of our freshmen went away. That means four kids. And they all had sickness, or they wouldn't have gone.

Why is the American Army so formidable? Do you know the story of Demaratus the defecting Spartan king who was in the court of Xerxes just before the Battle of Thermopylae? And the defecting Spartan king, there are two kings always in Sparta, and one of them always fights in the line with the leading soldiers. That's why they had two. And this one took off. So, Xerxes says to him, this is in Herodotus, the first history book ever written, he said, I don't understand the line. I don't understand the structure of this Greek hoplite army. Where are the people in the rear to whip them into battle? Demaratus said, well, we don't have those. And Xerxes laughed, he laughed a lot, by the way, it's recorded in Herodotus. A few days later he stopped laughing because the vaunted immortals of the Persians were people forced into battle and the Greeks were not. Isn't that something?

The story of how we broke out beyond the hedgerows in Normandy in 1944. Nobody knew what those were like. The aerial photographs just made them look like big hedgerows, and what you couldn't see was that they weaved back. They swooped back over the road. And so, they're going to try to go across country now. And they run up the hedgerows and the tanks rise up. And then the Germans shoot the tanks in the belly and attack from both other sides of the hedgerows. And we just couldn't move. It's a wonderful story how that problem got solved. One key thing was a boy who was a farmer's son from Nebraska, he figured out to weld a prong on the front of the tank. And then it would penetrate the hedgerows and wouldn't rear up. Others figured out the order that the infantry should be organized so they could meet the German attacks from the side. And all of this got to General Eisenhower days after it was being implemented successfully. They were thinking soldiers. They had lived in America. In America they had learned that you compete with people all the time, but much more than compete with them, you cooperate.

It's a wonderful lesson from classical philosophy that war is the greatest conflict in human affairs. It's also the greatest scene of cooperation, which is why all of you are sitting in this room today because you value that friendship and that cooperation with brothers and sisters. Our military is built around that. That's because our country is built around that. Now, the country is changing. It's controversial to say it, but I think that some of the fruits of the change are visible in Afghanistan this week. But how is it changing?

Well, rules proliferate. Nobody can read them. The Congress of the United States, every year it's been in session since 1792, has passed in the average year somewhere between 250 and 400 laws. It still does. Last year, that's what it did. In that range, right? The procedures are the same. Takes a lot of time. There's a lot of argument. A whole lot of people have to agree. But somehow now 70 or 80,000 pages get added to the Federal Register every year. That's reams and reams of laws, right?

The Homestead Act, which is one of the two greatest pieces of legislation in human history, the other one is the Northwest Ordinance. The Homestead Act in 1862, signed by Abraham Lincoln gave away 10 percent of the land area of the United States to about two and a half million people who got the land if they just would agree to live on it and work it for a time, five years. Now, do you know how long the Homestead Act is? It's 1,500 words long. The Northwest Ordinance, which set up the first time a free government could grow, Michigan, where I live, is in the Northwest Territory, and which also, by the way, came to the Union as a gift from Virginia, which claimed the land, those five states up there in the Northwest Territory. And the condition that Virginia, and Virginia is acting under the

guidance of Thomas Jefferson, and Virginia is a slave state. And Thomas Jefferson was a slave holder. But the condition they placed on the gift is there must never be slavery in this territory. People forget that Thomas Jefferson was responsible for one of the first, one of the greatest acts of liberation in human history. And what did they do with the land? Except as fast as they could, they sold it into private hands to get money to pay off the Revolutionary War debt. By 1862, by the time of the Homestead Act, those debts were all paid. So, they gave the land away. Because the purpose of the country was for us to live independent lives.

Now, the Constitution of the United States has two things to do, and they live in delicate balance. One is it builds a strong, powerful central government. Powerful enough to reach out its hands around the world and afflict our enemies. Powerful enough to keep order in our country when order is threatened. But it also divides and distributes power and also locates power in the people who are the source of all power. And that delicate balance has to be maintained somehow. And the ultimate people to maintain it, and here I assert to you, there's no leading founder of our country, and remember, those were very sophisticated people who did not think that the ultimate protection of our land was ordinary folk like everybody in this room today. I grew up in Pocohonas, Arkansas. First time I went to a big city, Little Rock, which I now know is not a big city, that was for Boys State. And look at all of us. Who are we, a bunch of dukes and earls? You can't decentralize power except to people who are acting on their honor, people who have taken an oath. Because that internalizes the command. Now it's your command. You can be responsible for it. Last night at Hillsdale College I gave the first of two capstone lectures to our graduating seniors. And Hillsdale College is just rolling right now. And it just has the massive advantage over the others that it isn't crazy.

And these seniors, I love them. I know most of them. We all know each other. It's not a very big place. And it was just a golden thing because the subject of the talk was how do you build your character? And Aristotle describes how that works. It's a beautiful process of making difficult choices. Difficult choices are the ones where you have to give up something good for the sake of something better. Or suffer some pain to avoid some worse pain. Suffer some death to avoid some shame. How do you learn to do that? And the answer is, everybody. It's the key doctrine of human nature in the classic authors and in the Declaration of Independence. Everybody hears the voice of the good. And when you make a choice, you can hear that voice.

I spent a week with Pat Brady, who's the head of the Medal of Honor Society, and I can report to you I know him very well by now. He won his Medal of Honor for helicopter flying in Vietnam. Another one was won in Vietnam by our previous speaker. And I can tell you that he's a rogue, and it's fun to drink a beer with him. But talk to him about honor. And the point is, he lived for it. He loved very greatly. And he went above and beyond the call of duty, else there would be nothing but defeat littering the military record of American history. The first step in studying and understanding the Constitution is that it is meant to empower as well as protect us. We are responsible for it. I urge you to learn everything you can about it, which I know you do because I went to Boys State. Thank you. *(Applause)*

*...The Convention viewed a video. (Applause)*

### **Fireside Chat With Ganassi Racing**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, veterans deserve the best. The American Legion deserves the best. We are fortunate to have a racing team that represents the best in the popular NTT DATA IndyCar Series. Team owner Chip Ganassi is himself a former racer and a member of the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America. He is the only team owner in history to have won the Indianapolis 500, the Daytona 500, the Brickyard 400, the Rolex 24 at Daytona, the 12 hours of Sebring and the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Ganassi Teams have won 13 IndyCar Championships and is the reigning 2020 Champion with driver Scott Dixon.

Driving The American Legion No. 48 Honda in many of the races this season is a man who is a racing Legend. Jimmie Johnson is a seven-time NASCAR Cup Champion. He shares with Richard Petty and Dale Earnhardt for most Cup Series Championships of all time.

Our other driver, Tony Kanaan, is the 2004 IndyCar Series Champ. He won the 2013 Indianapolis 500 and, in 2015, won the 24 Hours of Daytona for Chip Ganassi Racing. He led the No. 48 car to an impressive 10th-place finish in the 2021 Indianapolis 500.

We are fortunate to have this trio with us today for a fireside chat. Moderating their discussion is John Olguin. John is the senior vice president of marketing and communications for the Ganassi Racing team. Prior to joining Ganassi, John was with the Los Angeles Dodgers public relations department for 15 years. Ladies and gentlemen let's welcome The American Legion No. 48 race team Chip Ganassi, Jimmy Johnson, Tony Kanaan and moderator John Olguin. (*Applause*)

JOHN OLGUIN: All right. Chip, let's start this off. So, you have been in the sport for over 40 years. All right. How about talk a little bit about how the 1963 Indianapolis 500 and an eight-millimeter film transported you into this 40-year history in racing.

CHIP GANASSI: Thank you, John. If you all have about 45 minutes, you can sit down now, and I'll get into the story. No, I'll give you the short version. As John said, in 1963 I was five years old, and my father went to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. He was in Indianapolis on a business trip. He went over to the Indianapolis Speedway to take a tour. He came back with an eight-millimeter film of the 1963 race. And he brought it home. I was all of five years old. And we had one of those little Bell & Howell cameras, you used to feed the film through the eight-millimeter projector. And I must have watched the 1963 Indy 500 at least a thousand times. And it was won by a guy named Parnelli Jones. You might remember that name. Famous race driver, still around today. And so, I saw Parnelli win in 1963, like I said, at least a thousand times, and I was hooked on racing. I wanted to go racing.

Somehow by the time I was in my teens I was racing cars in my late teens. And lo and behold I was a rookie in Indianapolis in 1982. And I was all of 23 years old at that time. And Parnelli Jones actually signed off on my rookie orientation as a rookie at Indy you've heard about. You had to get four veteran drivers to sign off on your license. And Parnelli was one the signatory people. And I became friends with Parnelli. Here I was five years old. I watch him win the Indy 500 on the film. I meet him when I'm 18 years old. We become friends, so much so that about five years ago his son lives here, just north of North Scottsdale and I had my Thanksgiving dinner with him I think when I was 55 years old. So, it's something that transcended from when I was five years old to when I was 55. To this day, Parnelli and I are still friends. And it all started with this eight-millimeter film when I was five years old. And I was hooked on IndyCar racing ever since then.

JOHN OLGUIN: That's pretty interesting, Chip. The second thing I wanted to follow up with is I know you've had a ton of accolades. They read through a bunch of them. But it's also about relationships. And you've had a ton of relationships that you've created over the years. One of which was with the late Paul Newman. You want to talk about the last conversation that you had with Paul Newman and what that meant to you.

CHIP GANASSI: Well, I was very fortunate to befriend Paul Newman when he was involved in the sport for many years as a co-owner of Newman/Haas Racing. We were fierce competitors Friday, Saturday and Sunday. But Monday through Friday we became great friends. So much so he came to my wedding and it extended my mother and my mother-in-law's life, I think extended them 10 years just meeting old blue eyes. You ladies know what I'm talking about. But anyway, I think what John's talking about is when someone passes, we always remember the last thing that we said to them. I always remember the last thing I said, gee, that guy passed away and the last thing I talked to him about was such and such. I always remember the last thing.

It was in 2008, we had won the Indy 500 with Scott Dixon. And none of us had seen Paul at the racetrack for many months. And so, after we win the race, you take a ride around

the track with a pace car and wave to the fans with the winner and the driver and the team owner. And I saw Paul in the pit lane, he sort of stuck his hand up, you could tell he was very ill. But he was there, and I gave him a high-five as I went by. And I hadn't seen him in months.

The following week we go from Indianapolis to Milwaukee. And Milwaukee is the next race. And on Sunday morning, one of his handlers came over and said Paul's over in the bus. He wants to talk to you. So, I go over to his motor home. And just he and I talking. And I remember, it was one of those conversations, it was one of the first times this had happened to me. I remember because about ten minutes into a 20-minute conversation, I realize why I'm there. I'm there because it's the last conversation we're going to have. And he knew it. And suddenly I knew it. And we're sort of reminiscing about a lot of things that we had done together and the fun we'd had. I have to tell you there's some colorful language here coming up. So, bear with me, please.

We're having just a great conversation that two friends have. And one of his women handlers come in, stuck her head in the bus, and said, they just said, gentlemen start your engines; you need to get out there. We're going to miss the race. In those days I was calling the race. So, I stood up, okay, I was a little uncomfortable, like what do you say to somebody when you know it's your last conversation you're having. And I just said, hey, man, we've had a great time together, peace be with you. And he said, yeah, you, too. We've had a great time. I said thanks. I go up to the front of the bus and I walk out. And I look back and I said, "Hey, you never congratulated me for winning the Indy 500 last week." He said, "I know. Screw you!"

And that's the last thing that Paul Newman ever said to me. I could tell you it wasn't exactly screw you, you can interpolate what he really said. (*Laughter*)

JOHN OLGUIN: That's great, Chip. Jimmie, lots of accolades as well. Championships and on and on. 84-odd wins in NASCAR. But you've kind of taken on a new endeavor here in IndyCar. How did that conversation in your head go, conversation with Chip, to decide to do this?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: You know, I've always dreamed of being an IndyCar driver. That was really the original dream growing up for me. I grew up in Southern California. For my generation of racing, NASCAR wasn't mainstream as it is today. Opportunities that I had really led me in that direction. But my sponsor at the time, Chevrolet, was pulling out of IndyCar, and said, if I wanted a future in motorsports, NASCAR is what I needed to look at. So, I followed that and pursued it. And it was wonderful and great. But all along I've kept a very close eye on IndyCar. Many friends in the IndyCar paddock, three of them sitting here today, many drivers, other team owners. And I've just always had a watchful eye on the sport. And I've even mentioned a few things to Chip in passing over the past 10 years or so. Last spring, I guess, that conversation got a little more serious. And Chip said, man, if you want to come drive a car, come on we'll do it. We'll throw you in an IndyCar and give it a try. And driving the car was even better than I could have expected and really got me excited to make the switch and to give IndyCar a shot.

JOHN OLGUIN: So, has the process been what you expected, harder, easier? Where does it all sit with you at this point?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: I'm going to go with harder for sure. You think that driving the car with four wheels would be the same if it was a NASCAR vehicle or an IndyCar vehicle but they're much different. I'm closing the gap and getting much more comfortable in understanding the car, but each week I find myself on a new track. In addition to learning the car I'm also learning the new tracks. And just really enjoying it, though. Trying to get my goals in the right spot. I'm surrounded by amazing people at Chip Ganassi Racing. Closing that gap to the leaders and becoming more competitive each weekend.

CHIP GANASSI: Let me interrupt you, John, and I don't mean to do this Jimmie, put you on the spot, but you said something interesting to me yesterday and you repeated it to me this morning when we were walking in, I'd like you to tell the ladies and gentlemen,

the audience, it was a threshold moment in a race driver's career. Do you know what I'm talking about?

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Oh, yes.

CHIP GANASSI: This is a great story as a race driver. I want you to hear this from somebody that's a multi-time champion, a superstar of the sport, you've got to hear what he has to say here.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: Chip was kind enough to help me experience something for the first time, again. One was IndyCar last July and we know where I am today. And two was yesterday I had my first opportunity to drive on an oval at Texas Motor Speedway. I went the fastest I have ever gone in a race car through a turn. And as a driver there's nothing like that moment putting that new high score up there.

JOHN OLGUIN: For those who don't know, Tony drives the ovals this year and Jimmie has driven the road courses, so this was his first time on an oval in an IndyCar.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: It's been an amazing partnership. To see Tony in the car on the weekends in the ovals and carrying The American Legion on the car and doing such a great job, it's really piqued my interest. I watched him in the Indy 500 and watched all my friends go by in the opening lap. And I thought, man, I really feel like I should try this someday. We're in that process now of understanding if that's something I want to do. And yesterday was that first step. And it was a lot of fun.

JOHN OLGUIN: Great. I want to turn it over to this young man here. For those who haven't spoken to Tony before, he has a bit of an accent. And it's not from Alabama. He's Brazilian. And, so, Tony, lots of great drivers have come through Brazil. Talk about how you got into racing and growing up in Brazil that led you to racing.

TONY KANAAN: I'm going to correct you. I'm American now. *(Applause)*

JOHN OLGUIN: Good for you. He did become an American citizen in 2014.

TONY KANAAN: 2014, my wife is American. All my kids are Americans. And I guess my wife tells me that I married her to become an American. But we'll go with that. It doesn't matter.

Well, growing up in Brazil, there are two things, two sports that are huge there. It's soccer and racing. And my father was a huge racing fan. My dad never raced. It was like Chip's story. We used to go and watch races together all the time, or on TV. In Brazil, Formula 1 was more popular than IndyCar back in the day. We used to watch races on Sunday on TV. And when Formula 1 went to Brazil, he used to take me to the track to watch the races on the grandstands. And when I was eight years old, he took me to a go-kart track to watch a race. Rubens Barrichello was racing, which is a dear friend of mine, I didn't know him at the time. I asked my dad for a go-kart. We left the racetrack, straight to the factory and he bought me a go-kart that day. That's how I started it. Dad watched me race from when I was eight until I was 13. Unfortunately, he got really sick. He got cancer for three years when I was 10 years old. And leading to Chip's story, I remember exactly my dad's last words to me in the hospital, on a Thursday night. He asked my mother to bring me to the hospital because he wanted to speak to me. And his last words to me was obviously to take care of my family, never leave my mom and my sister hanging, but for me to never give up racing and win the Indy 500 for him one day. And he passed that night. So, I think I did well. *(Applause)*

JOHN OLGUIN: So, talk about that Indy 500, a seminal moment in your life.

TONY KANAAN: You know, it's one of those things. We went through, obviously, a tough time after I lost him. I had to support my mom and sister. I quit school to keep racing but made it to America. Made it to America, was able to fulfill my dream, became an IndyCar driver. I won the championship in '03. I tried to drive for Chip for many years. Never really worked it out. But we finally made it. But in 2013, it was probably my last year in IndyCar. I got actually fired from a team that I was racing with that I won the championship with. The sponsor, you know, just left. And we didn't have a car to race. So, during the offseason, I was without a team. And Jimmy Vasser, which is a guy who actually raced for Chip, won championships for him, had a very small team. And we kind of like

put some numbers together. Said, well, we have enough budget to race the first four races, which the fourth race of the year was the Indy 500. So we put this thing together. It was a pretty good team. But never really had achieved a lot. And we show up there, and obviously I had led twelve Indy 500s before, never had won. Something was always happening to me. People would come and ask me during the month of May, is this your year? Are you going to be well known as one of the greatest that never wins? And I never really believed that. And that year we started 10<sup>th</sup>. We got to the lead, and we beat the team that fired me the year before. Which was kind of sweet. *(Laughter and applause)*

And then obviously if you guys ever watched that race, when I crossed start/finish line, usually we celebrate fist up and I actually was naturally, I didn't even realize until somebody pointed out, but I was pointing up saying, told you I was going to do it, dad. So that was for him. *(Applause)*

JOHN OLGUIN: That's great. So, Tony, I've heard you talk about this a number of times this year, is I know you became an American citizen in 2014. But now that you drive The American Legion car and people are coming up to you all the time and saying things to you, what are they saying and how has that made you feel?

TONY KANAAN: It was amazing. Over the course of the years I became, I think, extremely popular in Indianapolis probably because I was trying to win that race so bad and never succeed. So, my fan base there is huge. And then this year, you know, after 23 years in IndyCar you don't think you can gather more fans or more appreciation. It's just there. And as soon as we announced this deal, I cannot tell you guys how many text messages from veterans. They said my dad is an American Legion member, my grandfather. It's been amazing how many people approach. I have so many coins now. It's so awesome. And getting to know more about the Legion and getting to know more what you guys do and trying to even, now, obviously we're trying to help the cause with the suicide, it's an honor. I can't tell you how emotional for me was to race that car at the 500. We had some names on that car that were extremely heavy and knowing more and more, I can't thank you guys enough to fulfill our dreams and my dream to still compete in the Indy 500. But I gained some more fans, which is pretty cool. *(Applause)*

JOHN OLGUIN: That's great. Jimmie, you have a history of people in your family serving in the military. And now also working with The American Legion, how has that felt for you with, I know your grandparents and so on have served, now being part of the American Legion Family.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: It's a massive honor. And thank you, everyone, it's really been an amazing year, as Tony pointed out, to meet different Legionnaires at the racetrack, to share the same pride we have for the race car and the competition. Even yesterday I'm spending time with a few of the folks, and helping them understand what it's like to be behind the wheel of a car and being out of control. I think it's been a fantastic partnership and one that I have a ton of pride in. My mom's father served in the Navy, and my dad's father was in the Army. I have a brother-in-law that served in the Navy as well. So definitely a part of the framework of the Johnson family and my wife's side, the Janway side.

JOHN OLGUIN: You've also had the luxury, and I think all of us have learned over the last year or so, all the amazing things that The American Legion has done, the GI Bill and on and on, now they're tackling something new, which is veteran suicide. And you've got to participate in a PSA/commercial. What was that like and what's it like being part of that message.

JIMMIE JOHNSON: I think many civilians in the country understand that it's difficult to come back from serving. But I don't think many really understand the depths of that. And for myself it was a big education. And then to be able to do the PSA and to help get that word out to everyone else has been really impactful. And certainly something that we need to correct and we need to be there for those vets returning and try to surround them with what they need to come back into civilian life. It's something I'm very proud to be a part of. And excited to really make a difference with that initiative. *(Applause)*

JOHN OLGUIN: So, Chip, certainly last but not least, your father served in the military. You've represented in racing many, many major brands. But what's it like to now also add to that list a brand like The American Legion?

CHIP GANASSI: First of all, I don't want to repeat what Tony and Jimmie said, but it's an honor to represent this organization, I can tell you. It amazes me, week after week, the commanders, the local people coming up, thanking me, for the effort, for the organization, for what we're doing, what we're trying to do for The American Legion in terms of veterans suicide and what have you. But just an awareness, they're thanking me. And all I can think of, it happens to me every single day, when all I can think of when you're thanking me is, I want to thank you. Okay? This is a hot topic these days about service and about just what The American Legion has done in the past, what it's going to do in the future. The reason we're able to talk about that stuff is because of all of you. And because of the groundwork and the foundations that you've laid as an organization. To talk about even going to the next step, having an organization embrace an organization like ours, means a lot. But to make that effort, to take the next step and what you're doing is very powerful. But at the end of the day, you don't have to thank me. I want to thank you for your service and everything you've done for this country, over the years, and what we all hope to do for this country in the future. Thank you. *(Applause)*

JOHN OLGUIN: Honestly, I don't know if there's a better way to finish than on that note. That is an absolutely perfect note. On behalf of Chip, Tony and Jimmie, thank you all for your service. We very much appreciate representing you. And, again, we couldn't be more proud. So, thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Gentlemen if you would all stand fast. Ladies and gentlemen, our American Legion racing team. Chip, thank you. *(Applause)*  
*...The Convention viewed a video.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Nominated by President Biden, our next guest was confirmed by the Senate and sworn in as the 11<sup>th</sup> secretary of Veterans Affairs on February 9, 2021. He previously served as White House chief of staff for President Obama. During the confirmation hearings for his current position, he said, "There is no more sacred obligation nor noble undertaking than to uphold our promises to our veterans, whether they came home decades ago or days ago." He served in the senior staff positions in the House and the Senate. He is a graduate of St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota and earned a master's degree at Georgetown. Please give a warm welcome to the Honorable Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough. *(Applause)*

**Address: Honorable Denis McDonough  
 Secretary of Veterans Affairs**

Thank you so much. It's an honor to be with you. Thank you, Bill, for that kind introduction, for your decades of service to our country, for your steadfast leadership as national commander, and last but in no way least, for your work as the booming voice of the Post 29 American Legion baseball team. Earlier this spring, a vet sent me a note. Included in it one of this year's official Legion baseballs. My son and I play catch with it in our backyard almost every night. I'm a product of Legion baseball, Post 491, Bayport Minnesota 1988. *(Applause)*

Having a catch with Teddy is a clear reminder of the role you play in communities and families across the country. When I look around this room, I see so many people deserving of our gratitude and recognition. Starting with Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Crandall, who received the Medal of Honor for his enormous courage and profound leadership in the Ia Drang Valley on 14 November 1965. May God bless you, the memories of Hal Moore and Joe Galloway, whom I know just passed away this month. And all those who fought at LZ X-Ray. I also want to recognize the Legion's national adjutant, Dan Wheeler, all of the past national commanders with us today, Navy Vice Admiral Yancy

Lindsey, Sergeant Major Michael Barrett, Diane Carlson Evans, the Legion Riders who just last week raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for children of disabled veterans and fallen servicemembers. *(Applause)*.

Hear, hear! And of course, all of you who have joined us today in person and online for the 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention of The American Legion. 102 years. That's an incredible run. I want to thank you, all of you, for your service to the nation and for your devotion to veterans throughout the years.

Now, we've come together at a difficult time. In just 11 days we will mark 20 years since the attacks on 11 September 2001. When our country was attacked on that fateful morning, so many young Americans, some of whom are here today, made the choice that so many veterans make at one point or another in their lives. They've made a choice to run toward the fight, not away from it. To serve our country. To protect and defend our freedoms. To fight for and alongside their fellow servicemembers. Whatever may come. And yesterday, as the last U.S. troops flew out of Afghanistan, the war those brave men and women fought came to an end.

I'd like to take a moment now to speak to those veterans and their loved ones, survivors, caregivers, families. I know that what's happened in Afghanistan over this past month has been incredibly painful for many of you. As you know, I'm not a veteran. But I've spent much of my life surrounded by and supporting veterans. In combat zones I've seen your excellence and the grueling demands of deployment after deployment after deployment. At Walter Reed, I've been moved by the strength and resilience of our wounded warriors. And at Dover, as we were reminded painfully just Sunday, I've witnessed the unimaginable grief of military families as they say their final goodbyes. But there is no way that I can come close to understanding how you feel right now. There is no way that anyone who did not serve in Afghanistan, who did not fight in Afghanistan, who did not believe in Afghanistan, who did not have loved ones who served and fought there, can fully understand how you feel right now. Because no one can unless they walked among the Afghan people the way you and your loved ones did.

But there are veterans on your left and on your right and across this country who do understand and do get it. And there are many thousands of veterans at VA who do understand, too, and are ready to help. And there are millions of people across the country who know what you did for them, who know what our fallen servicemembers have done for them, including those who were tragically killed during the evacuation this week in Afghanistan. Their service, your service, your choice to run into the fire matters. No matter what happens this month or any month. We are all safer for it.

I thank you for all you have done as individuals, as an organization, as partners with VA and as a veteran community to run toward the fight yet again. Helping evacuate Americans, Afghan allies and their families to safety. It has made a difference and saved thousands of lives. And while I cannot imagine what you're going through today, or what you and your families have been going through, I want you to know this: We at VA are here for you. Your American Legion brothers and sisters are here for you. And the nation will always be grateful for what you did and sacrificed for us and for the burdens that you and your families continue to bear on our behalf. We are forever in your debt.

You know, this difficult moment also reminds us of why we are gathered here today. Of the sacred duty and mission that we at VA and the Legion share together. It all comes back to the fundamental promise our nation made to veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the same promise we make to anyone who signs up for military service. If you take care of us, we'll take care of you. If you fight for us, we'll fight for you. If you have our backs, we'll have your back when you leave service. The thing is our nation as a whole makes that promise. But we at VA and the Legion are among those most responsible for keeping that promise. Today I'm here to give you an update on where we are in executing that mission and keeping that promise. But first, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you for all you do and all you have done in service of that mission for 102 years. It's a tough

job. It's a difficult job. But it's one that you do so well. There is no more noble mission and no more sacred obligation. *(Applause)*

In some ways, that shared mission has never been more critical than during this past year. Tragically, at this convention, perhaps more than any other, it's not impossible to notice the empty seats of those who are no longer with us. When I think about the more than 625,000 people this country has lost to COVID, I remember that they are your people, our people. The veterans we serve. The friends we want to call. The family members missing from our dinner tables. We remember those we've lost and our hearts go out to those they've left behind. But it's also important to remember that there are so many veterans out there right now enjoying their summers with their families or perhaps even sitting here in this room whose lives have been saved or bettered because we worked together. Veterans like Billy Hurley.

Like so many other vets and so many other Americans, Billy was struggling early in the pandemic. He lost his job as a bartender when COVID shut down the restaurant where he worked. And he had to go on unemployment. When that ran out, he got help from our Supportive Services for Veteran Families program at VA. But eventually he found himself in a position where he needed to pay one month of overdue rent. And he couldn't afford it. And in his own words he said he was broke. And he felt really down. Then he came to the Legion. He came to Ray Odum, a veteran service officer at Post 11 in Colorado. Ray helped Billy pay his rent and even offered to pay for his groceries. And now Billy has a steady job. And he says that when I walked out of the Legion, a big weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I felt refreshed, he added, like somebody had my back. The bottom line is that when Billy lost his job, VA was there for him. The Legion was there for him. We were there for him right when he needed it most. And that's the type of work we do together. That's the power of our partnership. And it's been on display throughout this pandemic. At the Legion, you've helped weather the storm by collecting food for vets in need. Giving blood. Checking in on veterans through your Buddy Check program. Distributing thousands of face masks and hosting life-saving testing and vaccination sites across the country.

VA employees have done the same. Working overtime, risking their own lives to save the lives of vets across the country. Ramping up telehealth appointments from 2,500 per day at the beginning of the pandemic to 45,000 per day a year later, so vets could get the help they needed even if it wasn't safe to come to the hospital. And mobilizing across America to get shots in the arms of more than 3.7 million people. All of that work, your work, our work, translates into the one statistic that matters most. Lives saved and improved by the work we do. In a time when veterans like Billy needed us most, The American Legion and VA rose to the occasion, and we did it together.

Now, as we all know, our work on the pandemic is far from over. We've already lost thousands of veterans to this deadly disease. And now the Delta variant is causing an exponential increase in infections, hospitalizations and even deaths once again. That's why everyone needs to be vaccinated. I can't say it enough. Almost every person dying from COVID right now is unvaccinated. In other words, right now almost every COVID death is preventable. But don't take my word for it. Listen to the docs. A doc in Alabama told a harrowing story last month, saying that unvaccinated COVID patients are begging her right before they're put on a ventilator for the vaccine. But at that point, all she can say to them, all she can do is to hold their hands and say I'm sorry, but it's too late. And days later, when she calls time of death for those patients, she has to tell their families that the best way to honor their deceased loved one is to get the vaccine because if they don't that tragic story will repeat itself over and over again. I don't want that to be you or your family or the vets you know and love.

That's why we've taken the extraordinary step of mandating vaccines for all VHA personnel who work in or visit our facilities. That's why I'm asking you now to please get vaccinated if you haven't already. And if you're immunocompromised and already vaccinated, that's why I'm asking you to please get your third shot at your local VAMC.

More than half the nation's vets have already been vaccinated. And thanks to the SAVE LIVES Act, all vets, their spouses, caregivers can be vaccinated safely, easily and free of charge. And fortunately, right now you can get the J&J vaccine downstairs in exhibit halls 1 through 3. When you have a few minutes, please head down there. The vaccine is the only way to end this pandemic and finally return to normal life. But while we want to get back to our normal lives, we must also recognize that some things shouldn't go back to the way they were.

At VA, for example, we shouldn't go back to the old way of doing things, because the work we've done to respond to the pandemic has forged us into a stronger, better department for our nation's vets. Telehealth and tele-appeals are allowing us to meet vets where they want to be met when they want to be met in unprecedented ways. Outpatient trust scores among vets rose to 90 percent this year, which in my mind should be the floor, not the ceiling of what we do. Our team rated its 1 millionth disability claim faster this year than in any but one year in the history of VA, a result of our goal to make sure vets get their benefits on time every time. And our cemeteries not only stayed open during the pandemic but expanded to six new locations. The bottom line: We're now providing more care and more benefits to more veterans than ever before. So, as we look to the future, we're not trying to build a VA that goes back to the old normal. With your help, we're going to continue to do better for our vets. We're going to continue to be better for our vets. And we're going to do that by driving toward the four fundamental principles of our vision: Advocacy; access; outcomes; and excellence.

First, advocacy, we're working to make sure the VA is the nation's premier advocate for veterans, their caregivers, their families and their survivors. When it comes to advocacy, it starts at the top. Our shared mission could not be a higher priority for this president. Could not be more close to his heart. When President Biden nominated me to lead the VA he told me to fight like hell for our vets. That's exactly what we're doing. And the administration is doing the same thing, delivering for our vets with the SAVE LIVES Act I mentioned earlier, with the American Rescue Plan, which allocated \$17 billion to help us care for vets during the pandemic, and with the proposed reconciliation package that will provide \$18 billion to help vets thrive in the future.

But we all know advocacy at the White House level doesn't mean anything if vets don't use the benefits they've earned, which is where you come in. For many veterans and certainly for some of our most deserving veterans you are their first impression of VA, the front door to the benefits they've already earned. You're sitting across the tables from them or their surviving spouses or dependents every day. All of which is to say, The American Legion is one of VA's most important partners. And I'm committed to working with you every day to improve access for veterans. *(Applause)*

On access, we'll move heaven and earth to get veterans timely access to their VA resources. A major part of that equation is making sure that veterans have the best experience wherever they access benefits and services, at home, in the community or at VA. That's why we're meeting vets where they are by expanding telehealth and tele-appeals and by supporting our caregivers. Let me just say this clearly. Caregivers are not an afterthought for us. They are a top priority. That's why I've appointed Meg Kabat to be the VA's first-ever senior advisor for caregivers. And it's why we've looked forward to expanding the program of comprehensive assistance to cover all caregivers as soon as possible.

For vets who are getting care in the community, we are building a network that has the right providers at the right locations to meet their needs no matter where they live. And of course, we're dedicated to improving the experience for vets who get their care directly from VA. That means finding the right balance between community care and direct care, putting the direct care system on a sustainable path to ensure that future generations of veterans enjoy the same great VA health care that past generations had. And it means rebuilding, repairing, realigning and modernizing VA health-care infrastructure to meet your needs, because that infrastructure is critical to the health of our nation's vets and to

the health of our nation. VA is the backstop and innovator at the heart of the entire U.S. health-care system, training America's physicians, researching tomorrow's challenges and innovating today to overcome them. That is never going to change and it surely won't change on my watch.

Next, let me talk about veterans' outcomes. Outcomes drive everything we do because vets, not us, are the ultimate judges of our success. And there is no more important outcome than preventing veteran suicide because one veteran who dies by suicide is one too many. Mental health services are critical for suicide prevention. *(Applause)*

So, keeping mental health services going during the pandemic has been one of our primary focuses. Fortunately, vets have adapted seamlessly to tele-mental health, attending 4.4 million sessions already this year, more than doubling their total for all of 2020. We're also going all in helping rural vets who need mental health services. That means building three new programs in rural locations to help severely mentally ill vets, and it means creating a new training program designed to attract top talent of clinicians to rural areas, to keep them in rural areas and to care for vets who live in rural areas. And for anyone who may be struggling with the news of this month, we're here for you. Whether you want to speak to another veteran, talk to a therapist, call our crisis line at 1-800-273-8255, text us at 838255, visit one of our vet centers or access any VA mental health services online. We're standing by and we're ready to help because mental health care is health care. As the secretary of defense said so well last month, your mental health is your health and your health is our top priority.

Another major focus here is toxic exposures. We're not waiting for Congress to act on this. We're going ahead and acting ourselves and we've already announced three major updates. One, we're creating a new comprehensive decision-making model for determining presumptive conditions. A model that will be guided by one core principle, getting vets the benefits they have earned and therefore deserve. Two, veterans suffering from bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and parkinsonism due to Agent Orange can now be paid the benefits they're owed. And, third, we announced last month that we'll presumptively pay disability benefits to veterans who suffer from asthma, sinusitis and rhinitis as a result of their service in Southwest Asia, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. Veterans have waited for these benefits for far too long. And we're doing everything in our power to make sure they won't have to wait any longer. *(Applause)*

Now, this is just the beginning, not the end, of our efforts on toxic exposure. And we're moving ahead with urgency. Lastly, on outcomes, we're laser focused on ending veteran homelessness. You know, a few weeks ago at a homeless vets vaccination event outside VA headquarters, a veteran came to get a shot. He wasn't wearing any shoes. So, we got him vaccinated. And our canteen staff got him a new pair of shoes. On the one hand, that story is heartwarming, a job well done. On the other hand, it's heartbreaking. Because that man served our country. He should have shoes on his feet. He should have a roof over his head. In fact, there should be no such thing as a homeless vet. Not here. Not in the greatest country on the face of the planet. *(Applause)*

So, I assure you, through HUD-VASH, SSVF, the Emergency Rental Assistance Program and more, we're going to do whatever it takes to help vets through the end of the eviction moratorium to get them into homes and to keep them there.

Finally, excellence. We're seeking excellence in all we do for veterans by leveraging the strength and diversity that defines the veteran population, The American Legion, our VA workforce in this amazing country. Our diversity is a strength, never a weakness. Every person entering a VA facility must feel safe, free of harassment and discrimination. And we will welcome all veterans. One of my first actions as VA secretary was ordering a top-down review of all of our policies, with the help of the Legion, to determine how we can make VA a more welcoming place for LGBTQ+ veterans, women veterans, minority veterans, MST survivors and more. Now, there's a lot more I could say on this. But it all boils down to this. For far too long, too many veterans have fought to protect our rights and our freedoms. And then they've had to fight brutal battles here at home for their own

rights and their own freedoms. Tragically, some of those fights continue to this day. But at VA those fights are over. Let me just repeat that. At VA those fights are over. In this administration, nobody's going to have to fight to get the quality care, benefits and services they've earned no matter who they are or who they love. *(Applause)*

That's where VA is headed, continuing to deliver more care, more benefits and more services to more veterans than ever before with advocacy, access, outcomes and excellence as our defining principles. But make no mistake: We can't do this without you. Since VA began, we have needed your help and your leadership to serve vets. And that's more true now than ever before. The experiences and perspectives of the nearly 2 million American Legion members are a powerful resource. When I think of just how powerful, I don't just think of the fact that you wrote the first draft of the GI Bill. Or even that you advocated for the creation of the Veterans Administration itself. I also think about a story I heard the other day, about an Army veteran named Sean Meyer. After returning home from two deployments to Iraq, Sean struggled with addiction, depression, panic and anxiety. War will do that. He said, "I knew I needed help but I didn't know who to reach out to." And then he found you. He didn't feel safe leaving his house, so you went to him. You did his paperwork. You helped him through the process. And you got him a 70 percent disability rating. If you ask him, that's not the most important thing you did for him. The disability rating is nice, he says. But I learned a long time ago, money won't buy you happiness. The most important thing, in his words, you gave him hope. That's what you do and that's what you have done for 102 years. You give veterans hope. *(Applause)*

So, when I said earlier that we're in a position where we have to fulfill the promise that the country makes on behalf of those veterans, that's what I mean. That's what I mean. So, I thank you again for the opportunity to be with you today. God bless the Legion. God bless the United States of America. And God bless our veterans, their survivors, their caregivers and their families. And may we always give them our very best. Thank you all very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Mr. Secretary, thank you for your remarks. I'd like to ask VA&R Chairman Ralph Bozella to join us. We have two prestigious awards that we would like to present.

The first is our Distinguished Physician of the Year. The second is our Distinguished Health-Care Provider of the Year. We intended to present them at our Washington Conference but had to reschedule due to the pandemic. The citations on both of the plaques are the same, so I will read them as one. The Distinguished Physician of the Year is to all Department of Veterans Affairs physicians. The Distinguished Health-Care Provider of the Year is presented to all Department of Veterans Affairs health-care providers. The awards are given "in recognition of your distinguished public service and commitment to the care of America's veterans during the 2020 COVID-19 Global Pandemic. Your daily selfless act of courage caring for our nation's veterans demonstrates your high degree of professionalism and countless hours dedicated to ensuring veterans are treated with respect while receiving exceptional health care." It is signed by Ralph P. Bozella, chairman, national Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission, along with myself, national commander. Mr. Secretary, please accept these awards on behalf of a grateful American Legion and tell your doctors and health-care providers, "Job, well done!" *(Applause)*

Our Distinguished Service Medal recipient this year is a woman who has performed outstanding service for our nation and our American Legion. As a high school student in 1964, she earned an American Legion Citizenship Award. After graduating from high school, she attended nursing school in her home state of Minnesota. She then volunteered to join the U.S. Army, here she would serve as a combat nurse in Vietnam. There, in her words, she did "whatever it took to save lives" and comforted thousands of veterans who experienced wounds and trauma. She worked tirelessly and successfully over many years for the establishment of the Vietnam Women's Memorial, which she helped dedicate. She has continued to work on behalf of veterans, male and female, including those who served

in Vietnam as well as other wars. Our worthy recipient of this highest honor is also a Paid-Up-For-Life Member of American Legion Post 2 in Helena, Montana. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present the American Legion Distinguished Service Medal to Diane Carlson Evans. (*Applause*)

**Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal  
Diane Carlson Evans, Advocate and Founder  
Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation**

Thank you, National Commander Oxford. Thank you, National Adjutant Dan Wheeler, our National Auxiliary President Nicole Clapp and their members, Sons of the American Legion Commander Clint Bolt and their members, Internal Affairs Commission Chairman Robert Newman, Jack Querfeld, retired Internal Affairs Division director, my fellow sister and brother veterans, and Post 2, Helena, Montana.

I am deeply honored to be back with all of you, and especially today. I believe this prestigious award says more about you than it says about me. I see today is finally my opportunity to say thank you to The American Legion. As I heard Jimmie, the race car driver, he stole the words out of my mouth. I'm here to thank you for what you did, not for what I did.

In 1985, one year after I founded the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project, at your National Convention you answered the call to honor the women who had served during the Vietnam War. You didn't hesitate. I lived in River Falls, Wisconsin, then, and my post, Post 121 in River Falls, from there I went to district, I went to the Wisconsin State Convention, to the National Convention, and you were with me all along the way. And back then, that wasn't easy because us veterans, we're still being scorned for having served our country during the Vietnam War. I had a torch bearer by the name of Judge Dan Foley of Minnesota, an American Legion past national commander and a World War II veteran. I was told by a member of my River Falls American Legion post to meet with Judge Foley if I wanted to know how the Legion works. Over lunch he told me what had to be done to get a resolution passed, but he made me work for it. I had to jump through all the hoops and cross all the Ts and dot all the Is. He taught me the way, while I had to prove to the Legionnaires that I was serious. I never dropped the ball, but you kept it in the air for me and helped fulfill the dream of a national monument to honor my sister veterans, the first in the history of the United States honoring military women on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. (*Applause*)

There was a time we fought together for each other and with each other. Those weren't glory days, but there was some magnificence in them that transcends the horrifying experiences of war. No matter what war, we served together or peacetime, our bonds are deep, our appreciation for sacrifice, and our compelling need to remember the dead and help the living are ingrained in us. The greatest privilege of my life was to serve as a trauma nurse in a combat zone caring for the wounded and dying, Pleiku, Vietnam. In 1982, with the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, during my visit to the wall that day, I realized I had unfinished business. My work for my brother and sister veterans was not over. I had to find my voice and start to fight again. Ultimately, I had to start telling the stories about the women I had served with and why I was so proud of them. It took ten years to finally honor the women with a memorial, but we prevailed. It took me 50 years to write my book, "Healing Wounds," published last year to talk about that fight and to share my own deeply personal experience in Vietnam and how that led to making history.

One month following the dedication of the Vietnam Women's Memorial, in the December 1993 issue of the American Legion Dispatch, National Commander Bruce Thiessen, a Vietnam era veteran wrote, "Little thanks was given to the women who served during the Vietnam War. Thank you is a small remark, but none is with more meaning." He wrote further, "That brief message seems to sum up the feeling of thousands of Legionnaires and their families who responded to The American Legion appeal to raise

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funds for the Vietnam Women's Memorial. Those contacted were also asked to write down on an enclosed card their thoughts about women who served in Vietnam during that war era. The response was phenomenal," says National Commander Bruce Thiessen. About 5,000 notes had been turned in by the time the memorial was dedicated Veterans Day 1993. The cards were available for reading by the public following the dedication. I have selected excerpts to read to you today.

First, "Because of you, the almost forgotten, my dreams have come true. You are heroes in my eyes and in the eyes of many of my friends. Because of your efforts when I was wounded, I was assured of a future."

Next, "I served aboard an aircraft carrier and never saw any of the many women serving at the time. However, I dealt with several very competent women via radio communication channels, and I very much appreciated their helping my brothers ashore in Vietnam. They laid their lives on the line."

Next, "You have truly earned your way to heaven for the price you paid in hell. The tears of pain and sorrow will never really fade as long as men and women die for the country they love. Few understand the price we paid for many to enjoy."

And last, "Finally the memorial will be complete. It will be a beautiful addition honoring wonderful people. My husband was wounded, but he never, ever talked to me about it, but thank God he had these brave and beautiful women there for him from a very grateful veteran's wife."

Now, you may be asking how is any of this talking about a memorial dedicated 28 years ago, how is that relevant to today? Well, here's your answer. You deserve gratitude. You deserve appreciation from all of us who benefit from your important work. And now finally we welcome home and honor those veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and around the world. They need what The American Legion can give them, and I know you will. The attacks and attempts to whittle away our veterans' programs may never cease. American Legion leaders move your initiatives and programs forward in so many ways, aging veterans, physical and mental health, it's all been discussed at your convention and especially by Secretary McDonough. Close to the heart of the Legion are you, the service officers, who helped me with my claim. Frontline advocacy at all times for us. There is a place for each of us in the Legion. I found my place was alongside you to help heal the emotional wounds of war.

To repeat Commander Oxford's recent words regarding our current generation of men and women serving today in uniform, "Their courage, victories, and selfless acts of service will not be washed away by history. To all the men and women who served and made the world a better, safer, and brighter place since the dark day of 9/11, I salute you." As do I. And to all who have stepped up to serve our country in war and peace, I salute The American Legion who continue to step up to care for us, our families, and our nation. Remember I said this award is more about you than about me, for without you, my wonderful husband Michael, a lifetime member of the Legion as well, the sculptor Glenda Goodacre, sculptor of the Vietnam Women's Memorial, and my family, I wouldn't be standing here today. Good luck, carry on, and thank you for giving me this opportunity to thank you for all that you do for America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Diane, thankfully, our paths never crossed in Vietnam, but it's a great honor to present you with our Distinguished Service Medal. *(Applause)*

For the Marines in the crowd, our next speaker has had a hugely successful 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. In 2011, he was named the 17<sup>th</sup> Sergeant Major of the U.S. Marine Corps. He served in that position until his retirement from the Corps after 34 years in 2015. If you have ever heard him speak before, you would understand that his genteel mild-mannered spirit is one that could have

only been developed at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, where he nurtured young Marine recruits. Fortunately for The American Legion, he has brought the same passion and commitment to essential veterans' issues such as suicide prevention. 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, Micheal P. Barrett. *(Applause)*

**Address: Sergeant Major Michael Barrett, USMC, Ret.  
17<sup>th</sup> Sergeant Major of the United States Marine Corps**

Oorah! So, I'm not making this part up, just a few minutes ago, when James Baca ran back there and said, "Hey, good news, we're moving you up the schedule, I hope you're ready." By the way, he did that to me while we were going to the bathroom. *(Laughter)*

But I had just gotten done talking to my wife, and she just wanted to call and say good luck. She's back in Indiana. Yeah, Oorah, Indiana! She said, "Is the bar open there yet?" I told her, "Is the bar open yet? Why?" She said, "Because all of your speeches sound so much better when everyone's been drinking." That's what you get after 39 years of marriage. *(Laughter)*

First, I accept the challenge of being about the twenty-fifth speaker today to stand at this podium with the challenge of there's absolutely no chance of any kind of redundant messaging, and I'm ready for that because I don't think there is.

The world is a dangerous place, and it's not getting any nicer. The stressors on all of us are immense, and they are exponentially greater if you're haunted by unsettling past experiences and other overwhelming challenges. This is extremely difficult for me. Thirteen families received the most devastating news this past week. I was three times in my 34-year career that Marine casualty assistance call officer on the other side of the door knocking. I don't wish that responsibility on anyone. I've attended over 300 funerals, memorial services, and dignified transfers in the past 20 years. Being angry and frustrated and letting it harbor and consume your every thought and subsequently your every conversation accomplishes nothing.

It's been a tough couple of weeks. We've felt pain and frustration, or should I say we've endured pain, frustration, loss all before, but it never gets easier. Two deployments to Iraq, where my battalion covered down on Fallujah, Karmah, Saqlawiyah, the Zaidon, and Fuquilet [phonetic], where I lost 23 Marines and 300 wounded. Thirteen months in Afghanistan as the NATO Regional Commander Southwest sergeant major for Helmand, Nimruz, and Farah. 279 soldiers, sailors, Marines, and NATO personnel killed and over 2,700 wounded on my watch. Still to this day, certain sounds, smells, sights trigger physical and cognitive effects on me.

I'm done being angry. My heart hurts for all of our gold star families and all of our severely wounded. No pain we live through, no trial that we experience should ever be wasted. To the development of our character, our fortitude, our future efforts, and our resolve, all that we have suffered and all that we will endure now, we must all be together to be stronger and more resolute in our daily efforts to continue to serve and to give more. I'm thinking about our selfless warriors and our wonderful veterans, all they give, all you've given. They and we are going to be asked to give more, and there's only one right response, where do you need me. There's no time for hemming and hawing.

I'm a rugby player. When you go into the scrum or to the ruck, it's head down, ass up, drive forward until you gain ground, or you win the ball back. It's easy to sit in front of a TV and criticize and scream, "What the hell" about a decision and wonder what was the approval and thought process in regards to that thing, whatever that thing was. Our leaders have a lot of stuff on their plates, and none of us, none of us, honestly knows what all that is. I don't know what the final factors were that led to the decision to leave Afghanistan the way that we have. I can only surmise somewhere was it the tens of millions of displaced

human beings caused by 20 years of vicious, unrelenting conflict, or was it the \$6.5 trillion bill that's going to come due. Or was it the human cost, the incalculable personal toll estimated to be greater than 800,000 human lives, of which over 7,000 of them were American lives and over 53,000 wounded. Did we all do our part? Did we leave it all on the battlefield?

All of my experiences, all of my observations, the over 600 combat patrols that I walked in all of my times in the air, my gut tells me we absolutely did. Keep our heads high. We could only control the situations that were right in front of us. We followed our orders, and we did our duty. We allowed a nation of people to experience 20 years of prosperity in contrast to what they knew, what life could be like. We did what we could and what we were allowed to do.

Now we can and we have left the battlefield. However, we cannot leave the global war on terror. We may want to be done with it, but they are not done with us. The ugly history proves this. November 1979, U.S. embassy in Tehran is attacked and seized. The most powerful nation in the world is held hostage. April '83, a vehicle laden with explosives detonated in front of the U.S. embassy in Beirut and killed 63. Six months later a large truck filled with 2,500 pounds of TNT smashes through the front gates of the Marine barracks and kills 241 of my brothers. April '85, a bomb explodes in a restaurant frequented by soldiers in Madrid, more of our brothers taken. August '85, a Volkswagen loaded with explosives crashes into the front gate at Rhein-Main Air Force Base, 22 killed. April '86, TWA flight 840 attacked by terrorists, four Americans killed, two were sailors. December '88, Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, 259 taken by terrorists. January '93, two CIA agents executed in front of Langley by terrorists. February '93, a group of terrorists deliver a van packed with explosives into the underground parking garage at the World Trade Center, six killed and over a thousand wounded. November '95, a car bomb explodes at the U.S. military complex in Riyadh, killing seven servicemen and women. June '96, another truck bomb explodes in Saudi Arabia, the Khobar Towers are destroyed, 19 killed and hundreds wounded. August '98, terrorist coordinated attacks on two U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, 224 killed. October 2000, the USS Cole, 17 sailors killed. September 11, 2001, the attacks took the lives of 2,977 innocent human beings, mostly Americans but also people from 60 other nations. They were all victims who went to work that beautiful September morning, but because of unimaginable acts by the most hateful people on the planet, they were all in God's hands by noon.

Our way of life, our freedom has changed forever, threatened forever. Another 32,190 terror attacks since 9/11. I have intentionally left off drug war, cartel violence, and the attacks on our brave brothers and sisters in blue. For 246 years we have fought for and to keep our freedom. Our history books are filled with tens of thousands of great and heroic achievements and advancements and over a million heartbreaking or gut-wrenching losses. That alone should inspire every citizen to fight like hell to not forget what it took to be here in the greatest country on the planet. Born here by chance, we live here by choice, serving and defending her is a responsibility, whether we're running the business end of our bayonet through the chest of the enemy in the wheat fields of World War I or hopping across the islands or slugging it out in the bulge of World War II or the frozen mountains of Korea or the steamy jungles of Vietnam or the rubble of a shell shocked Beirut or the oil soaked fields of Desert Storm or the mean streets of Panama, Grenada, Somalia, Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, we all have witnessed and we can speak of the unconquerable spirit of those who have and still wear the cloth.

Do you remember what we looked like? Do you know what they look like today? Some, like us, not old enough to buy beer but old enough to serve and fight. They have a family or a steady boyfriend, a girlfriend that swears to be waiting for them when they return from a half a world away. Remember? They are ten pounds lighter now than when they lived at home, and that's because they're either working, training, or fighting from well before dawn until well after dark, and they obey orders instantly without hesitation, but they are not without spirit or individual dignity. Remember? They are self-sufficient. They

have two uniforms. They wear one. They wash the other. They keep their canteens full. They keep their feet dry, but sometimes they forget to brush their teeth, but they never forget to take care of their gear. If someone's thirsty, we'll give them their water, we'll give them our water, and if they're hungry, our food. They'll even split their ammunition with you in the middle of a fire fight even if you're running low too. And too many have seen more suffering and death than they should have in their short lifetime, and they feel every note of the National Anthem vibrate through their body while standing at a position of rigid attention, and they fail to hold back tears when Taps are blown, and they're unashamed. They are an elite class of American that have kept this country free for over two centuries. I know that they will continue to live hard, train hard, and fight hard and provide our nation with the capability to contain a crisis, to fill a gap, or to hold the line, but only God knows when or where or who they're going to have to fight or help next, but I know that they're ready to leave tonight, just like you do.

Our efforts have come at a great loss with much pain. So many have given their blood, their body parts, and too many instances, their minds. And our Gold Star families have endured the selfless sacrifice of their fallen hero. The faces and the names line the hallways of all of our command posts, and they're etched on the marble and the granite across the globe, a solemn reminder that bears the scars and memories of our brave, indomitable in crisis, fearsome in battle, generous in their nature, and humble in their manner. May we never forget the men and women who intuitively know the joy and sense of purpose that only comes through great challenges and subordination to causes greater than self. We know what it means to keep company with the finest men and women in a world under the toughest conditions. Our nation needs people willing to walk where lightning strikes, drawn to a sense of duty. A minute doesn't pass where I'm not wowed by the selflessness, the courage, and endurance of our 21<sup>st</sup> century hunter-warriors.

To the families and the loved ones, they remain strong and focused, and not a day goes by where their sacrifices are not known and cherished. Saying good-bye again and again and again to your loved one, to your warrior is a hell of a thing to have to endure. Nearly 350 million Americans, and less than 1% of the nation serves in the cloth. This is profound because we're doing it with an all-volunteer force. We are fortunate in that we have been allowed to pursue anything we want in life in this country. Today's warriors have chosen to be defenders of the Constitution and servants to the nation. There's nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer.

So, what do you say that hasn't already been said? The Spartans in 480 BC did not ask how many are the enemy, but only where are they? Which leads me to this closing. Upwards of 20 veterans die by suicide every single day. This is a call to action. We are veterans. We are Legionnaires. Just tell us where we are needed next, and if you haven't already, add to your basic daily routine conduct buddy checks, make sure your buddy, your brothers, your sisters are okay. So, until we meet again, may God keep you in his loving embrace, always faithful. I've said enough. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Our next speaker, originally from Toledo, Ohio, our next guest moved to Arizona in 1982 so he could attend Arizona State University, where he obtained a bachelor's degree in finance. After a successful business career, he was elected governor of Arizona in 2014 and re-elected in 2018. When he first assumed office, the state had a \$1 billion deficit. He was able to balance the budget in his first year without raising taxes. He created the Arizona Border Strike Force to combat border related crime. In 2015, he signed a bill requiring all high school students in the state to pass a civics test. Please welcome the governor of the great state of Arizona, Doug Ducey.

**Welcome: Honorable Doug A. Ducey  
Governor of the State of Arizona**

Good afternoon, everyone. I want to say thank you very much to Commander Bill Oxford for the kind introduction and for hosting us today. It's an honor as governor to welcome you to the American Legion's 102<sup>nd</sup> National Convention, and it's an honor to welcome you to the State of Arizona. How are you enjoying yourselves? *(Applause)*

We're excited to have you here in Phoenix, and we're excited to be meeting in person. You know, this is the first time we've been able to host this event in Phoenix since 2008, so I hope that all of you get to see all the great parts of the State of Arizona. Depending on how much time you have here, I recommend seeing everything from the Grand Canyon to the Sedona Red Rocks to our wine communities in southern and north central Arizona. But even if you're just staying in the greater Phoenix area, there's plenty to do. The restaurants are world class. The hotels and resorts are just stunning. And the Arizona Diamondbacks are playing just down the street tomorrow night and tonight if you want to see some baseball. And we're just a day away from September. That means that summer is officially in the rearview mirror and temperatures are finally going to be inching back into the double digits. So, I hope you get to see all that the state of Arizona has to offer.

But the reason I'm here is to recognize our veterans. I want to take a moment to thank all of you for your service. You've all put your lives on the line to protect us, and you did so without question and without the need for recognition, and we're not going to take you or your service for granted. You are the reason we are able to celebrate freedom and liberty that we hold so dearly. As we approach the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of September 11, there's no better time to recognize the women and men who have put on a uniform to protect and defend our nation. That tragic event would lead to the war in Afghanistan, which too many of our troops have sacrificed their lives for. We have all tragically witnessed the bravery and sacrifice of our troops when 13 U.S. servicemembers were killed in Kabul last week. We all found it horrifying, and what's worse is that five of the men who died were just 20 years old, as old as the war in Afghanistan. These men and women didn't have the chance to become military veterans. They didn't have the opportunity to be a part of this organization. Their selflessness, their willingness to help Americans and many of the Afghan people cost them their lives. Now, it's my hope that the Biden administration will get all remaining Americans out of Afghanistan as soon as possible so we can prevent any more loss and suffering. *(Applause)*

And let's take a moment of silence for those who lost their lives in Afghanistan last week. To all of our veterans here today and all of our active-duty military members and their families, thank you. Thank you for your bravery, for your sacrifice, and for your service. Because of the trauma and stress that comes from service, too many of our veterans take their own lives. That's heartbreaking to all of us, and we're going to do everything we can to ensure that veterans live long, healthy, and happy lives. It's why in 2019 I signed legislation which requires the Department of Health Services to compile an annual report on veteran suicides in Arizona. The report will help us decrease the number of veteran suicides by tracking data, understanding historic trends, and analyzing potential risk factors. We know that mental health can also be supported by simple things like having a community, a good job, or educational opportunities. It's why in June my office partnered with the Be Connected network to launch the Faith Network, a statewide faith-based avenue to support Arizona servicemembers, veterans, and their families. Be Connected is an important part of the ecosystem of support we're building for veterans and their families across our state. We've also launched the Veteran Toolkit and the Arizona Roadmap to Veteran Employment, which veterans across Arizona can use to access the resources needed to connect with job opportunities. And to ensure that all our veterans have the proper care and support they need, we've allocated 25 million additional dollars to build a state veteran home in Mojave County, bringing our total number of veteran homes to five around our state. *(Applause)*

I know that some veterans lack the basic needs like a roof over their head or a decent paycheck, and we're not going to let that happen here in Arizona. In May, my partnership with the Department of Housing, we allocated \$500,000 toward combatting homelessness among Arizona's veterans. Under the leadership of Director Tom Simplot, I'm confident that we'll get more of our veterans into safe and decent living conditions. And to cap off this year's legislative session, I signed this year's budget, which puts money back into veterans' pockets by eliminating all income taxes from our veterans' military pensions. *(Applause)*

Well deserved. Well deserved. These heroes have put our country first, and it's time that Arizona puts them first. I want to recognize all the leaders who made this event possible and whose hard work make life better for our veterans. Dennis McDonough, the secretary of Veterans Affairs, welcome Mr. Secretary. Colonel Wanda Wright, the director of the Arizona Department of Veterans Services, Bill Oxford, national commander of The American Legion, Ken Queen, commander of the American Legion Department of Arizona, Angel Juarez, adjutant of the American Legion Department of Arizona, John Altman, chairman of Legislative Affairs for the American Legion Department of Arizona, and I want to also thank all the members of the American Legion Department of Arizona for being here and being involved in this great organization. *(Applause)*

I also want to welcome the president of Hillsdale College, Larry Arnn, to the great state of Arizona. *(Applause)*

Once again, let's take a moment to honor our veterans, our soldiers, and our civilian soldiers. They're one of the many reasons why this is the greatest country on the face of the earth. God bless our troops. God bless you all here today. And God bless the United States of America. Thank you and enjoy Arizona. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Our next speaker is the second woman to be elected mayor of Phoenix. She is a graduate of Harvard University and also earned an MBA at Wharton School of Business. Mayor Kate Gallego is unable to be here this morning, so please turn your attention to the video monitor. *(Applause)*

**Welcome: Honorable Kate Gallego  
Mayor of the City of Phoenix**

I'm Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego, and I'm so honored to welcome the 2021 American Legion conference to our city. We are so glad to have you back. This conference was last here in 2008, and we still talk about what a great time people had as well as projects that began there. So, to the 9,000 American Legion members, welcome home. American Legions in Phoenix have been key to our success as a city. They have produced so many of our American leaders, including in Phoenix, Arizona. They have helped us honor our veterans and our fallen, invest in our young people, and I know personally I have so many positive memories from American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary events. I met one of my best friends at my first ever American Legion Auxiliary membership meeting on the day I got my card, and I'm sure that is true for so many of you. I hope this time will allow you to deepen your friendships and your commitment. Thank you for your service to our country.

Here in Phoenix, we pride ourselves on being a veteran-friendly city, from the businesses you saw at the airport to our great partnership that we moved forward with at the city council last week, working with an American Legion to bring more housing for our veterans, including those who need affordable housing. One of our largest projects during the past year on housing was with U.S. vets to make sure that we have high quality housing here and are spending millions of dollars to be able to do that right here in Phoenix, one of many, many great projects for our veterans that you may get a chance to visit. Please enjoy our wonderful city. We have award-winning restaurants walking distance from where you are, as well as amazing art galleries, beautiful vistas, and we hope that you have

a wonderful time in this veteran-friendly city. Thank you so much for all you have done for our country and for The American Legion. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: A veteran of the U.S. Air Force, our next speaker had a successful 42-year career in information systems technology. He joined The American Legion in 1991 and was elected commander of the Department of Arizona for the 2019-2020 year. He also belongs to the Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Riders. Please welcome the president of The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Arizona, Past Department Commander Ken Queen. *(Applause)*

**Welcome: Kenneth R. Queen, President  
National Convention Corporation of Arizona**

Good afternoon, everyone. You know, it's going to be awfully tough for me to follow the governor and the mayor of Phoenix with their speeches because I think they covered just about everything I might have said. I want to welcome you all to Phoenix, Arizona, and to the 102<sup>nd</sup> National Convention of the American Legion. I bring greetings to you from the Department of Arizona and from The American Legion Convention Commission. It's great to see so many Legionnaires in the audience today as well as Legion Family and our distinguished guests and delegates.

I believe strongly in the American Legion mission, and I believe that by working together as a family, we are stronger together. We achieve a real synergy. Arizona held its department convention at the end of June, and during our preplanning sessions, some of the members expressed concern about whether or not we'd be able to get strong attendance at that convention. As it turned out, we had an excellent attendance, and that's because after 15 months of lockdown at varying degrees, all of us were eager to get out and socialize and work together face to face. That is, in essence, the human experience, and that's what it's all about. As with other departments, the COVID pandemic posed many challenges in Arizona. We could not conduct business as usual, but through it all, we improvised, adapted, and overcame those challenges. In Arizona we conducted food drives. We funded veterans-only food bank events, provided financial assistance to families of deployed National Guardsmen, and held blood drives across the state. We remained relevant. We carried out our mission.

Now here we are in Phoenix, Arizona, for our 102<sup>nd</sup> National Convention, and our work began this past weekend with our delegation activities, but I want you all to remember, when the day is over and your work is done, please don't forget to have some fun.

As you know, a lot of planning and work goes into preparing for and hosting a National Convention, and I would be remiss if I did not recognize some of those who made this happen so successfully. I want to thank the national office staff for all their support. I want to thank Michael Walton, chairman of the National Convention Commission and his committee work. I want to thank Bridget Robinson, director of conventions and meetings planning and her staff for all their planning, scheduling, and coordination efforts. And informing and training our Arizona Convention Committee chairman. Finally, I want to thank our Arizona Convention Commission secretary, our Arizona committee chairmen, our drivers for the national officers, and the dozens of Legionnaires, Auxiliary, and SAL members who volunteered their time and energy to help make this convention a success. We're excited to be here. We're excited to have you all here. Let's all have a productive and successful and fun convention. Thank you all for all you do. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Ladies and gentlemen, the next part is one of my favorite parts of the job. I'd like to call chairman of the American Legion Riders Advisory Committee Mark Clark to the podium so he can help lead the presentation of Legacy Scholarship donations.

...National Vice Commander Feuerbach assumed the Chair.

**Presentation: The American Legion Riders  
Mark Clark, Chairman, American Legion Riders Advisory Committee**

Good afternoon. Commander Oxford, national officers, our dedicated and talented headquarters staff, guests, and fellow Legionnaires and our Legion Family members. I have the privilege of honor of serving as the national chairman of the American Legion Riders, and on behalf of our entire committee, I bring you greetings. I also had the distinction honor of serving as chief road captain on this year's National Legacy Run.

Twenty-nine years ago, at Post 396 in Garden City, Michigan, 19 members who were also motorcycle enthusiasts started the first American Legion Riders program in the nation. Few could imagine what we would become. The American Legion Riders, as you know, is the only program that includes all of the American Legion Family, Legionnaires, American Legion Auxiliary, and the Sons of the American Legion. Today there are approximately 150,000 riders in 2,300-plus chapters, and every department has a Riders program at either the post, district, or department level.

This year's National Legacy Run covered 1,410 miles, starting in Rogers, Arkansas, and ending in Fountain Hills, Arizona. It was a tough and grueling ride because of the temperatures that we had to ride in, but 225 dedicated riders completed their ride with us because we ride for the kids, and it doesn't matter what the weather is or what the temperatures are. It's just what we do. We were privileged to have Commander Oxford with us on the entire route, and I can tell you he hung in there with the best of them, and we were just honored to have him. We were also privileged to have National Auxiliary President Nicole Clapp ride with us on three of the five days. So, to have those two with us made this year's ride something special. We ended this year's Legacy Run with collections of approximately \$705,000 that we've collected so far. *(Applause)*

That includes a unique donation from Virginia Post 93 of \$6,246, for having auctioned off and won the Royal Legion vest that they will maintain for one more year until it's retrieved by the Royal Legion Riders from Great Britain on next year's ride. We'll now show a short video with highlights from this year's Legacy Run and then we will accept donations from the departments who wish to present their donations to National Commander Bill Oxford. ...*The Convention viewed a video. (Applause)*

**Additional Donations to Legacy Fund**

UNIDENTIFIED\_DELEGATE (WV): Commander, from the Department of West Virginia. Riders from four states, West Virginia, Ohio, Maryland, and Virginia got together on a cold morning in May to bring you \$15,851.

DELEGATE PISA (AK): Commander, from the Department of Alaska. Right now, we have a \$1,000 donation, and we have two more checks coming in for another \$8,500.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NEWELL (NJ): Commander Robert Newell, delegation chairman, John Baker, department adjutant, from the great Department of the American Legion of New Jersey. We're glad to donate \$5,000 to the Legacy Fund.

DELEGATE RUIZ (CA): Commander Ray Ruiz, Department of California American Legion Riders president. We gladly donate \$28,000 this year

DELEGATE CLARK (KY): Bill Clark, past director from the Department of Kentucky. We've got \$2,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (GA): Past department commander from the Department of Georgia, we gladly donate \$5,000.

DELEGATE MURPHY (PA): Commander Michael Murphy from the Department of Pennsylvania. With me is my department adjutant Woody Hogan, Alternate National Executive Committee Member Paul Kennedy, Legion Riders chairman from Department

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of Pennsylvania John Hostel, and our immediate Past Department Commander Bob Johns, and we're proud to present a check for \$5,563.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MS): From the Department of Mississippi, with Jerry Allhands as the commander, \$1,500.

DELEGATE FLEMING (FR): John Fleming from China Post 1. We have a \$1,000 donation from the Abbott family and \$3,500 from China Post.

DELEGATE GAMBLER (FL): I'm Gambler from the great state of Florida, from chapter 110, \$5,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NE): It's my pleasure to represent The American Legion Riders of Nebraska. We have a donation here of \$11,485, and of that, \$320 was scraped up from the delegation out there. So, we're proud of you.

DELEGATE PHILLIPS (AR): Good afternoon, Doc Phillips from the great State of Arkansas. On behalf of the Department of Arkansas, we have collected over \$7,000 for this year's Legacy Scholarship Fund, and we're proud of it.

DELEGATE CHAPMAN (NM): Dee Dee Chapman, chapter 10, Post 69, Alameda, New Mexico, \$700.

DELEGATE WALLACE (MI): Commander from the state of Michigan. I'd like to introduce Department Commander Barry Wood, Past Department Commander Larry Money, and I'm Jim Wallace. Michigan is the home of the founding members of the American Legion Riders at Garden City, Michigan, Post 396. This year Larry and I had the best opportunity to enjoy the department's American Legion Riders ride. We traversed the thumb of the great state of Michigan. We proudly collected \$21,714.86 for the Legion Scholarship Fund. Thank you.

DELEGATE KERSEY (TN): Good afternoon. My name is Larry Kersey. I'm the commander from the Department of Tennessee. We are donating \$3,000 to the Legacy Fund. Thank you very much.

DELEGATE HARRIS (NC): Commander Oxford, from the great state of North Carolina, I am Pat HARRIS, and here with me is Commander James Moore and our NEC Jeff Joiner. In January of this year, North Carolina has transmitted a check for \$71,721, and today on behalf of the American Legion Riders of North Carolina, we brought a second check totaling \$23,973 for a grand total of \$95,694.

DELEGATE WEBER (IL): Mr. Commander, from the department of Illinois, I'm Roy Weber. With me is Department Commander Wayne Fisher, Riders Chairman Joe Lampert, and Vice Chairman Roy Smith. This year's total from the Illinois Riders is \$20,600.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN): Mr. Commander, from Boonville American Legion post in Boonville, Indiana, \$500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CO): Mr. Chairman, Mr. Commander, with a huge thanks to Post 209 in Colorado Springs for contributing \$12,064.26 and doubling our total from the last contribution to a total of \$24,892.20 from the colorful state of Colorado.

DELEGATE RIDELL (HI): Fran Ridell, Alternate NEC from Hawaii, aloha. As a Legion Rider on behalf of our 15 members of chapter 17, I proudly present a check for \$1,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): Commander, with me is Department Adjutant Lowry Finley-Jackson and our national vice commander from Missouri, Rich Heigert. From the great state of Missouri, the Show Me State, and the home of President Harry S. Truman, where the buck stops here, the Show Me State is proud to present a check for \$82,100.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MCDERMOTT (NY): Mike McDermott, delegate chairman from the Empire State of New York, Commander Frank Lemarsh, Legion Riders Director Cowboy Morris, \$11,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (KS): Mr. Commander, from the Department of Kansas sixth annual in-state Legacy Run, \$32,517.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NH): Mr. Commander, from the Live Free or Die State of New Hampshire, I have with me Department Commander Oliver Brooks, and from

the 28 members of the charter chapter in Woodsville, New Hampshire, we have a check for \$1,645.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN QUEEN (AZ): Commander Oxford, from the state of Arizona, Ken Queen, the delegation chairman, Arizona donates \$7,000 to the Legacy Fund.

DELEGATE WILSON (OH): Mr. Chairman, Jerry Wilson from the state of Ohio. I want to take a little moment here. My wife and I are celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary here at this convention. I don't know how she did it, but she's only 49. That's what she says. But through American Legion charities of Ohio, we are donating \$10,000 to the fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (LA): Commander Oxford, from the beautiful state of Louisiana and the Big Easy of New Orleans, Post 350 would like to donate \$1,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DVORAK (MN): I'm Mark Dvorak, delegate chair from Minnesota. Here is the committee chair for the Minnesota Legacy Run, Auxiliary member Dr. Jody Hacine.

AUXILIARY MEMBER HACINE (MN): On the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Minnesota American Legion Rider Run, by bringing the Family back together, Minnesota is donating \$174,000.

CHAIRMAN CLARK: Folks, I've been given an unofficial total. I'm not going to give you down to the exact dollar, but right now we're sitting at \$1,150,055. That's kind of a guess, but it's pretty close. Pretty close math. Thank you, everybody. Thank you for your commitment to the kids. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER FEUERBACH: The Royal Canadian Legion is committed to making a difference in the lives of veterans and their families; providing essential services in their communities and remembering the men and women of Canada who sacrificed for their country. The Dominion president was a member of the Third and Fourth Battalions of the Royal Canadian Regiment. He retired from the Beachville Volunteer Fire Department in London, Ontario after 32 years of service. Please welcome Royal Canadian Legion Dominion President Bruce Julian.

**Greetings: Bruce Julian, Dominion President  
The Royal Canadian Legion**

That's going to be a pretty hard act to follow. Good afternoon, comrades, National Commander Oxford, fellow guest speakers, officers, commanders, delegates, conference guests, my comrades all, I'm honored to address The American Legion's conference this year. I'm sure glad they let me in to speak with you today. As you know, the border between Canada and the United States has been closed for quite a while, and I'm happy we finally got the chance to get together to meet face to face. I can only hope they let me out. *(Laughter)*

I want to set the stage with our shared history as allies. We have a longstanding respect for one another that holds true today. Whether during two world wars, Korea, the Gulf, in Afghanistan, or other conflicts, we have joined forces to become comrades. And we're good neighbors too, most of the time. I'm happy The American Legion and the Royal Canadian Legion remain good friends, and I know we will continue to learn from each other and support one another's activities.

Today I want to tell you a bit about what's new in Canada. A few short days ago, we elected a new executive team at the national level. I am proud to take on my new role as dominion president with all the challenges and opportunities it brings and also because of what I saw in our members from all backgrounds during the pandemic. They stepped up and went well above and beyond. I witnessed great distress with branches having to close for good. We lost over 20 of them. Others struggled to stay afloat, but they didn't give up hope.

Our volunteers did whatever they could to continue serving our veterans and their communities. That meant taking phone calls to check on veterans and seniors and also showing up on doorsteps with hot nutritious meals. Branch members also went into

overdrive, thinking of new ways to raise funds to stay operational. What they raised through our poppy campaign each November must go directly into supporting veterans and their dependents and cannot be used to keep the lights on or the bills paid. They came up with initiatives like drive-thru meal services and new GoFundMe accounts, something that we authorized for the first time because of the unprecedented circumstances.

At a national level, we had to reach into our reserves to free up \$3 million to help branches stay afloat. When there was still no end in sight to the lockdown, we redoubled our efforts to receive financial support from the federal government. Something we hadn't done in our almost 100-year history. Our strong advocacy work with the government resulted in a \$14 million support fund for our branches across the country. It literally saved some of them from permanent closure, and we were very grateful to receive such support. Today many of our branches are open again and are getting back on their feet, and we can only hope for a brighter future ahead as the pandemic starts to recede.

This year the Royal Canadian Legion is commemorating the 100th anniversary of the poppy symbol as a symbol of remembrance, and that milestone reminds us how crucial our work has been over the last decades. A French lady named Anna Guerin was influenced, like others, by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae's poem "In Flanders' Fields." She started a charity to rebuild the war-torn regions of France and later presented the poppy concept to the Great War Veterans Association, the Legion's precursor, 100 years ago this past July. Canada was the first of the British empire countries to approve this Inter-Allied poppy idea. To help mark this milestone, Canada Post will issue a special stamp and the Royal Canadian Mint will issue a unique coin. The poppy remains one of the most recognizable symbols in Canada today. It is prevalent during our national poppy campaign, which now distributes close to \$20 million each year to help veterans and their families.

Our ten regions operate independently yet are connected to our headquarters in Ottawa. Collectively, like you, they do a lot. We have 1,380 branches to serve veterans and their families, promote remembrance, and support our communities. We hold local remembrance ceremonies, and we plan and hold Canada's National Remembrance Day ceremony each November in Ottawa.

We organize our country's largest track and field competition for two junior categories of youth. As for programs, I'll mention just a few. Leave the Streets Behind is a national program to help homeless and near homeless veterans. Our service bureau with service officers across the country helps hundreds of veterans get their financial support or filling out applications for benefits. We help and support veterans and their families transition to civilian life. And Buddy Check Coffee holds events so veterans can get together and talk.

We've seen great growth and success with our work in Canada, but it takes members to get it done. We need to attract new members from younger demographics. Before the pandemic hit, we were seeing positive membership growth year over year, and despite the ravages of the pandemic, we continue to welcome new faces in 2020. This year close to 14,000 new members have joined to date, and we hope that number will continue to grow. We need members from all backgrounds, veterans or not. They are the dedicated people who get the work done on the ground.

We are making it easier for people who believe in our mission to join, and we are developing better processes and systems to keep members happy and informed. For example, we turned in-person meetings and conferences into online events. We connected through video conferencing, and for the first time, we have just held our national dominion convention virtually. We also recently launched Operation Harmony with the aim to discuss and combat discrimination in all its forms within the Legion and its membership, wherever it may exist. We want to be inclusive, diverse, and equitable in everything we do. We're in the beginning stages but plan on holding focus groups and discussions with our ethnic communities. It's all about fulfilling our mission.

I've talked about some of our work, but I'll mention one more program we support, which is Operation Vet Build. It was pioneered by a veteran member at a branch in Ontario, who had seen something similar being done here in the states. His program has now grown

to include over 20 locations across the country. Operation Vet Build offers a form of pure support. Veterans can get together in a calming environment to build model planes, tanks, cars, or whatever they wish. The program has received a lot of positive attention and feedback. It's programs like this that are making a difference.

Looking ahead, we also remain focused on our advocacy work, like financial security for ill and injured veterans and their families and improvements to long-term care for veterans and all our seniors. An end to the backlog of veterans waiting to hear about the status of their disability claims, government policies and practices that destigmatize mental illness in the military and the veteran community. Programs that can improve mental health outcomes, including mental health first aid, and national standards for psychiatric service dogs and companion dogs for the Canadian Forces members dealing with PTSD.

The Royal Canadian Legion continues to welcome change. We must. We look forward to maintaining close ties with you, The American Legion, as we approach our second century of operation. We wish you the best as you tackle similar challenges. I hope to speak with many of you while I am here, and maybe you can gather new ideas at this conference. Thank you for having me here today and enjoy the rest of your conference as you build your foundation for the future. Thank you, and may God bless us all. *(Applause)*

**NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER FEUERBACH:** 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 S. Lyon. *(Applause)*

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

Good afternoon. Thank you so much for the kind introduction. I'd also like to thank National Commander Oxford for inviting Student Veterans of America to join you once again, and also, it's great to see our National Adjutant Dan Wheeler. Great to see you so much.

I want to say a special thanks, as I start off, to a couple of the folks in Washington, D.C., in the office that the American Legion maintains, but first I just want to thank each of you for getting me out of Washington, D.C., for a couple of days. I appreciate it. A big thank you to Chanin, John, and Joe. It's always a pleasure to work alongside you to strengthen and improve the GI Bill and the economic opportunities that are available to veterans and our families. I'm also joined here today by SVA's Vice President of Government Affairs Lauren Augustine. Lauren is a combat veteran of Iraq, and we're very thankful that she can be here with us.

Before we continue, we must acknowledge that we're officially out of Afghanistan, and in another few days, we'll honor those that we lost with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attacks on September 11. The past few weeks have been incredibly difficult for me to watch personally, and it's impossible during this time not to reflect on my own service and that of our fellow veterans, active-duty servicemembers, and also the Guard and reserve, our military families, our survivors, our caregivers, our allies and supporters, many of whom are sitting right here with us today in this room.

If you feel anything like I do, I want you to know that you are not alone. You deserve to be listened to, and we are here to support you. In observance of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11, we've partnered with the 9/11 Day of Service organization and others to serve and express volunteerism on the September 11 National Day of Service and remembrance. Our shared goal is to inspire Americans to perform 20 million good deeds in remembrance and in tribute of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11.

There's also a tremendous need coming in the weeks ahead to support, welcome, and help resettle the tens of thousands of Afghan allies and refugees who are coming to

America. Our more than 1,500 SVA chapters and our awesome chapter leaders have a long story of stepping up to support their communities. This time is no different. We are encouraging those who want to get involved and to help with government agencies and vetted nonprofits that are aiding in the resettlement efforts of our refugees and advocacy efforts to partner with fellow organizations like The American Legion as much as possible to support the resettlement effort.

I'd like to share with you that I would not be where I am today without the support of both SVA and The American Legion, and I truly mean that. My great-grandfather served in the Army in World War I, and I named my 19-month-old son after him, not too bad for a Navy veteran to name his son after an Army veteran, but I guess that's a good one. My grandfather and my wife's grandfather both served proudly in World War II, and my father-in-law served proudly in the Marine Corps in Vietnam. All of them have had interactions and benefited from The American Legion just as I have.

Personally, I arrived at recruit training command in Great Lakes to complete Navy basic training on August 5, 2001, the day after my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. I enlisted in a peacetime military, and then I witnessed the events of September 11 on a taped television recording in the days of events when I was at boot camp. We were no longer going to be shining our boots and ironing our uniforms, we would be preparing, as my whole generation would, for war. I deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism and much like most of today's servicemembers, I decided to pursue my education after my time in the service with the GI Bill. I went on to earn an associate degree, my bachelor's degree from a small state school in Tallahassee, Florida, called Florida State. Football season is upon us, so go 'Noles. And then I went on to get a master's degree from Syracuse University, and I'm proud to stand before you today because I will leave this convention and start the fall semester as a Ph.D. student at Syracuse University. *(Cheers and applause)*

Thank you. I'm going to need those cheers. The next five years are going to be hell. But I'm not that dissimilar from those in my generation. When you look at it for post-9/11 veterans, nearly three out of four of us end up on a college campus within seven months after we transition out of the military, making college some of the most common places that you'll find my generation of veterans and making the GI Bill quite literally the front door to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and what it means to be a veteran with access to the benefits and the services that veterans are entitled to.

Today's student veterans get the benefit of the post-9/11 GI Bill, which is now an opportunity for an education without expiration, thanks to our work together with The American Legion on the Forever GI Bill. Without you, The American Legion, and the support that you provide my generation of veterans, there would be no post-9/11 GI Bill. In fact, in the early days of SVA, it was The American Legion that provided us with our first office space in Washington, D.C., and it ushered in the beginning of the then brand-new post-9/11 GI Bill back in 2008. The full name of the Forever GI Bill is, of course, the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, and it's this name that was selected to honor one of our very own Legionnaires, a gentleman with a rich and storied relationship with the Legion and the GI Bill, former National Commander Harry W. Colmery, who is considered the architect of the GI Bill in 1944. Together the Legion, SVA and others have continued Colmery's legacy by continuing to strengthen the GI Bill, most recently by working together to finally close the 90/10 loophole, allowing predatory schools to try to target the hard earned education benefits of veterans. For this generation and all future generations of veterans, I wanted to say thank you to The American Legion.

I'm proud of our achievements, but we're not ready to rest on any laurels. We believe that the GI Bill is the front door to the VA, and the first interaction that many newly transitioned veterans will have with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and historically our work together has been focused squarely on VA's education transition benefits to great success. I'm excited to share with each of you that in focusing on the GI Bill as the front door to the Department of Veterans Affairs, SVA is answering the call for our chapter leaders and student veterans across the globe by expanding our advocacy efforts to speak

to the importance of the access of the whole of VA, specifically VA health care, for student veterans. As a start, we'll be looking to expand VA's integration for the academic leadership program, better known as the vital program. Telehealth options for student veterans, and access to VA vet centers as well as more comprehensive mental health care for ours and every generation of veterans. We're excited for this new chapter in veteran advocacy for Student Veterans of America, and we hope to continue to partner with The American Legion on these new efforts. The voice of the American Legion is and will remain among the most influential for veterans advocacy in Washington, D.C. We're also looking to build on our great work with the forever GI Bill. While this piece of legislation is a culmination of more than 20 individual bills, one component I'd like to focus on is the concerns of science, technology, engineering, and math degrees, as these majors are vital to America's national security.

The Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship offers \$75 million annually to encourage student veterans to not only pursue but complete their STEM degrees, but sadly presently only 24.5% of this scholarship was used last year. Veterans have a high propensity to succeed in STEM majors, but many are discouraged by poor academic advisement, and many others will switch to another major before graduation date due to funding and time issues. This should never happen, and that's why we're joining, together with our partners, on a critical mission to improve the retention and outcomes for student veterans in high demand fields such as STEM, while preventing, or even in some cases reducing need for student debt.

At SVA, we seek to inspire tomorrow's leaders to achieve their greatest personal potential. The COVID-19 pandemic created several unforeseen roadblocks to that mission, but I'm proud to say in the year and a half since the pandemic began, we've been able to protect education benefits and tuition as well as monthly housing allowance. We've been able to support our student veterans as they switched to virtual and hybrid learning environments and continue to deliver on a world class leadership and training programs so that our chapters at the local level can continue to focus on the fellowship and camaraderie that veterans so strongly desire when they separate from active duty.

Like always, we could not have done this work without the support of the American Legion, and in January, we look forward to welcome all of our community back, as well as yours, to our SVA's 14<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference in Orlando, Florida. If you had the opportunity to attend our conference before, it shouldn't surprise you that veterans have some of the highest grade-point averages nationwide, as well as higher graduation rates and success rates post-graduation when compared to traditional students who have never served in the military. With the right support, student veterans and military-affiliated students exceed all expectations, and together with the Legion, SVA can continue to bust the myths that veterans are charity cases, that we're broken or perhaps not even smart enough to go to college, let alone succeed after graduation. In fact, the truth is quite the opposite.

I personally am a proud member of the American Legion, but I didn't join The American Legion until three years ago. A lot of people have asked me, well, why hadn't you joined sooner. My answer is actually pretty simple. Up to that point, no one had asked me to join yet. Therefore, I encourage you to get involved with an SVA chapter that's closest to your Legion post back home. Welcome my generation into the good work of The American Legion and in your communities, and never be afraid to ask a younger veteran to join the Legion. We want to continue to serve when we take off the cloth of our nation, and The American Legion, in my opinion, is still one of the best places to continue to serve as a veteran.

I want to thank you for your support and welcoming us here today to be with you in person. It is pretty amazing to be at something in person. So, thanks for pulling it off, American Legion. We pride ourselves on being at Student Veterans of America an inclusive organization. We're all veterans, regardless of gender, who you love, or the era of your service, are welcomed with open arms and equal opportunity to continue to serve.

I wanted to share with you, just a quick personal anecdote, talking about The American Legion. Our Vice President of Student Affairs Lauren Augustine is sitting in the first row, who by the way traveled all the way here to be at this American Legion convention eight months pregnant with what's going to be a beautiful baby girl. So, if we could give it up to Lauren. *(Applause)*

More than that, she's an Army veteran who served a combat tour in Iraq and is not yet a member of the American Legion. Not acceptable. So just backstage, we were with your executive director of the D.C. office, and Chanin asked Lauren to serve. She will not be leaving Phoenix, Arizona, without becoming a member of our American Legion. So, congratulations and welcome, Lauren. Lauren and I look forward to hearing from the rest of the rest of the speakers throughout this convention and continuing our long and lasting relationship with one of the best veteran organizations in the United States, our American Legion. Thanks for having us here and thanks for supporting our nation's student veterans. I can't wait to speak with some of you throughout the rest of the day. Thank you. *(Applause)*

*...National Commander Oxford resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The American Legion has a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with the organization led by our next guest. USAA, like The American Legion, cares about financial security for families of current military members and of veterans from previous generations. The president and CEO of USAA has more than 30 years of experience at this great company. He is a graduate of Tulane University and completed executive training programs at Harvard, Duke, Stanford and Wharton. Please give a warm American Legion welcome to USAA CEO and President Wayne Peacock. *(Applause)*

**Greetings: Wayne Peacock, President and CEO  
USAA**

Thank you, Commander Oxford, and I am honored by your warm welcome although I'd say this time in Arizona warm welcomes can be a little too hot. Maybe we'll get a little relief here today. Good afternoon to all of you, honorable members of The American Legion, the Legion Auxiliary, and the Sons of The American Legion. I truly appreciate the opportunity to address you on behalf of USAA's 13 million members, but most importantly, our 36,000 passionate and dedicated employees.

There's no finer calling than serving our nation, particularly during times of conflict and tension. So, I wanted to say thank you for your service. Our nation owed you so much. Including all who have served in Afghanistan and all who have supported those who have served there as well. We will never forget your valor and sacrifice. I also want to give a special shout out to the many, many volunteers who devoted their time and talent to organizing and executing this convention. I know it can't be easy during a pandemic, so please join me in a round of applause for everyone who made this possible. *(Applause)*

For more than a century, The American Legion has fulfilled the pledge in the Preamble of your Constitution to inculcate a sense of duty and obligation to the community, the state, and the nation. We see your civic leadership in action in Southington, Connecticut. There the Legionnaires of Kiltonic Post 72 collect donated laptop computers and give them to deploying military members, to patients at Walter Reed, and the residents of Connecticut veteran homes. To date, Post 72 has given away more than 4,000 computers, every one of them a vital connection to loved ones and a much bigger world.

We see your impact in Springfield, Pennsylvania. There Legion Post 227 is hanging Hometown Heroes banners on light posts around town, all to honor the memory of native sons and daughters who made the ultimate sacrifice, either in the military or as first responders.

And we see it in Savage, Minnesota, where Dan Patch Post 643 once again awarded \$14,000 in scholarships this summer to help young high school graduates go to college to

pursue their dreams and to contribute greatly to society. These are just a few of the countless ways the Legion brings life to a commitment to community and to country.

USAA is proud of our deep relationship with you and delighted to sponsor this 102<sup>nd</sup> annual convention. USAA too has been around for almost a century. We're about 300 days away from our 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, so we share a very distinct history with you. In fact, we share 600,000 members in common, and most importantly, we share a deeply felt core value of service to our members, to the broader military community, and the communities where we work and live.

Commander Oxford asked me today to talk about some of the unique ways that USAA stepped up to live that core value of service during the pandemic's challenges, and I'll tell you that everything starts with taking care of our employees. Some of you may remember Major General Joe Robles, who was USAA's CEO, when he spoke at this convention in 2013 and 2014. Joe is one of my mentors, and his philosophy was simple. Take really great care of USAA employees, and they'll take really great care of USAA members. So, when the pandemic hit just a few weeks after I became CEO, in fact, I tell folks that I got 19 days of grace before the pandemic became a reality, I really stepped up and drew on that advice from Joe.

To prevent COVID from spreading at work, we moved 30,000 of our employees to work from home in just nine days, and then we gave them a lot of reassurances. We covered the cost of COVID-related testing and medical care. We gave them three extra weeks of emergency paid time off to deal with their own COVID-related issues or those of their family members. And we set up drive-through distribution for meals for our employees to take home because we recalled that so many restaurants and stores closed their doors at that time.

You know what, it turns out that General Robles was right. Our team members paid it forward by going above and beyond to deliver for our members. Team USAA rallied to create some financial breathing room for more than 1 million of our member families. We deferred payments on credit cards and loans. We offered special payment arrangements on their insurance premiums, and we waived nonsufficient funds charges and other fees. And then we covered the cost of COVID testing and care under our Medicare supplement insurance, and when auto accident claims dropped because people weren't driving, we responded by putting money back into our members' pockets. In all, we returned \$1 billion to our auto policyholders through three rounds of special dividends at a time where I know every dollar mattered for many of them. (*Applause*)

As we helped our members, they showed us how much it meant to them. I will tell you I and we have received countless notes, e-mails, and survey responses thanking and praising our frontline representatives. We stand head and shoulders above all of our competitors in almost every independent measure of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Nine times out of ten, our members give us an "A" when they grade their interactions with us. I would say it's the envy of the financial services industry. But for me, nine out of ten is not enough. We strive to be ten of ten on a go forward basis.

So, we're investing billions of dollars right now to become even more efficient and more responsive. We're modernizing our processes and technology to improve our experiences for you, to update our products, and to make sure that our teammates, our people are at their best every day. Serving our members also means supporting other organizations that fight for them. Over the years, we've invested tens of millions of dollars into mission-aligned causes, causes such as ending veteran homelessness, supporting veteran run businesses, and sponsoring Memorial Day programs and education just to name a few. But when needs intensified last year, so did our support. USAA and the USAA Foundation committed close to \$90 million to advance pandemic-related relief, education, civic bridge-building, and other vital goals, and members of our employee Team USAA have backed that up by giving another \$15 million from their own pockets since the beginning of 2020. They've also invested thousands of their hours just as you do in volunteering through remote and direct service in their own home communities.

I'd say it's in our DNA at USAA to step up in challenging times. Each time we respond to a disaster, it reinforces a lesson that our military members and military veteran employees learn through uniform. When times are tough, we pull through by pulling together. And at no time is that more true than today as we respond to Hurricane Ida and we position our teams to be able to respond and support the over 1 million people that are in the path of that storm and especially the folks in southern Louisiana, who will suffer and are suffering greatly from the impact from Ida.

That's a lesson for our country, I think, in this time of division and challenge, and I would say The American Legion, the Auxiliary, and the Sons of The American Legion can once again, like they've done for a century, provide the leadership that our nation sorely needs. By demonstrating the power of coming together in something larger than any one of us by ourselves. You have a noble legacy as veterans strengthening America. From the diamonds of American Legion baseball to the gatherings of Boys State and Girls State to your role as champions of our veterans and their interests, USAA is honored to support you in setting such a civic example and to join you in supporting the strengthening of America, strengthening our armed forces and our veterans.

And finally, we are honored by each one of you who trusts USAA to help achieve financial security. I would say, just as you heard from Jason, if you haven't had a chance to tell your friends about how great USAA is, they're probably just waiting for you to make that ask of them. So please help us out along the way. But lastly, I just want to say to everyone out here today, God bless you and God bless America. (*Applause*).

**Presentation: National Society of the Sons of American Revolution**

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER LIEBENOW: Commander, I am honored to present to you an award on behalf of David Lee Wright, Esq., Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, President General, who unfortunately could not be with us here today. The citation reads: Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, presented to James W. Oxford, national commander of The American Legion, the Distinguished Patriot Award in recognition of your support to youth education, patriotism, citizenship and assistance to war-time veterans and families. David Lee Wright, president general, N.S.S.A.R. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, the next order of business is a letter of greetings from the Korean Veterans Association.

**Greetings: General (Ret.) Kim Jin-ho, Chairman  
Korean Veterans Association**

*ANNOUNCER: Dear National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford, thank you very much for your letter on July 15 inviting me to The American Legion's 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. I had a valuable opportunity to attend the 100<sup>th</sup> National Convention in Minneapolis in 2018 and made a congratulatory speech. Let me inform you that I have fond memories of being able to feel the great history of The American Legion through the event. I know that it is a great honor be able to attend such an important event and I'm very sorry, however, that I had to RSVP on July 15 saying I could not accept the invitation due to the impact of the Corona pandemic. It is very regretful that I couldn't make it as I was looking forward to seeing each other during your tenure. Please allow me to wish you all the very best for the 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Convention. I respect you as national commander for your outstanding leadership and The American Legion greatly elevating its leadership in leading The American Legion and greatly elevating its status during a difficult time due to the worldwide spread of COVID-19. I wish The American*

*Legion all the best and hope you and your family stay healthy. Sincerely yours, Retired General Kim Jin-ho, chairman of the Korean Veterans Association.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Our next order of business is video greetings from the minister of the Veterans Affairs Council of the Republic of China.

**Greetings: General (Ret.) Feng Shih-Kaun, Minister  
Veterans Affairs Council, Republic of China**

Good morning, National Commander Oxford and distinguished guests. I am minister of the Veterans Affairs Council, Republic of China, and a more than 40 years Air Force veteran. Many thanks to National Commander Oxford's sincere invitation. Due to the restrictions on international travel on the COVID-19 pandemic, which put me unable to participate in this event. On behalf of the Veterans Affairs Council and all veterans from Taiwan, I would like to express our sincere blessing through this video.

The Republic of China and The American Legion have a very profound history of interaction. As early as August 30, 1954, the first lady, Madam Chiang, was invited to attend and give a speech at The American Legion's annual convention held in Washington, D.C. In 2019, President Tsai once again delivered a remark at the annual convention in Indianapolis, Indiana. Through video clips pre-recorded highlight the long-term friendship between VAC and AL thoroughly. When COVID-19 was raging last year with the widespread shortage of face masks, Taiwan's representative office in the United States managed to present 250,000 surgical masks just in time to Americans.

When National Commander Oxford and his delegation visited VAC two years ago, we exchanged our views on promoting our bilateral interaction to a higher level to achieve this goal. VAC will assign coordinators to Washington, D.C., to work towards this goal from next year. As stated above, I think we can keep working on the following directions.

First, since VAC owns a comprehensive and advanced international level veteran hospital system, we may consider cooperation and interaction between our veteran hospital system to provide higher quality and preferential services and exchanges. Second, VAC welcomes you to visit Taiwan to understand how we take care of our veterans. We keep our long-term friendship based upon the shared common values. They are freedom, democracy, peace, human rights, and international justice. U.S. military has been working so hard for this noble value, whether during World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War in the last century, or even the Global War on Terrorism in this century.

Taiwan's location in the middle of the first island chain poses a unique strategic position. We will do our best to enhance the security, peace, and economy in the region. In the early morning of June 6 this year, U.S. Air Force C-17 carried three cross-party U.S. senators to Taiwan in a whirlwind manner. They are Democratic Senator Tammy Duckworth, Republican Senator Dan Sullivan, and Democratic Senator Chris Coons respectively. I very much admire Senator Duckworth's dedication to her country, whether she was on the battlefield, serving as assistant secretary of VA, or a member of Congress. Her speech emphasized that we are friends. We cherish our partnership helping each other in need is what friends are. She also said that, as Taiwan faces the challenges brought by the pandemic, she understood Taiwan's urgent needs. At the beginning of the COVID-19 last year, Taiwan also donated medical supplies to the United States. Therefore, she wanted to thank Taiwan and contribute 750,000 doses of vaccine to Taiwan on behalf of all Americans. What she said has deeply touched me. Thank you very much for your sincere value to Taiwan. Both Senator Coons and Sullivan also says the United States' support for Taiwan's prosperity, democracy, and security remains solid. At the same time, they will continue to promote legislation to consolidate the Taiwan-U.S. relationship.

I want to thank you for your support for Taiwan from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for your extremely high level of strategic thinking and the adoption of resolutions each year to express support for us. The strategic relationship between Taiwan and the United

States has made considerable progress recently. For example, the U.S. Congress passed the Taiwan Travel Act and the Asian Reassurance Initiative Act in 2018. The Taiwan Alliance International Protection and Enhancement Initiative Act passed in 2019. The Taiwan Assurance Act in 2020. These acts are all critical and profoundly affect the security and stability of Taiwan and the Asia-Pacific region. I believe that the continuous attention from all of you to Taiwan benefits to the stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region. Taiwan also will continue to fulfill our responsibilities to maintain our security.

Finally, I look forward to the ending of the COVID-19 and the early lifting of the global travel restrictions. I sincerely welcome you to visit Taiwan and get to know how we take good care of our veterans by combining veterans hospitals and veterans homes as an integrated pyramid service system. I wish the 102<sup>nd</sup> National Convention of The American Legion a complete success, and good health and well-being to all of you. Thank you. *(Applause) ...The Convention viewed a video. (Applause)*

### **National Commander's Report to Convention**

**James W. "Bill" Oxford, North Carolina, National Commander**

American Legion Family, delegates and guests. After the year that we just experienced, it is fitting that we meet in the city named for a mythical bird. Though America was never in ashes, Phoenix is where our National Convention, after a two-year absence, has risen. The truth is, our organization and the nation that we love so much, have faced challenges during this pandemic that most of us have never experienced in our lifetimes. Tremendous challenges require tremendous response, and the American Legion Family has proven that it was up to the task. From setting up supply and relief centers to conducting virtual job fairs, posts and departments continued to do what the American Legion Family has always done. Serve our communities and our country. With thousands of posts performing outstanding services in their communities, in spite of COVID, most will go unrecognized. But praise and attention isn't what motivates most Legionnaires. You see: It's the inner satisfaction that we get when we live up to our motto "Veterans Strengthening America."

In racing terms, I do not know how many more laps we have to go until we finally defeat this pandemic and the variants. I do know that week-after-week this year, the phrase "Ladies & Gentlemen, Start Your Engines" has taken on a special meaning. The #48 American Legion INDYCAR has been driven by a past Indy 500 winner and by one of racing's all-time greats. It's also been driven by someone who has led the NTT INDYCAR Series for most of this season. Alex Palou. But that is what the Chip Ganassi team brings to the table, experience and respect. It kind of reminds me of a certain veterans organization. That bears the name American Legion. But it brings attention to issues that impact all veterans, families and young people who benefit from our programs and our services. It races for all the posts that stood up while society shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic. I truly believe that we are well past the 400 mile-point of this 500-mile national health emergency, which has already taken more than 600,000 American lives. As soon as the vaccines became available, we have encouraged people to take them. Many American Legion posts have become vaccination sites. It's just another example of "Veterans Strengthening America." Even those who haven't been infected with COVID-19 have been impacted health-wise. A recent survey revealed that 61 percent of American adults reported a weight gain. I did. *(Laughter)*

Fortunately, The American Legion has about a hundred solutions for this weight gain. If you haven't registered for the 100 Miles for Hope, please do so. We've still got time. It still is not too late to support a great program and to get in shape. Lose a little weight. Get healthier. Nobody says that you should stop exercising when this year's campaign, that's September 6, just a couple of days from now. There are 55 departments represented at this convention. Think of all the cumulative weight and cardiovascular diseases that could be prevented and general health benefits that would occur if we can convince the majority of

our Legion Family members and friends to join us in this 100 Miles for Hope challenge. You don't have to run a marathon. If you visit our website [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) you can see there are probably a thousand different activities that you can choose from. Even riding a motorcycle can count. Besides getting fit, we need to remember and recognize its true purpose. That is to support our Veterans & Children Foundation. That's two of our Pillars, in just one sentence.

In October 2020, your National Executive Committee passed an historic resolution. The NEC called for America to take a new direction in the Global War on Terrorism. We do not believe authorizations for the use of military force should be endless. It's time to end those forever wars. Our hearts ache for the loss of life that has occurred in Afghanistan. We have not seen the safe and orderly evacuation of our fellow Americans, our Afghan allies and their families that we had hoped. We will continue to advocate that safe passage be provided to those who assisted our military during those long deployments. They fought shoulder to shoulder along with our men and women. *(Applause)*

But we also must be willing to support any efforts to strike back hard against those who carried out terrorist attacks on Americans. Preventing future terrorist attacks must remain a priority. To all of America's Afghanistan veterans I say, thank you for your noble and heroic service there. You have kept us safe for 20 years and have made it possible for thousands to flee from the oppressive grip of the Taliban. *(Applause)*

You also brought down the architects of 9/11. We empathize with the emotional toll taken by recent events on our Afghan vets. I had many similar feelings when Saigon fell. Political and diplomatic failures, however, are in no way a reflection of our great military members who have done everything that was asked of them. *(Applause)*

The American Legion asks our senior government leaders to institute a far better evacuation and withdrawal for Iraq. We need to continue expediting special immigration visas for interpreters and their families. We simply cannot and must not abandon our allies. Our Preamble was recently updated to "preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars." This is yet another reason that The American Legion strongly supports the dedication of a national memorial on the Washington Mall for those who fought and sacrificed in the Global War on Terrorism. *(Applause)*

Senator Joni Ernst and Representative Jason Crow, both veterans, one a Republican, the other a Democrat, have sponsored legislation that will finally give the men and women who fought this long war their overdue recognition. As our troops came home, Congress and the White House must ensure that all of their health issues are addressed. The American Legion was instrumental in the awarding of Agent Orange-related benefits to our Vietnam War veterans. But the toxic exposures didn't end there. Water at Camp Lejeune, open-air burn pits, contaminants at a far-off base called K2 and environmental hazards have taken their toll on the health of military members, veterans and families.

Paul Laird was on the cover of the March 2016 issue of the Legion magazine. The Army veteran from Otisfield, Maine, operated a bulldozer in 1977, as he participated in radioactive clean-up at Enewetak Atoll in the Marshall Islands. When he spoke to The American Legion, he had already suffered three bouts of cancer but was denied VA disability compensation because, like others who served in the clean-up operations, they were not actually in the islands when the atomic testing took place. The logic behind these denials is absurd. Do you really think it would be safe to live and work in Chernobyl, even though the accident at the Russian plant occurred years ago? In this case, Paul Laird lost his life on March 20, 2019. He was 62. It's time for Congress to pass the Toxic Exposure in the American Military Act, also known as the TEAM Act. The American Legion fought tirelessly over decades for our Vietnam veterans to receive the benefits that many have died waiting to receive. We must fight just as hard for or even harder for the current generation of heroes.

And I know everybody has heard this. We've all heard young veterans ask us, "What's in it for me, The American Legion? It's a fair question. But I say to them, don't listen to us, watch us. Watch us fight hard for their benefits and well-being. Watch us organize and

operate our children and youth programs. Watch us support and provide temporary financial assistance to families during times of need. Look at the million dollars we provided to Coast Guard families last year. Watch our National Emergency Fund provide a lifeline to victims of natural disasters. Watch us check on veterans and their buddies, not to sign them up as members, but simply say, "We're here. We want to help, we can help. Tell us what we can help with."

Actions matter and I've seen plenty of posts providing extremely vital service to communities across the country that were truly hurting because of the pandemic. But I would be remiss if I did not ask for your prayers and support to the victims of the recent floods, tropical storms, hurricanes that's happening on the East Coast now, but The American Legion always, always looks after its neighbors in need. No one single thing we can do as American Legion members, but there are important things like our Buddy Check. There are many reasons to do a buddy check. Providing information about a VA service or post activity could be one. Simply offering assistance to move garbage cans from the street to the back of the house. A trip to the grocery store. Those are things that our Buddy Check can help with.

But what if the veteran you contacted was contemplating suicide when he or she received your call? You can make a life-or-death difference. You can be the call that convinces that veteran that he is valued and appreciated. You can be the call that convinces her that there is a community of veterans, us, called The American Legion, that cares about her well-being. You can be the person to convince the veteran to call the Crisis Hotline. Memorize the number. 1-800-273-8255 extension one. Memorize it. Put it out there. Put it in your phone. That's 1-800-273-8255, extension one. Last year, more than one active-duty servicemember per day died by suicide. And they're just a part of a group of veterans, 20 of them, per day that took their own lives. These numbers are not just statistics. Each and every one is a national tragedy. The military is working hard to remove all stigmas associated with seeking therapeutic help. The American Legion is embarking on a new suicide prevention program. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin recently said, and we've heard this before, "Mental health is health, period." I couldn't agree more.

We just discussed some of the vital services and programs provided by The American Legion. All great. But it's always been "Service first, membership second." But membership is the foundation upon which our Four Pillars stand and operate. I believe that going into the spring of last year, before COVID, we had the momentum and a great opportunity to reach our goals. But the COVID pandemic changed that plan for the year and most of this year. Response, protection and service, reaching out, became our greatest priorities. It is time once again to make membership a priority. It is not just the foundation for our pillars but it's the foundation for the future of our organization.

Many years ago, the Wall Street Journal ran a headline that stated "The American Legion, once civic and social power is slowly fading away." The article said, "The old members are dying off and the young ones aren't interested." My reaction to that, is happy 50<sup>th</sup> birthday to them. That was published in May of 1971. I don't know if that reporter is still around, but we still are. *(Applause)*

Ladies and gentlemen, America has just been through hell and back. We've lost many members of our American Legion Family to the coronavirus. But like the Phoenix, we are still here, still strong. We haven't risen. We never left. *(Applause)*

Just want to finish with just one other thing, I want to say God bless America and hope you enjoy the rest of the convention. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: At this time I would like to 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**

The 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Convention of The American Legion is hereby called to meet in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31-September 2, 2021. The convention business sessions will be held in the Phoenix Convention Center starting at 8:00 a.m. each day.

**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 ensuing year, amending the national constitution and by-laws, and transacting such other business as may be brought before it.

On Thursday, September 2, 2021, 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 (Article V, Section 3), to wit: "... 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, 2021) 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 capacity as chairman of the National Convention." (Article VII, Section 3) "Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote." (Article V, Section 4) 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 or 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 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 who are not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his/her department.

**National Executive Committee**

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

**Department Officials**

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

**Convention Committee**

Americanism, Convention Committee Joint Meeting  
 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 & Homelessness – One Delegate.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Thank you very much, Mr. Adjutant. I now declare the 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be regularly convened. The Chair now 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**

Commander Oxford, and my fellow delegates: Thirty-eight delegates to the Committee on Credentials and Rules met at 8:30 a.m., August 29, 2021, in the Sheraton, Valley of the Sun Ballroom C-E, 2nd Level. George West (NH) was elected Chairman, and C.W. Sparks (TX) 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 Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion which approved the revised edition of May 10-11, 2017.

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 which is based upon the provisions of Section 3, Article V, of the National Constitution which the National Adjutant just stated in the Call for Convention.

In accordance with the membership report certified to the Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs by the National Adjutant on August 3, 2021, and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 2,047 plus the National Commander for a total of 2,048 delegates to the National Convention allocated as follows:

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Alabama	26	Montana	16
Alaska	13	Nebraska	34
Arizona	45	Nevada	14
Arkansas	17	New Hampshire	21
California	93	New Jersey	45
Colorado	28	New Mexico	16
Connecticut	23	New York	98
Delaware	15	North Carolina	45
Dist. Of Col.	7	North Dakota	18
Florida	124	Ohio	90
France	19	Oklahoma	22
Georgia	47	Oregon	24
Hawaii	9	Pennsylvania	140
Idaho	16	Philippines	7
Illinois	80	Puerto Rico	9
Indiana	77	Rhode Island	10
Iowa	47	South Carolina	30
Kansas	30	South Dakota	24
Kentucky	26	Tennessee	31
Louisiana	24	Texas	70
Maine	23	Utah	13
Maryland	53	Vermont	16
Massachusetts	40	Virginia	53
Mexico	7	Washington	30
Michigan	69	West Virginia	21
Minnesota	73	Wisconsin	58
Mississippi	17	Wyoming	12
Missouri	42		

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.

Thank you, Commander Oxford, for the privilege to make this report. Commander, as 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 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. Thank you. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Any discussion? Hearing none, All in favor say aye. All opposed, say nay. The report of Credentials and Rules is accepted. I'll now entertain a motion to adopt the rules of convention.

FROM THE FLOOR: So moved. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Any discussion? All in favor say aye. Opposed nay. The rules of convention are adopted. The Chair recognizes Myron Kirby of Illinois, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Finance, for the purpose of making a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Finance  
Myron Kirby, Illinois, Chairman**

Forty-One members met at the Sheraton, Phoenix Ballroom, Sections A & B, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor at 9 a.m. on Sunday, August 29, 2021, in Phoenix, Arizona. Robert Bradley (Indiana), Corporate Financial Controller, opened the meeting as staff liaison and informed the

committee that nominations were in order for Chairman and Secretary. Myron D. Kirby (Illinois) was elected chairman, and Carl E. Levi (Tennessee) was elected secretary, by unanimous vote.

Reports were received from Paul Evenson (South Dakota) Chairman of the Marketing Commission, and Walter Ivie (Texas) Chairman of the Media and Communications Commission.

Chairman Kirby reported that the 2020 consolidated financial statements were audited by Crowe LLP who issued an unqualified opinion.

The Chairman then introduced the National Treasurer, Shawn T. Long, CPA (Indiana), who updated the committee on the economy. Treasurer Long completed his report with a recommendation for national per capita to remain \$18.50. Robert Morrell (New York) made a motion to keep dues at \$18.50. The motion was seconded by George Lussier (Virginia) and adopted by unanimous vote.

Chairman Kirby then introduced Robert Bradley (Indiana) to report on the financial position and activities of the National organization.

Secretary Levi then read the resolve clause of Res. 1.

**Resolution No. 1**

**Department: Nebraska**

**Subject: WITHDRAW #48 INDYCAR TEAM SPONSORSHIP**

A motion was made by Paul A. Morin (Massachusetts), seconded by Robert Morrell (New York) to refer to the Finance Commission for further review, which was approved by unanimous vote.

Jack Monahan (Connecticut) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. Robert Skinner (Idaho) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

As being no further business, the meeting recessed at 9:50 a.m.

Being a duly elected delegate to this convention, I move to adopt this Report of Finance as given, commander. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: We have a motion and a second to adopt the Finance report. Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor, please indicate by the usual sign. All opposed? The report of Finance is adopted. Next, we will be accepting donations, first, for the Veterans & Children Foundation, then American Legion Charities and after that the National Emergency Fund.

... *National Vice Commander Liebenow assumed the Chair.*

**Collection of Donations**

DELEGATE HAGGAN (FR): Doug Haggan, along with Past National Commander Jimmie Foster, Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion, FODPAL proudly donates \$500 to the commander's program.

DELEGATE WOODS (ME): Lloyd Woods, from the great state of Maine, representing the past national vice commanders. The club would like to present \$500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: On behalf of the National Association of Sergeants-at-Arms of The American Legion, we proudly present a check for \$1,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KESSNER (IA): Past Department Commander and Delegation Chairman James Kessner, Department of Iowa. Along with three other people, we present a check of \$1,000 to the EF fund. And from a private donation of 550, For a total of \$1,550.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NEWELL (NJ): Robert Newell, delegation chairman, and John Baker, department adjutant, from the department of New Jersey, the Garden State, we proudly present \$5,000 to the commander's fund.

DELEGATE JOHN (PA) Bob John, the immediate past department commander for Pennsylvania, along with our current department commander, Mike Murphy, our

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department adjutant and our Alternate NEC, we are proud to present a check for \$30,617 to the Veterans & Children Foundation.

DELEGATE EIDEN (MN) Commander, Ray Eiden from Falldin Post 555, Minneapolis, Minnesota donates \$100 for the Children's Foundation Fund.

DELEGATE RICKER (MN): My name is Lloyd Ricker with the Minnesota American Legion Foundation. We are very proud that we can donate \$20,000 to the World War I Memorial in Washington D.C., basically to thank the doughboys and the World War I vets that started us. With me today I am fortunate, I have some board members, Bruce Codham. Ryan Hill. Also members of the board are our outgoing delegation chairman, Mark Dvorak; Commander Tom Fernlund. And then we're very fortunate to have with us people that represent us on a national level. Of course, you know Past National Commander Dan Ludwig; NEC Bill Barbknecht and Alternate NEC Peggy Moon.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): Minnesota also donates \$6,000 to the National Emergency Fund

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): Commander, just from passing the hat from our Minnesota delegation, we want to donate \$21 to each of your funds for the National Emergency Fund, The American Legion Children's Fund, and then also the VCF Fund.

DELEGATE BROOKS (NH): Oliver Brooks, department commander of the state of New Hampshire. With me is Department Vice Commander Maurice Anderson. We'd like to donate \$1,000 to the National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GRIGSBY (MO): Commander Oxford, I'm Gary Grigsby, department commander Missouri and also the delegate chair. With me is Mark Clark, the ALR national chair. And the Department of Missouri will be contributing \$342 to the Veterans & Children's Foundation and for the National Emergency Fund, \$2,550.

DELEGATE FRIEND (OH): Roger Friend, immediate past commander from Ohio, with NEF being my project, I'm pleased to present you a check from the Department of Ohio for \$11,879, and Ohio Charities for \$10,000. Totaling \$21,879.

DELEGATE WEBER (OR): Commander Oxford, Don Webber department commander, Rob Liebenow, national vice commander, Past National Commander Charlie Schmidt, NECman Andy Milar and Vice Commander Larry Whitmeyer, representing the Department of Oregon, home of the Sons of The American Legion, we're proud to present \$5,000 to the Veterans & Children's Foundation.

DELEGATE MOMEN (MI): On behalf of Delegation Chairman Barry Wood and myself, Membership Director Brian Momen, the delegation from the department of the great state of Michigan is pleased to present \$500 to the Veterans & Children Foundation.

DELEGATE SCANLON (VT): Tom Scanlon from the Green Mountain State of Vermont. I'm here with our immediate past department commander, who is our delegation chair and our NEC chairman, to present \$1,000 to the National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATE GARY (AZ): From the great state of Arizona, my name is Steve Gary, the past department commander. We're here to make a donation to the Veterans Children's Foundation for a sum of \$3,500. And for the National Emergency Fund, for a sum of \$4,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN (NY): Delegate chairman from the state of New York, with Commander Frank Marsh, we have \$2,000 additional for the Legacy Fund. \$232.50 for Comfort Warrior. \$85 just recently for the NEF, and \$20,760 the NEF. For a total of \$23,077.50.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): Mr. Commander, the Department of New York takes the issues of veterans' mental health, suicide and homelessness very seriously. As such, this year we have allocated \$1.5 million to help battle those causes.

DELEGATE PAJAK (MA): Jodie Pajak, State of Massachusetts, immediate past commander and proud to have served two years with you, along with me I have with me our immediate Commander Tony Diaz and our Department Senior Vice Commander Sally May, and we're proud to donate \$600 to the Emergency Fund.

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DELEGATE MAY (MA): We would also like to donate to the Veterans & Children Foundation, at this time \$745 bringing our total this year to \$21,400.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): Commander, I have a \$100 donation to the Veterans & Children Foundation in memory of former NEC Will McKernan from Middlesex County, New Jersey.

DELEGATE WILSON (OH): Jean Wilson, Department of Ohio, commander and First Vice Commander Bradley Teis. We're here and pleased to say that we're donating \$10,000 to Comfort Warriors. Thank you.

DELEGATE NELSON (MT): Jeff Nelson, past department commander from the state of Montana. On behalf of the Department of Montana, we want to contribute \$2,000 to the National Emergency Fund. Big Sky Country.

DELEGATE CRAIG (CA): I'm Jim Craig, commander of Ronald Reagan Palisades Post 283, California, and it's an honor to give a check for \$10,000 for the national commander project.

DELEGATE O'LEARY (OK): I'm Charlie O'Leary, incoming commander for Department of Oklahoma. And we are donating \$1,509 to the National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATE ASBERRY (GA): I'm Eddie Asberry from the great Department of Georgia, home of Past National Commanders Bob Turner and Dale Burnett. We proudly donate \$5,000 to the NEF in remembrance of Willy Pitts.

DELEGATE FLEMING (FR): I'm John Fleming representing China Post 1. We are donating \$5,000 to the National Emergency Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): Past Department Commander James Kessler, Cindy Young, Ken Rochholz, and Alan Shank honored to present a thousand dollars to the NEF Fund.

DELEGATE ALLHANDS (MS): I'm Jerry Allhands the department commander for the Department of Mississippi, the greatest state in the Union. Y'all come on down to visit us in Mississippi, the weather is great today. We are honored to donate \$590 to the NEF in memory of one of the greatest National Executive Committeemen I've ever known, the late great Robert Gosa.

DELEGATE BOWMAN (MI): Charles Bowman, Department of Michigan, the Department of Michigan donates \$2,000 to the NEF Fund.

DELEGATE MILLER (AZ): Scott Miller, John Ivens Post 42, Grand Canyon, Arizona, \$1,000, National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NEWELL (NJ): Robert Newell, delegation chairman, John Baker, department adjutant from the great department of American Legion of New Jersey, the Great Garden State, presents \$10,000 to the National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATE MURPHY (PA): Michael Murphy from the Department of Pennsylvania. With me is Department Adjutant Woody Hogan and alternate National Executive Committeeman Paul Kennedy. Two checks, one for the National Emergency Fund for \$8,875. And the second check for Operation Comfort Warriors for \$9,877.11.

*...National Commander Oxford resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm a numbers guy. For the National Emergency Fund, in 2020, \$293,244. In 2021, \$341,186. For a grand total of \$634,431.90. For the Veterans & Children Foundation, in 2020, \$844,197. In 2021, \$3,124,390, for a grand total of \$3,968,587.58. And for American Legion Charities, in 2020, \$19,945. For 2021, \$916,899, for a grand total of \$936,844.99. *(Applause)*

All I can say is wow! Thank you all. At this time, I'd like to recognize Past National Commander Rohan and Vince Gaughan.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN: Commander, on behalf of the Veterans & Children Foundation, the president of the foundation Judge Gaughan, and I would like to present you with the 1919 Society Platinum Level medallion and diamond lapel pin to thank you for all of your efforts toward the Veterans & Children Foundation.

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And thank you all for your donations today and into the future and all the work with 100 Miles for Hope. Thank you. *(Applause)*

**Salute to Colors and Recess**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Members of the American Legion Family, would you please stand and join me in a salute to the Flag of our country. One.

*...The delegates rose and saluted the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Two. The time is now 2:48. We stand in recess until 8:30 a.m. tomorrow morning.

*...At 2:48 p.m., Tuesday, August 31, 2021, the 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Convention of The American Legion was recessed to reconvene the following day, September 1, 2021, at 8:30 a.m.*



**PROCEEDINGS**  
**Second Day**

**Wednesday, September 1, 2021**

*...At 8:30 a.m., the members assembled for the second day of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.*

**Call to Order**

**James W. "Bill" Oxford, North Carolina, National Commander**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The Convention will come to order. Sergeant-at-Arms.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**David S. Shore, North Carolina, National Sergeant-at-Arms**

Uncover and join me as we recite the pledge of allegiance to our nation's colors.

*...The Convention recited the Pledge of Allegiance.*

Recover. Hand Salute by the numbers One! *...The Convention saluted the Colors.*  
Two!

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Edward L. Harris of Indiana. Please uncover.

**Invocation**

**Chaplain Edward L. Harris, Indiana, National Chaplain**

Dear God, thank you for this day and thank you for allowing us to be part of this day. Again, dear God, we're here to receive information to take back to our various departments and districts and counties and posts. Help us to receive the information that our commander and adjutant has given their staff for our benefit. Go with them, keep them fresh. All this we ask in Your name. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Please recover. The Convention is now in session. Please take your seats. Before we move to the first speaker, I want to take a moment of personal privilege. We've collected a lot of money in the last two years. In 2020, we collected \$7,732,771. *(Applause)*

In 2021 we've collected \$14,728,029. For a grand total of \$22,460,000 because of y'all. Just thank you, thank you, thank you very much for your generosity and your help in making those numbers possible. *(Applause)*

At this time, I'd like the national vice commanders to join me on stage for the presentation, which will be given by retired Navy Captain Louis Cavaliere of the Chapel of the Four Chaplains Foundation.

**Presentation: Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion**  
**Louis Cavaliere, Chairman of the Board, Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation**

Good morning, everyone. So, I'm joined on stage here by Robert John, the immediate past commander of the Department of Pennsylvania, who will assist me in giving out these awards, but first I give you greetings from Philadelphia and the State of Pennsylvania. The only place in the world where we have a chapel dedicated to four Army chaplains in the middle of a Navy yard, and rightly so because, when the Dorchester went down in 1943,

we had Army and air corps personnel on board, a Navy gun crew, Coast Guard communications crew, and the ship was crewed by merchant seamen, and throw into that mix the four chaplains, and you have a microcosm of what America is all about and what your posts are all about. That microcosm has lived on for 70 years. Yes, we are celebrating our 70<sup>th</sup> year as a foundation in Philadelphia. *(Applause)*.

All this because of the heroic act of four Army chaplains. That's why I'm wearing this poppy in remembrance of them and all of those who went down on the Dorchester and all of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. As we say at the chapel, every day is Memorial Day. But we can't do this without the support from all of you, and because of all of you and because of all of the support that we receive from you and all the posts and all of the Auxiliaries and the Sons and the Riders, we can continue our Legion of Honor program, where we recognize ordinary people who do extraordinary things, and that's what I'm doing here today. We still give out over 400 Legion of Honor awards every year. We also conduct a huge scholarship contest, and because of you, we were able to expand our chaplains training program.

I don't know if you know this, but we train chaplains all over the country, and did you know that 20 years ago, after 9/11, the Chapel of Four Chaplains sent over 40 chaplains to help minister to Ground Zero in New York City, and we will conduct our 9/11 service in two weeks at the chapel in Philadelphia with most of those chaplains present.

Finally, I stand here to thank you because your support has allowed us to grow our most important program, which is our outreach to veterans, so that we can provide the service to alleviate the problems of homelessness, joblessness, substance abuse, and suicide, and that is just a huge problem, but we do what we can. We do what we can, little simple things, so varied, things like getting a Tricare rep to hold office hours in our chapel. Things like having somebody down at the personnel center in St. Louis to get people's military records, so they can get their DD-214 and qualify for veterans' benefits. Things like bringing a Rosie the Riveter back to the Navy yard in Philadelphia, where she worked as a welder during World War II, and for her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday wanted to go back to that dry dock No. 5. Things like arranging for proper military funerals and honors. Things like interacting with families, particularly Gold Star families. The list goes on and on, and I could be here all day and tell you about that, but now we honor service, and we honor service for our outgoing national commander and his staff. It is my pleasure, and I ask you now to please stand as we induct into the Legion of Honor of the Chapel of Four Chaplains, Bill Oxford, Francis MacDonald, David King, Robert Liebenow, Bruce Feuerbach, and Richard Heigert. Well done, gentlemen. Well done to all of you. Keep up the good work and join me now in congratulating the national staff for this well-deserved honor. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

*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 Chapel of the Four Chaplains Foundation Board Chairman Louis Cavaliere. They are being awarded to National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford, National Vice Commander Bruce C. Feuerbach, National Vice Commander David L. King, National Vice Commander Francis J. MacDonald, Jr., National Vice Commander Richard A. Heigert and National Vice Commander Robert D. Liebenow.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Next order of business, The Chair recognizes Robert Newman of Indiana, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Internal Affairs, for the purposes of a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs  
Robert E. Newman, Indiana, Chairman**

At 9:30 am, Sunday, August 29, 2021, the Convention Committee of Internal Affairs, consisting of the two Subcommittees of Other Internal Matters and Membership met in the Valley of the Sun Ballroom C-E, Second Level at the Sheraton for the purpose of electing a Chairman and Secretary for Internal Affairs. Robert E. Newman (IN) was elected Chairman and John W. "Jay" Bowen (CO) 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 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 Committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolutions.

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 recessed at this point subject to call by the chairman if required. The Convention Subcommittees met and considered their assigned resolutions as follows:

**Membership Subcommittee  
John W. "Jay" Bowen, Colorado, Chairman**

At 10:30 am, Sunday, August 29, 2021, 41 delegates assigned to the Convention Subcommittee Membership met in the Valley of the Sun Ballroom C-E, Second Level of the Sheraton. John W. "Jay" Bowen (CO) was elected Chairman and Gene Ormandy, Jr. (NY) was elected Secretary.

Program updates that were provided include 2020-2021 membership year, post development/district revitalization and training updates.

The committee considered three resolutions and their dispositions are as follows:

**Other Internal Matters Subcommittee  
Robert E. Newman, Indiana, Chairman**

At 10:00 am, Sunday, August 29, 2021, 39 delegates assigned to the Convention Subcommittee on Other Internal Matters met in Valley of the Sun Ballroom C-E, Second Level at the Sheraton. Robert E. Newman (IN) was elected Chairman and John F. Debisschop, III (CT) was elected Secretary. The committee considered 10 resolutions and their dispositions are as follows:

**Referred to the Membership & Post Activities Committee**

**Resolution No. 3 (CO): Verification Of Information For Online Renewals**  
**Resolution No. 5 (CO): Mandatory Fields In Online Membership Application**  
**Resolution No. 16 (VA): Bronze Brigade Membership Incentive Award**

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**Referred to the Internal Affairs Commission**

**Resolution No. 2 (NE): Names Of Merchant Marines To Be Added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial**

**Resolution No. 9 (CA): Name A United States Navy Ship In Honor Of Telesforo Trinidad**

**Resolution No. 14 (OR): Reaffirm Support For The Preamble To The Constitution Of The American Legion**

**Received And Recorded**

**Resolution No. 18 (MI): Endorsement Of Brett E. Holt For National Commander**

**Resolution No. 27 (IA): Endorsement Of Michael Monserud For National Vice Commander Of The Sons Of The American Legion**

**Rejected**

**Resolution No. 6 (CA): Titles For The American Legion Riders**

**Resolution No. 17 (VA): Establish Council On Fitness, Wellness And Health Living.**

**Resolution No. 23 (FL): Cost Of American Legion Caps**

**Resolution No. 26 (NM): Add Legion Riders Category To The National History Contest**

**Resolution No. 29 (OH): Four Chaplains Exhibit At The National Veterans Memorial And Museum**

At this time, the 2021 National American Legion College selectees will be displayed on the screens. After convention, each department will receive written correspondence on the selections. 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 OXFORD: Any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor, say aye. Any opposed, nay. 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. Bad officers dominate news coverage, while good officers are often not given their due recognition. These next two awards are given to first responders who represent the best of the best.

Our 2021 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year has been a police officer for 16 years. He is a sergeant on the gang unit of the Omaha, Nebraska Police Department. In 2020, he led his crew in the recovery of more than 80 firearms, the arrest of over 150 felons and 275 misdemeanor and traffic offenses, and the recovery of more than \$750,000 worth of narcotics. Just as important, he and his colleagues obtained sporting equipment, built basketball courts and arranged shopping and social events as youth alternatives to gang activity. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm round of applause to our Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, Daniel Martin. (*Applause*)

*ANNOUNCER: This is to certify that The American Legion has bestowed the title of National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year upon Daniel Martin for outstanding selfless service over and above normal duties through heroic acts, community service and professional achievement thereby exemplifying the meaning of the phrase: America's Finest. You reflect great credit upon yourself, the Omaha, Nebraska Police Department and law enforcement officers everywhere.*

**2021 National Law Enforcement Officer of Year**  
**Daniel Martin, Omaha Police Department, Omaha, Nebraska**

Wow, thank you, guys. I'm honored and humbled to accept this award. And I'm honestly a little bit in shock. After 17 years as a law enforcement officer, I can honestly say nothing shocks me anymore. I wouldn't be here today without the support of my family, who's sitting out in the front row here. My crew mates, my squad mates, who are like family to me, and my command, and the citizens of Omaha that I get to serve. But I'll be honest for a second here, standing in this room at this podium in front of all of you, veterans of the armed forces, veterans of combat and war, I feel a little undeserving of this honor. I'm sincerely grateful for your service. I'm certain it comes with many sacrifices, and I thank you and your family each and every day.

Although the last few years have been a little rough for law enforcement with the loud noise, the media hype, social media and 24-hour bad news cycle, it's nothing in comparison to what the men and women sitting in front of me have had to endure. I can't express to you enough my sincere gratitude. Please, God bless our veterans, our current troops, and our first responders. Thank you very much for this honor. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Few acts require greater bravery than entering a blazing building. Imagine the fortitude that it requires to serve as a fireman for 56 years. The man that we are honoring today has done that and more. He served in the U.S. Army in Vietnam, where he earned a Bronze Star. And yes, he is a proud member of American Legion Post 174 in Gallitzin, Pennsylvania. A certified instructor with the Gallitzin Volunteer Fire Department, he has used his extensive experience to teach the art of firefighting to many of his colleagues. He is a past president of the Cambria County Volunteer Firemen's Association. Please welcome our 2021 National Firefighter of the Year, Robert Nagle. *(Applause)*

**2021 National Firefighter of Year**  
**Robert Nagle, Gallitzin Volunteer Fire Department, Gallitzin, Pennsylvania**

Good morning, veterans. I would like to thank all of you veterans for your service. I'd like to thank National Commander Bill Oxford, his staff, his officers, and all those who do everything to make this a great organization. I'd also like to thank R. Ray Lenz. He is a past commander of the State of Pennsylvania, and he recommended me for this award. He's a good friend of mine. My home department is Gallitzin, Station 71. I'd like to remember past chief Don Miller, chief Jim Nagle, all the officers and members of the department who have helped me and supported me in all my endeavors. They are brothers in arms with me, and they are my friends.

Today I feel very sad when I see the news of all the fires out west, in the south and the east all the flooding that is going on. Recently, our emergency service personnel are being taxed to their limit, and they are out there doing their best to help in all areas of the country right now. They do so without asking for anything. Don't ask for thank yous, but it's their job, and they continue to do it, and they do it 24 hours a day, as long as it takes to finish the job. Also, I would like to remember 9/11 is coming up shortly. The New York City Fire Department lost 343 firefighters plus police officers and Port Authority officers also passed away in that terrible day. Those men and firefighters do what most people don't. They ran into a building when others run out. They never shirked their duty. Many knew that on that day there was going to be loss of life, but they went and continued to do their duties. They are brothers in arms, and I will always remember them. As a fire department, we always say we will never forget.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family, my wife and my children, for everything that they've done for me. They allowed me to pursue my passion as a firefighter for 56 years. I'm going on 58. If it wasn't for their help, I wouldn't be able to do what I do today. Also, I

feel very honored to be in the presence of all you veterans. All the veterans in this country. I'm also humbled by the leadership that it takes to keep this organization alive. You are outstanding veterans, and you're outstanding officers, and this organization is an outstanding organization. Thank you very much. Have a fantastic convention. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: This is to certify that The American Legion has bestowed the title of National Firefighter of the Year upon Robert Nagle 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, the Gallitzin, Pennsylvania Volunteer Fire Department and firefighters everywhere.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Our next guest has been awarded several accolades at United Healthcare, including the prestigious Innovation Award. She earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting at the University of Georgia and is a certified public accountant. She is the vice president of National Strategic Partnerships for United Healthcare's Care Modernization and Innovation organization for more than 20 years. Please welcome, Lisa Barrett. *(Applause)*

**Address: Lisa Barrett, National Vice President  
Member Navigation Solutions, United Healthcare**

Thank you, commander. Thank you all for the warm welcome this morning. It's an honor and privilege to speak to you today on behalf of United Healthcare and our alliance with The American Legion. What a wonderful organization this is. Our company appreciates your service to this great nation, and I personally appreciate it as well. I'm really, really excited to be here with you today.

Every one of you, when you served, had a mission, right. Probably more than one mission. But our mission at United Healthcare is to help people live healthier lives and to help make the health system work better for everyone. Those are two very lofty goals, and we strive to achieve those every day in every interaction we have with those whom we're privileged to serve. I'd like to share with you today two areas of focus that excite me personally and keep me going back to work at United Healthcare every day. I get to work on this exciting health-care transformation and social determinants of health every day. So, as I said, the first is social determinants of health. The second is health system transformation. So, I'd like to give you a couple of personal examples about these ideas, and then I'll explain exactly what I mean by social determinants of health and health system transformation.

Now, I'm not a veteran myself, but I am the child of a father who became a Marine at the age of 17. He was one of 11 children growing up in a sharecropper family in rural Georgia, and I think a lot of his siblings served in the military because they wanted to change their lifestyle, if you will. So, I had three uncles who served in World War II. One drove a Higgins boat onto the beach in Normandy. I had another uncle who served in North Africa and in France in World War II, and then as I said, coming back to my dad, so I'm very proud of that heritage that I have coming from a family of those who served. So, my dad, at the age of 17, he joined the Marines. He actually got his GED when he was in the Marines. He trained at Parris Island, and then he was shipped off to mainland China shortly after World War II, and then after he served his tour of duty, he was honorably discharged, and he came back home to Georgia, and he worked for a local company transporting gas. Then he learned a trade, and then he ventured out on his own and started an heating and air conditioning business.

Now, I lived in rural Georgia growing up in the '60s, and I remember as a child watching him in his shop. He used a manual brake to form sheet metal into gutters. That was one of the things that he did in addition to installing heating and air conditioning. But another thing I have, another vivid memory I have was one time when a chainsaw got away

from him, and it sawed his leg all the way down to the bone at the knee joint. What I remember most about that incident is that he never went to the hospital or to the doctor. We couldn't afford hospitals or doctors, and I'm pretty sure we didn't have health insurance. So, he doctored on the wound himself until it finally healed months later. I share that story with you because it's a keen example of how social determinants of health influence a person's health condition and health outcomes. So more about social determinants a little later. Let's shift gears a bit to health system transformation.

My husband and I have seven millennial children. They range in age from mid-20s to early 30s, and three of them are married. So, we're sort of like the Brady Bunch, only bigger. Many of our kids' friends served honorably. Many of them have been deployed to the Middle East because of the age range that they are after graduating high school, and many of those men and women never came home.

The ones who did almost always had a severe case of PTSD. One such Marine veteran that I know is struggling with PTSD, anxiety, depression, and I'm sure other things, maladies of war that I would never even be able to imagine. He's in his early 30s. He struggles to keep a job and a roof over his head. He's trying so hard, but he desperately needs the health system to work with and for him, health system transformation. And then I have a third perspective on the health system and issues that gives me an insight into how much clinicians, doctors, nurses, any clinician want. They want to help provide the best care possible and the most effective care possible, but oftentimes they're strangled by the health-care system itself. You see, my deceased husband was a physician. In fact, he served part of his residency attending to patients at the Carl Hayden VA Hospital just up the road. So, again, a perspective on health system transformation.

So why is United Healthcare focused on social determinants of health. Well, United Healthcare is a health-care company, not just a health insurance company, and here's one of the reasons for our focus. First, social determinants have a bigger influence on health than clinical care. In fact, sixty percent of a person's health is driven by social, behavioral, and environmental factors like education, income level, race, ethnicity. Wow, sixty percent. Sixty percent of your health is determined by what you do and where you are outside of the doctor's office. So just think back to the example of my dad, and you'll see what I mean.

We hear a lot about health disparities and health equity in the news these days. Social and environmental factors drive these health disparities. Environmental factors like access to education, employment, do you smoke, do you live in a building that has asbestos. All of those types of things affect health outcomes. Another reason that we're focused on these is that unmet social needs are associated with a higher degree of utilization and health-care costs. So, studies show that people that report food insecurity or don't have access to transportation are more than two-and-a-half times as likely to report multiple emergency department visits than those who do have access to those things, and they're more than twice as likely to experience a hospital inpatient stay. Wow, so unmet social needs put an extra burden on the health system.

So last year in 2020, United Healthcare screened about 2 million members for health-related social needs, and what we found was that more than one in three of our members reported an unmet social need. That's a third of our membership that we surveyed, and those are just the ones we know about. We also found that our stakeholders, like our employer groups that we insure, our state and federal governments, and even our members want our help with unmet social needs, but most importantly, addressing the social and environmental factors represents our greatest opportunity to help people live healthier lives, and what did I say. That was our mission, right? Helping people live healthier lives.

Now, as you might imagine, COVID has exacerbated these social determinants and the health disparities they cause, so what is United Healthcare doing to address these issues. First, we invested over \$500 million in affordable housing units in underserved communities across the country. Second, to help ease the burden and aid in recovery from the effects of the pandemic, we donated \$12.3 million through our Empowering Health grants to community-based organizations, many of whom are veteran organizations, across

21 states. Third, the United Health Foundation has also donated \$1.5 million to Feeding America, which is the network of member food banks, and we did that because of the troubles that they were experiencing as a result of the COVID pandemic. We also have invested \$1 million into Meals on Wheels America to support local programs that address the immediate needs and ongoing needs of our vulnerable senior population. We've partnered with local community-based organizations to distribute more than 47 million meals since 2018.

Now, as proud as I am to be a part of an organization that invests in vulnerable communities by providing food, providing housing, why should any of this matter to you as an American Legion member. Because veteran status is an important social determinant of health. So, think of it somewhat like gender or race. It's a part of who you are, right? The part of you that has had a military life, it stays with you, and it's part of your life story. It affects your view of yourself and your view of the world, and it might impact the kind of health care that you need to consume or where you may receive that care. Knowing that a person served helps us at United Healthcare to better serve the veteran. So how do we do that exactly?

At United Healthcare we are linking United Healthcare veterans with 8,000 or more veteran specific programs and an additional 1,800 veteran spouse programs that provide assistance to those who have these social determinant barriers to health. We've seen great progress in connecting our veteran members with resources to help them live healthier lives. So that's the picture about social determinants of health as well as how we're assisting our veteran members in this area. Now, what about health system transformation?

The United Healthcare vision is to deliver the most affordable coverage, the simplest experience, and the highest quality supported care. Now, how do we intend to deliver on those promises? First, let's talk about the affordable coverage. Affordability is the cornerstone of any sustainable health-care system, and we all know that right now our system is not sustainable because it's not affordable. But we're making health-care coverage more affordable by attempting to take costs out of the system in ways like focusing on new consumer centered product design, which make access to care more easy and affordable. We have supported clinical programs that keep members healthy and reduce the need for costly treatments and hospitalizations. We're reducing our administrative costs and our back-office simplification. We want to guide our members to the best site of service because that's going to help reduce costs and improve the quality of the care that you receive. Trying to negotiate better unit costs with our providers to lower overall costs, and then designing innovative networks focused on premium designed care, providers to those who offer high quality, more efficient services, and the one we all like to talk about, making pharmacy costs more transparent for members.

The second thing we want to do is to offer a simpler experience. I'm sure you've experienced the health-care system. Maybe you've had an issue getting a claim paid or you can't get an appointment at your provider's office. It can be complicated, and we're trying to make coverage easier to use, meeting each person's needs where they want to be met on their terms, not on our terms. We can partner with care providers to make it simpler for them to work with us and to care for the health of their patients. So, we're doing that by bringing care to the member through easier to access telehealth options and home health services that guide members to the right provider. Investing in digital tools and virtual care plans. Connecting different points in the system through a tool that we have called Point of Care Assist so that the information flows better through the system. It enables patients to receive much of the care they need in the comfort and safety of their own home by providing digital access to therapies that support both physical and behavioral health. Third, we want to offer high quality supportive care. We're transforming the way care is delivered, supporting members at every step in their health-care journey. Powered by technology and data and analytics capabilities, we can enable the delivery of better health outcomes while also reducing the overall cost of care.

There are many ways that we can do this. As I mentioned previously, we're expanding provider relationships that reward for value, broadening our view of health care, and investing in these areas like affordable housing and food security. Combining data and technology to promote the use of high-quality providers, improving quality of our provider network and care for our members, and then focusing on complex and special needs cases, providing a human touch, advocating for our members at every step of the journey with programs we have such as Advocate For Me and Navigate For Me. Again, these are lofty goals we've set for our company to transform the health system, but, again, what does that have to do with our alliance with The American Legion?

For me, it's simple. We both have a common goal and a common mission to take care of veterans by providing holistic care. The Legion is not just about shared fellowship between members. It's also about passionate advocacy for veterans' well-being and lifting each other up when there might be adversity. We all know that veterans have unique health-care needs that go beyond routine care. Maybe they have a physical challenge related to their service, such as a traumatic brain injury, vision loss, hearing loss, a spinal cord injury. I'm going to go back to my dad again. He didn't have a spinal cord injury when he served in the military, but when he was in his 50s, he had a motorcycle accident that left him a quadriplegic, and the fact that he had served in the Marines allowed him to be cared for at the veterans hospital in Augusta, Georgia, and I will forever be grateful for that great care that he received there. And that's just one example. It may also mean that veterans have mental health conditions and needs, like substance use disorder, PTSD, depression.

So, caring for veterans may also require all these wraparound services I talk about that help address all of their needs, not just their physical needs. United Healthcare and The American Legion are working together on our common mission to provide holistic care to veterans. I believe our corporate alliance will strengthen us in addressing all of a veteran's health and in transforming the health system for veterans. When veterans are properly supported, it's a testament to their value and an acknowledgement of their commitment to the service of their country. Increasing and simplifying access to care and essential support services may help these servicemen and women, no matter how they served, achieve lasting wellness, and that is really the end game, lasting wellness. I want to thank you for your time and attention today. God bless you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The Chair recognizes Vincent James Troiola of New York, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation, for the purposes a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Legislation  
Vincent James Troiola, New York, Chairman**

Good morning, Commander Oxford, Adjutant Wheeler, Past National Commanders, distinguished guests, Legionnaires and friends. I am honored to stand before you on the stage of the 102<sup>nd</sup> National Convention.

The National Convention Committee on Legislation met on Sunday, August 29, 2021 at the Phoenix Convention Center, South Building, Exhibition Hall G. There were 40 delegates to the Committee present and 5 guests in attendance.

Following the preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the Chairman and Secretary were duly elected. I, James Troiola, a delegate from the Department of New York, was elected Chairman following a motion from Robert Hensley, a delegate from the Department of Tennessee. Bernard Stegmüller, a delegate from Illinois, was elected Secretary following a motion from Richard Perry, a delegate from the Department of Arizona. There was no new business to discuss. The Legislation Convention Committee received no resolutions for consideration. A motion by Al Richards, a delegate from the Department of Wisconsin, was initiated to authorize the Chairman and Secretary

to make technical corrections to the Committee Report, as necessary and appropriate. This motion was unanimously approved and adopted by the Legislative Convention Committee.

A motion by Melvin Smullen, a delegate from the Department of Maryland, was initiated 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 Oxford, as a duly authorized Delegate to this Convention from the Department of New York, I move for the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I have a motion and second to adopt the report. Any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor, say aye. Any opposed nay. The report of Legislation is adopted.

Our next speaker has been actively working to serve the military and veterans community for more than a decade. She raises awareness of the VA loan through financial briefings to servicemembers across the country. She has also been married to a retired Army soldier for more than 20 years. Please welcome, vice president from Veterans United Home Loans, Pam Swan. (*Applause*)

**Address: Pam Swan, Vice President  
Military Relations and Business Development, Veterans United Home Loans**

Good morning. Thank you all for being here today. I do want to correct the gentleman this morning introducing me. I'm much older than that. I've been married to my military husband for 34 years this year. So, what that means, and I tell everybody that I speak to, is that I'm very old. Thank you so much for having me here today. I'm honored to be here today representing Veterans United Home Loans.

As the largest VA purchase lender, our mission is to help Veterans use their hard-earned benefits to achieve the American Dream. As a military spouse, my husband is a retired Army Sergeant First Class, I know how important those benefits are to military families. That's why I'm so proud to be here with you today. My husband has been in the Legion since the Gulf War. I've been active in the Legion Auxiliary for many years. There are a lot of fantastic service organizations out there. For more than a century, though, The American Legion has been and continues to be the gold standard. The Legion was the first veterans organization to understand that the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood that unite us were not forged in a single war or period of service, but through generations. I'm sure many of you here today belong to the same chapters as their parents, their grandparents, and their children.

My father-in-law, Jack Swan, was a U.S. Navy veteran of World War II and a lifetime Legionnaire. He was especially proud of having served as the commander of Legion Post No. 23 in Watseka, Illinois. Every year, he would stand on the same corner raising money for the Legion and Legion programs on Poppy Day. When my husband, and I would come home with our family on leave, he would stand on that same corner with his father. It was always such a special memory for our family. We wouldn't have it without the Legion.

The American Legion is a lot of things to a lot of people. For young people, programs like Boys and Girls State and American Legion Baseball are their first opportunities to take concepts like teamwork and civic responsibility and turn them into meaningful action. For servicemembers, the Legion is a support system. In the past 20 years, especially, Legionnaires have been fixtures at deployments, redeployments and funerals. They have also been the staunchest advocates for our servicemembers on Capitol Hill. For veterans, The American Legion is home. It's a way they can continue to serve and bond with their brothers and sisters. It is a way to continue the mission of advocacy for their fellow veterans and ensures our nation lives up to its promises to our veterans.

I can't imagine a world without the Legion. How different would all of our lives be? Without the Legion, there would be no GI Bill. The GI Bill fundamentally changed

America. It put veterans on a path to success. It greatly expanded the reach and importance of the VA, transforming it from an organization with a limited mission to one that stands side-by-side with veterans throughout their lives. For many veterans, that path includes homeownership. Since the creation of the VA Home Loan program in the original GI Bill, the VA Loan has been utilized more than, get this, 25 million times. Just last year, for the first time ever, veterans used their VA benefits over 1 million times. For families like mine, and I'm sure many of yours out in the audience, the GI Bill has been the cornerstone of our success. It has been life changing. Now multiply my family, your family by 25 million, and you can now begin to see the Legion's impact and importance. While I've got a platform here, I want to say thank you to The American Legion. Thank you to all of you in the audience. Thank you for your role in creating and protecting the GI Bill for generations of American veterans and their families.

Not all the work the Legion has done has been as well-known or as instantly impactful as the GI Bill. For decades, Legionnaires have worked tirelessly to bring the invisible wounds of war into the light. When the Legion was formed, what we recognize now as PTSD was called shell shock and later combat fatigue. Thanks to the advocacy of brave veterans who understood before others that such conditions were not a moral failure or sign of weakness, but a treatable medical issue. While there is still a long way to go in the fight to understand PTSD and to end veteran suicides, today's servicemembers have resources that we couldn't have imagined in 1919.

I'll bet just about everyone in this room has either served in an overseas combat zone or has a loved one who has. We all know deployments add stressors to already stressful lives. Veterans are just like everyone else. They have the same obligations, the same rough patches in interpersonal relationships, and the same financial hardships. For many veterans, the hardest part of leaving the military or even just coming back from a deployment is the loss of community and purpose. My husband has told me about the focus and the sense of mission you have overseas. When you come back home, life in a garrison environment is tough. For Guardsmen and reservists, who are often dropped back into their lives as if they were never gone, it can present unique challenges. That's when The American Legion is needed most, and it always rises to the occasion. For over a century, the Legion has used its platform to enhance the lives of our veterans, their families, and our military.

Every year, the Legion works to protect and expand hard-earned and well-deserved benefits. The Legion also utilizes its massive platform to educate on veteran benefits, encourage Buddy Checks, and promote many other resources, its own, the VA's, and those of other organizations, to help veterans get through difficult times with their heads held high and their health intact. That's why me, my husband, and now my employer, Veterans United Home Loans, are so proud to be a part of the Legion.

When Veterans United began in 2002, our founders quickly realized that to serve a values-based organization like the U.S. military, we need to be a values-based organization. Our mission is to help veterans use their VA Home Loan benefit to get their hard-earned piece of the American Dream. We're the biggest VA purchase lender in the nation because our primary goal is to help veterans and their families come home. Our values to deliver results with integrity, to be passionate about our work, and to enhance lives every day inform every decision we make at Veterans United. That's why we set up the Veterans United Foundation, which is completely funded by our employees and our company.

In ten years, Veterans United Foundation donations and partnerships have changed the lives of countless veterans. As a responsible corporate citizen, Veterans United Home Loans works closely with a number of great organizations. Last year, we launched our Make It Mean More campaign, which paid off the homes of 11 outstanding veterans. The reason I am here today on behalf of Veterans United is to talk about our relationship with The American Legion. Earlier this year, The American Legion and Veterans United Home Loans formally announced our partnership to keep faith with our veterans through expanded veteran suicide prevention efforts. We pledged \$2 million to build on the great work the Legion is already doing. *(Applause)*

Thank you very much. This will allow the Legion to expand programs and opportunities for Legionnaires. It will increase opportunities for peer support training. It will help distribute important mental health and wellness tools and resources through The American Legion's infrastructure. In other words, it will save lives. Without the Legion's advocacy over the years, without Legionnaires bravely taking stands to address mental health issues that can lead to suicidal thoughts, this program wouldn't exist. This program couldn't exist.

The men and women who fought in the world wars, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and other campaigns had to be the ones to stand up and say, "It's not just okay to ask for help, it's your duty to yourself and your families and each other." To many of us have lost loved ones to suicide. Usually, the warning signs are difficult to see. Too often, they aren't even evident until after the act and even then, they're hard to spot. We must continue that work by lifting up our brothers and sisters who are struggling. We must continue to fight back against those who would stigmatize invisible wounds. We must continue to devote our resources to care for those who have borne the battle. We owe it to them. We owe it to each other. Thank you for inviting me to share some time with you today. *(Applause)*

On behalf of Veterans United, I can't tell you how proud I am of this partnership, and how excited I am for the work we are doing together to help our veterans. God bless you. God bless America. And God bless The American Legion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: That relationship is worth two million bucks to the American Legion, wow. At this time, I'd like to call on past National Commander Brett Reistad to present the plaque of appreciation to past national commander and National Convention Corporation President of Indiana James W. Koutz, for the outstanding job that Indiana did in hosting the 2019 Convention in Indianapolis.

**Presentation: Plaque to the City of Indianapolis  
Brett Reistad, Virginia, Past National Commander**

Good morning, everyone. It is my distinct privilege and pleasure to present to Past National Commander James Koutz, president of the Department of Indiana Convention Corporation, this beautiful plaque for the city of Indianapolis for their support for an outstanding 101<sup>st</sup> National Convention. *(Applause)*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Thank you very much, Past Commander Brett. We were glad to have all of you in Indianapolis in 2019 and hope you had a great convention there. We think we put on a great convention for you all. Let me say that I'm just the president of the convention corporation. The people that did all the work were the people in Indiana. We had great help from all the Legionnaires and the Legion Family from the Department of Indiana, and you can't hold a convention without the national staff, convention staff, because they're the ones that really take care of you. So, I want to say thank you. Thanks for coming to Indianapolis. We think we had a great convention. Come back soon. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, our next speaker has 30 years of highly successful leadership experience in diverse and large organizations. He has a passion for building cohesive, mission-oriented teams while coaching and developing future leaders. He is the senior vice president of North American Field Operations with Philips Corporation. Please welcome Jeff DuLillo.

**Address: Jeff DuLillo, Senior Vice President  
North American Field Operation, Philips**

Good morning. As the commander said, I'm senior vice president for Field Operations at Philips North America, Philips Healthcare Company, that has a deep partnership with

the Veterans Administration and a longstanding commitment to serving our veterans for nearly 50 years. As I'm here with you today, I feel like we're just getting started. Where's Tennessee in the audience? Can I get a shout out for Tennessee? I think I'm your newest American Legion member. *(Cheers and applause)*

The Volunteer State, I love it. It's truly an honor to be with you here today in Phoenix. For 102 years, The American Legion has advocated for our veterans and their families, our military, our communities. I thank you so much for the work that you've done for over a century to take care of our veterans. Thank you. *(Applause)*

I think in modern times The American Legion has also become an amazing partner in health-care delivery, helping us to understand the needs of our troops so that we develop technologies that best serve our heroes and their families in our communities. I am humbled to be here with you today to discuss how we're going to continue to work to connect you with the health care that you deserve. Of nearly 9 million veterans under the VA system, half of them are enrolled from rural locations, many of you I've met here are part of those rural locations. And sometimes aging with multi-modal or chronic conditions. I think about whether we're seeking to be close to family or just find peace in nature, for whatever reason you should choose to live remotely, that should not limit your access to great health care at any age. Yet still, unfortunately, this is often our reality. So, providing care to rural veterans has been a passion of Philips, but it also presents real delivery challenges because we have few physical practices, hospitals, networks, geographic barriers, and of course long distances. Broadband and Internet availability, which I've heard several times this week while I've been here. So, I believe it's up to us in the health-care industry to provide leadership with the VA to help overcome these obstacles.

At Philips, we believe our veterans have earned that access to care no matter where you live. As a company, we feel empowered and responsible to enable and protect the right to care for all of you, so many hero veterans we've served for so many years. And we want to bring it closer to you by extending care solutions, telehealth solutions beyond the hospital and into the very communities where our veterans live, not making them go to where the doctors and hospitals are.

Now, I want to tell you about Philips for a second. See, we're on a mission too, a mission to improve the lives of 2.5 million people this decade. That's a high aspiration and a key part of reaching that goal in the United States specifically we've made is to reach and care for our veterans. Today we're honored to provide one-third of all medical solutions across the Veterans Health Administration enterprise, from patient monitoring to diagnostic imaging and treatment, to now co-developing new technology-enabled solutions that improve close to home access for all veterans. And like the military, our mission is quite personal to us. I served as an infantry officer in the Army, and while I am no longer part of the military, I can assure you it is still very much a part of me. In fact, Philips has more than 850 military veterans serving that same mission and passion to improve access to health care for veterans, and I'm proud of the many ways Philips is working closely with the Veterans Administration. *(Applause)*

Yeah, 850. We started a veterans group at Philips two years ago with 35. We're at 850. I'm very proud of the VA and The American Legion partnerships that are making some of the things I'm about to share with you a reality. We aspire to make health care to all veterans available, relevant, and personal. By making it available, great care accessible to all, by extending the reach of doctors via telehealth solutions. You've heard about that a few times today. We're partnering to build the world's largest telehealth critical care system across the VA's 1,800 ICU beds and more than 1,700 care sites nationally. We're doing that today.

We're making it relevant. Philips has been working with the Veterans Administration and the VFW, as well as The American Legion, in what we call Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations or more commonly known as the ATLAS program. Local pods within American Legion posts that offer telehealth appointments with doctors through a secure VA video connect. These pods, or in some cases rooms, are equipped with patient monitoring solutions, wireless technology, and sensing devices to allow veterans to receive

clinical services such as primary care or, most importantly, mental health counseling, at these more convenient, more secure, more private, and closer to home settings through The American Legion. I'm very excited for that. We're also piloting ten of these ATLAS sites across the country. There's one here just north of Phoenix to test this innovative access to care, including some of the most remote areas of the country. We specifically targeted remote areas so that you have the least possible burden to get the best possible consultation for your specific needs and get it much closer to home.

And we're making it personal. As veterans ourselves, Philips understands the importance of serving our own. We're bringing technology to individual military members and veterans through our partnership largely with VA and DoD and The American Legion to develop and pilot noninvasive wearable monitoring technologies, much like this watch I have here, to provide individual tailored early warning of possible infections or changes to condition, and you can do it anywhere. A project we accelerated greatly during the pandemic. And with our vital signs solutions, those of you in The American Legion and the headquarters should be familiar with this. Our partnership with The American Legion to deliver easy and fast, intuitive, touchless self-health screening, one that doesn't require you to touch anything or any surface to create an initial screening of your bios. These are just a few of the types of innovations that will provide veterans both proactive and low risk health monitoring while allowing you to do what I call the freedom of maneuver you deserve. You've earned it.

I said it a few times. As a military man, I love a mission. Philips is on a mission to make great accessible to all of our veterans, available, relevant, and personal, and we're committed to enabling this access no matter where you live by bringing the care to you. Thank you all for your service to our nation. It is my highest honor to get to serve our veterans in this way, to get to serve you. Thank you. *(Applause)*

#### **Presentation: Certificate of Appreciation**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Putting on an event such as this requires many months, and even a few years, of advance work. Negotiations and contracts need to occur long before the opening gavel. The 2020 National Convention was cancelled because of the coronavirus but the efforts and flexibility of the National Convention Corporation of Kentucky have not gone unnoticed. I'd like to ask Bill Moore, Convention Corporation President, to join me for a presentation.

CONVENTION CORPORATION PRESIDENT MOORE (KY): I'm a person of few words. First of all, it reminds me of a distinguished poet from Massachusetts, John Greenleaf Whittier. "Of all sad words of tongue and pen, these are the things that might have been."

Evidently, it wasn't meant to be in Louisville, but I want to thank, and this award belongs to the Convention Corporation of the Department of Kentucky, the American Legion Family of the Department of Kentucky, the officials of the city of Louisville, and the government of Kentucky. And last and certainly not least, to Bridget Robinson and Mike Walton. Kentucky enjoyed it. We were ready to go. But like the great poet said, these were not to be. But I can promise you one thing, in the year 2026 Kentucky will be ready, and we'll welcome you to the bluegrass. We will see you, and I'm going to use my strong feelings and be a Kentuckian. We'll see you all in Louisville in 2026! This belongs to everyone except the person standing here. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Certificate of appreciation, presented to Convention Corporation of Kentucky, in recognition of your professionalism and "Adapt and Overcome" attitude during the National Convention 2020 uncertainty. Well done and thank you. Attest, James W. "Bill" Oxford, national commander and Daniel S. Wheeler, national adjutant.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Preventing veteran suicide has been our top calling as Legionnaires and continues to be. Our next speaker has been actively involved in that issue. He served as a Marine Corps scout sniper and is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is currently Colorado's veteran suicide prevention coordinator. Please welcome Matt Wetenkamp. *(Applause)*

**Address: Matt Wetenkamp, Veteran Suicide Prevention Coordinator  
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment**

Hello. Thank you. Thank you to Chairman Bozella, the VA&R Commission, with whom I've been working on this issue and have been invited to speak. Special thank you to Joshua Hastings out of the national office. It's been great working with you. I appreciate you as a colleague and a peer and as a friend now, so thank you for everything. Thank you to my wife for being here today. Appreciate you. But largely thank you to The American Legion. You all may be aware The American Legion passed a resolution recently on lethal means safety. The language in it, I thought, was brilliant. It was perfect. It hit all of the important points, including at the very end talking about the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment and its importance. So, thank you to The American Legion for stepping up, seeing a need, and passing that resolution.

A brief bit about my background because I think it's relevant to this conversation. I'm a lifelong gun owner. I grew up hunting. My family owned guns. A lot of hunting and shooting. I joined the Marine Corps out of high school. September 11, 2000, was my first day in the Marines. I was a scout sniper deployed to Iraq in 2003 as part of the initial invasion, been a gun owner ever since. I spent the last ten years or so working in veterans services: Nonprofits, universities, community outreach and partnerships, but most specifically recently, mental health. That's when I really started diving in and how I think about mental health and guns and suicide really started to change.

Several years ago, a group was founding in Colorado. You may have heard of it, it's a national initiative between the VA and SAMSA called the Governor's Challenge to prevent suicide among servicemembers, veterans, and their families. The Colorado team was among the initial cohort of states to join. We were laying out in the early days of this what our key priority areas would be. There were going to be four, and pretty much everybody in the room agreed that lethal means safety should be one of those four. There's always one, and there was one in the room who said, you all have lost your minds. You want us to commit twenty-five percent of our attention to convincing veterans to give up their guns. You're on your own with that one.

I had been through all the trainings, mind you. At this point, I'd been in veterans services for years, working with wounded warriors, assist training, you name it, the list is long, and every single one of them mentioned guns and lethal means safety. So, I had all the info. I'd been given all the information. It was there, but it didn't register. It hadn't stuck with me. So, I was in that meeting thinking things and saying things like guns are just the tool. They're the end result. We need to focus upstream, the mental health problems before they ever get to reaching to the gun, which is true and there's a lot of great work going on, on that front, but I didn't have that full picture of the guns and suicide piece.

Thankfully, they ignored me and kept lethal means safety as one of the four priority areas. And fast forward, I had left that position, and the director of Colorado's Office of Suicide Prevention, the same person who reached out to me to join the Governor's Challenge earlier, now reached out to me to offer me a job. She said, we've got this project in Colorado. It's called the Gun Shop Project. It's a lethal means safety initiative reaching out to communities. I thought to myself, why is she reaching out to me. Does she not remember what I said about guns and suicide?

I was reminded recently that she also remembered something I said that day, which anybody who knows me is not surprised because I say this all the time, but I strive to go through life with a mind that's open to being changed. If I'm wrong, if I'm that one person

at the table, everybody else gets it and I'm wrong, I don't want to be that person. What am I missing? Show me. So, I took the job, and I jumped in, and it was all the same trainings. It was all the same information. So, I had to dig deeper and kind of look at it not as a clinician or a public health official or a researcher because I'm none of those things. I'm just a veteran, a gun owner. So, I had to look at it from the veteran and gun owner perspective. And here's what I found out that changed my mind.

The first thing that jumped out at me was this thought that, well, if it's not a gun today, it will be something else tomorrow or next week or next month. Someone who's suicidal and wants to die, they'll find a way eventually, and I found out that might not be true. What we see is that the vast majority of suicides happen within one day of a personal crisis. This is whether that person has had prior issues, mental health issues or not. One day of a personal crisis, job loss, dire medical diagnosis, divorce papers, loss of a child or close family member. Studies of suicide attempt survivors show that a very, very short window of time typically passes before first contemplating suicide and actually attempting. Every study shows this. Eighty percent, less than eight hours. Sixty percent, less than one hour. The number that always stuck with me was one study showed that fifty percent of these suicide attempt survivors reported considering for less than ten minutes. Fifty percent thought about it for less than ten minutes of what was likely the worst point in their lives.

It made me think about all the work I've been in outreach. How many times over the years have I heard a veteran say to me, I don't need therapy. I don't need counseling. I don't need mental health services. I'm not crazy. My life just sucks. And that's what I've learned is that that is mental health issues. Getting served with divorce papers two weeks after you got fired, that's not just life sucks, that's mental health issues that we have resources for. Many of you in the audience are those resources. We are those resources to each other.

The second thing I'd learned is that the availability and accessibility and lethality of the various means of attempting available to someone in that window really matter. Studies of these survivors show that someone is more likely to delay attempting or even not attempt at all if the perceived lethality of the means available to them aren't high enough. There's a small study, mostly young men, who all survived attempting suicide with a firearm. I always like how they describe that study, right? It's a bit redundant, small study of people who attempted suicide with a firearm. It's going to be small. I met one of those people recently actually. His name is Eric. He lives in a rural corner of northwest Colorado, and he years ago attempted suicide with a shotgun. And he bears the scars to prove it. But he uses those scars, he takes those scars out into the community now to talk to fellow gun owners about how grateful he is to be alive.

Again, focusing on the availability and the accessibility actually works, and we've seen it for close to a century now all over the world. It doesn't matter what the society is or what the means, the most lethal means of suicide for that given community, it doesn't matter what it is. It could be town gas, over the counter medications, illicit drugs across Europe, pesticides in various Asian countries, even most recently with the Israeli defense force and firearms, we see that whatever the means are that are killing that society's friends, families, and neighbors more than anything else, we focus on that, and we talk about it, and we care about the availability and the accessibility of it to the people among us who are vulnerable, lives are saved and the suicide numbers start to drop.

And the third point to all this that ties it together for me is that word I keep using. It's the lethality piece. I always want to pause here when we talk about lethality and think about lethality of firearms. We know that attempts with a firearm are ninety percent fatal or higher. We take all the other attempts together, combined they're fatal around five percent of the time. I lost a friend of mine in high school to a suicide attempt that was not with a firearm. His suicide attempt was not five percent fatal. I just want to acknowledge that, to those that we have lost that were not to firearms, there's ways of looking at all of these numbers, and so a moment to acknowledge all of those that have been lost.

But the point remains that firearms are a lethal tool. We know that as gun owners, as veterans. I'm always perplexed by this. I do outreach in the community, and someone might

say to me, why are you focusing on guns? Leave us alone. Are you out talking to people about cars and ropes and belts and razor blades and caring about who has that? Well, no, I'm not. Are you carrying a rope in your holster? Guns are a tool. We as veterans know that better than anybody. They're a very, very lethal tool, designed for a very specific job, and they're good at it. You'll often see in this topic things like a firearm in the house or a firearm ownership is an increased risk for suicide or indicates an increased risk for suicide. I know as a gun owner, and I've heard other gun owners say, you're saying we're crazy? Gun owners are crazy, that we're more likely to die by suicide? Well, no. Again, it can happen to anyone.

These are the life crises that are thrown at us and our friends, family, and neighbors every single day. It can happen to anyone. The difference is that, when gun owners hit that lowest point, when they're in that tiny window of crisis, when it feels like the world is closing in and there are no options, there's no way out, how is this going to end other than if I end it? When they reach out, they have the ninety percent lethal tool at arm's reach. It's an impulsive act at our lowest point. So, we know all this, right? So, we've got the small window of crisis, the lethality of firearms, all these things we know, it paints the picture, well, what can we do then? What is our role as veterans, as gun owners?

Well, another thing you see in firearms research is that in every single study of gun owners, the number one reason for owning a gun, it's about protection. Protection of my community, protection of myself and others, protection of my family. It's always about protection. We are protectors. Recently in my home state of Colorado in Boulder, mass shooting at a grocery store. How many gun owners do you think imagine themselves to be just the sort of person who, if they were in the grocery store that day armed, maybe only one person would have died? How many people in this room feel that way? If you were in that grocery store that day armed, perhaps only the shooter would have died? I feel that way about myself. I can say that with confidence. But if I imagine myself to be the sort of person who would draw my weapon in defense of others, what else will I do in defense?

Another point to all this, I mentioned it at the beginning, it's that term, gun control. Too often I feel the people talking about lethal means safety work in public health. They work for the government. They have a lot of initials after their names or maybe just one initial, but it's the wrong one. So, it complicates everything on this topic of guns. And so to those who look at this topic of lethal means safety and guns and suicide and say, you know what, I know what that is. That's a Trojan horse heading towards gun control, and I want no part of it. Friends, I say to you this is the opposite of that. This is keeping efforts of gun control perhaps at arm's reach. It's saying, yes, red flag laws, ERPO, confiscation, those are technically options, but we're going to keep those there. We've got this as protectors of our community. As gun owners, no one knows better than us the lethality of these tools, and we'll look out for one another.

Imagine a decade from now what would happen if the suicide numbers in this country had plummeted, and it was largely as a result of fewer attempts with firearms. Imagine reading a retrospective in "The New York Times" a decade from now applauding gun owners for standing up and taking the initiative to say this is a problem affecting all of our communities. It's destroying families, and rather than your solutions, we have solutions in our community. So, what does that sound like? What does it feel like? What does it look like? Well, it's hard to say because the solution is always going to be different. Does that household need a gun in it 24/7 because of work? What is available in that community for storage? There are a million different possibilities that arise, but we have to keep those principles in mind. One day, what's within arm's reach? One thing is ninety percent fatal. Everything else, less than ten.

There are a couple ways of framing this that I'll leave you with that have been useful for me over the years, that have motivated me to take action. Now for me, when someone reaches out to me and says, hey, so and so's in trouble, the first thing that comes to my mind is do they have guns? Do they have access to the other guns in the house? Is there somewhere we can keep them for a few days until the dust clears? The first analogy that I

love to share, drinking and driving, how we changed how we think about that and how we talk about that and what is and is not socially acceptable. Imagine yourself closing down a bar with your friend. Late at night you've been there for hours. It's closing time, the lights are turned on, the friend starts to slide off the stool, can't find the keys. What are you reaching for your keys for, friend? You're not driving home. We've been here all night. You can barely stand. Oh, it's fine. I can drive. Walk, take an Uber, anything, please. It's what any sane person would do, right, if you're a protector of your friend?

Now imagine if the bartender leans over the bar and says leave your friend alone. What difference does it make? He could trip on the curb. He's drunk. He could trip on the curb walking home, smash his head, die. The taxi or Uber could get hit by a semi. He can die any way he gets home. What does the means matter? Of course, the means matters.

You're infinitely more likely to survive, and those around you are likely to survive with those other options rather than driving. You are the bartender in this situation. You're the leaders in your communities, post commanders, post leaders, welcoming in the new veteran who just joined. You're the ones who know about who got served with divorce papers and who got fired, whose kids are really sick. We need your leadership in the community. We need you to be the voice of reason as gun owners who can say from the perspective of a gun owner and a protector of the second amendment and gun rights in this country and say let me help. Here's why this matters. You, your problems, and your guns are safe with me until things are better.

So, head home to your communities. Take this with you. Remember how much this matters, that window of crisis. It doesn't have to be grand. You don't have to say it perfect. There is no perfect way to tell somebody I care about you, I'm worried about you, we need you here. Can I hold your guns for a couple days? It's going over to your girlfriend's house because she had a miscarriage two months ago and today her husband told her he wants a divorce. Just go tell her you're thinking about her, see if you can take her gun to your safe for the night. It's going over to the new guy who just joined the post and you find out he's in trouble and he got fired last week and got home today to an emptied out house and divorce papers. It's going over there, knocking on his door, making eye contact and telling him, I'm worried about you. This sucks, but we'll get through it. I've got a lawyer actually for my divorce. I'll connect you with her tomorrow. She's fantastic. I've got to get home to Samantha. It's bedtime, got to be there for bedtime, but I'm not going to be able to sleep tonight knowing you're here alone, empty house, and all those guns here. Can I change the code on your safe? I'll come back tomorrow. We'll get connected with the lawyer. I know, I know, I know, I know you wouldn't, but do it for me. I won't be able to sleep tonight knowing you're here. Just let me change the code. I'll come and do it back tomorrow after we get you connected to the lawyer or come stay at my place.

It doesn't have to be perfect, just have the conversation, reach out. I mentioned mass shooting earlier. Imagine the sort of feeling you would carry with you for the rest of your life knowing you had saved a dozen people by stopping a mass shooting. Could there be any higher moment in one's life than saving that many lives? There's a mass shooting every day of veterans in this country, and we can stop it together, and it doesn't take you drawing your weapon and using it on another human being. All it takes is conversation, an extended hand, and telling those in our communities who are vulnerable that we've got them. Thank you. *(Applause)*

#### **Presentation: Department Membership Awards**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: It is now time for the membership awards. The departments and individuals who will be joining me on stage today are being recognized today for their outstanding membership efforts for the 2020–2021 membership year. Membership is the lifeblood of our organization. Our members define who we are; determine what we stand for; and communicate to our nation in one loud, powerful, resolute voice about what the United States can achieve with unity and courage.

We are The American Legion, made up of veterans, by veterans, and for veterans. We have a solemn responsibility to extend a helping hand and embrace our fellow veterans. Through our friendship and example, they will become aware of who we are and what we do. This past year has truly been a challenging year for membership. We all know that. Through faith, goodness, and the warrior spirit, The American Legion endured. We adapted. We overcame. We served others.

As society re-opens, we must get back to building relationships with our active-duty, reserve and National Guard units. Through Reconnect, American Legion Riders, Operation Comfort Warriors, the Family Support Network, and the Veterans & Children Foundation, we have an opportunity to engage communities and fulfill the promises of our Four Pillars.

Since 1919, we have advocated for every veteran regardless of when or where they served. Now, more veterans can call The American Legion home because of the LEGION Act. Recruiting is about growing an organization that is worth belonging to. It is a labor of love. At this time, I would like for all the Gold and Silver Brigade recruiters to please stand up. These men and women recruited over 5,000 members into our organization. *(Applause)*

Thank you on a job well done! Now retention is every bit as important as recruitment. Recruiting brings in fresh talent with bold ideas and tenacious spirit. Retaining that talent is where we develop our future leaders. Retention is about leadership, and it requires leadership. It is about delivering on our promise to care for veterans, their families, and the communities that we live in. When we open our hearts to the communities we serve, when we deliver the programs under our Four Pillars, and when we fulfill the promise of preserving and protecting our great nation for future generations of Americans, our Legionnaires will stay.

This, my fellow Legionnaires, is why personal contact is critical. We have a great message and it must be communicated! That's why in January I asked our posts to conduct a Buddy Check and reach out to every member within our ranks to simply see how they are doing and if there was anything we could do to help. This was first conducted under Commander Reistad around our 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. We conversed with our veterans and their families because it is our sacred responsibility to take care of our fellow veterans. Posts with active and robust Buddy Check programs experienced growth. The Buddy Checks were heard by Legionnaires around the globe, politicians, and community leaders. Men and women in the military knew that The American Legion had their backs and that The American Legion cares.

We need to grow our membership and retain the future leaders of our great American Legion so that your children and their children and their children can truly love and appreciate our magnificent country. Now let's recognize all the departments on stage and a few individuals for their outstanding efforts in membership this year.

*...National Vice Commander MacDonald assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MACDONALD: Before we get started, I would like to recognize the following departments for attaining 100 percent of their membership goal in 2019-2020. These departments not only surpassed their membership goal, but they also received a Culture of Growth shadowbox as well. Please stand and make some noise when I call your department: The Department of Colorado. The Department of Mexico. The Department of Montana. The Department of North Carolina. The Department of the Philippines. The Department of Wyoming. The Department of Utah. *(Applause)*

Three of these departments also received the General Henri Gouraud Trophy for being the first department to attain 100 percent of their membership goal in their respective category. Category IV, Department of North Carolina. Category V, Department of Colorado. Category VI, Department of Utah. *(Applause)*

Now, the first award being presented for the 2021 membership year is the 100 percent membership goal awarded for exceeding their membership. One department exceeded their membership goal for the 2020-2021 membership year. A shadowbox is being presented to the Department of Mexico. Congratulations to the Department of Mexico on exceeding

their membership goal. Considering everything that has gone on this year, this is a great accomplishment. *(Applause)*

Last year, we had four departments meet every target date. They were: Department of Mexico, Department of Montana, Department of North Carolina, and the Department of Wyoming. The Department of Mexico also met every target date this year. A plaque is being presented to them for a job well done.

The next award being presented is the Department Commander of the Year Award. This award is given to any department commander who meets or exceeds their 100 percent goal by the May target date. This award is being presented to Department Commander Milo Vukovich. *(Applause)*

In 2020, we had seven department commanders who met this challenge: Dean Noechel, Colorado. Jeffrey Nelson, Montana. James Moore, Jr., North Carolina. John O'Brien, Philippines. Martha Bigbie, Utah, and Mike Cooke, Wyoming.

The next award being presented is the Culture of Growth Award. This award recognizes departments for their hard work and dedication to growing their departments over the previous year. These are outstanding accomplishments and a testament to the motivation of their members and their ability to implement their strategic plan. By implementing and working the five priorities within the strategic plan, these departments saw their membership grow over the last year. These departments are receiving a Culture of Growth plaque. These awards are being awarded to: Department of Alaska, Commander Hunter Davis; Department of Florida, Commander William Rick Johnson; Department of Mexico, Commander Milo Vukovich and the Department of South Carolina, Commander Walt Richardson. Congratulations, commanders. Your members should take pride in knowing their hard work paid off this year.

The O.L. Bodenhamer Trophy is presented to the department who led The American Legion in traditional membership for the Flag Day report of June 14 and is limited to the 52 departments within the United States, including the Departments of the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. This plaque is being presented to the Department of South Dakota. Last year's winner was the Department of Utah. *(Applause)*

The Henry D. Lindsley Trophy is presented to the department that on March 31 attained the highest percentage of membership over its previous year's membership at that time. This year's plaque is being presented to the Department of Utah. Last year's winner of the trophy was the Department of North Carolina. *(Applause)*

The next presentation is The American Legion Race to the Top award. It is given to district commanders who attain at least 100 percent of the district's assigned membership objective by March 31. This is the most prestigious award a district commander can earn. And as always, this contest is very competitive. The separation between qualifying for the award and the first, second and third place winners at times comes down to just one one-hundredth of a percentage point in some categories. Last year, the following district commanders won this award: Steven Anderson, Utah - Category 1, District 3. Jack "JD" Baker, North Carolina - Category 2, District 25. Devell "Bo" Durham, Jr., North Carolina - Category 3, District 11. Bruce Carl, Florida - Category 4, District 15. Robert Suelter, Florida - Category 5, District 6. *(Applause)*

This year's district commanders are receiving a new cap, polo shirt and a shadowbox plaque for their efforts. And the winners are: James M. Defrehn, South Carolina - Category 1, District 16. James R. Gibson, South Carolina - Category 2, District 13. Johnny D. Castro, Florida - Category 3, District 11. For the second year in a row, Bruce Carl, Florida - Category 4, District 15. Stephen N. Foster, Ohio - Category 5, District 4. *(Applause)*

#### **Presentation: National Membership Recruiter of the Year**

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MACDONALD: Now we are going to present the National Membership 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. In 2020, we had a winner who had won the award previously. David Witucki from the Department of Texas was the National Recruiter of the Year last year. This year we have someone who is a first-time winner. From the Department of Utah, recruiting 359 new members, please join me in recognizing this dedicated Legionnaire and the 2021 National Membership Recruiter of the Year, from Lester Keate American Legion Post 90, Martha A. Bigbie. *(Applause)*

This is but a small token of our appreciation for the job well done. She is receiving a new cap, polo shirt, shadowbox plaque, and a Recruiter of the Year ring. Without a doubt you are an outstanding recruiter, who shares a passion for supporting veterans. Congratulations on a job well done. Would you like to say a few words?

DELEGATE BIGBIE (UT): Just three things. Remember, membership is a team effort. And we should always include the whole Family because we are the Legion, the Auxiliary, SAL and the Legion Riders. I approach the membership in three areas. One, always say hello, thank you for your service to any veteran that you meet. In the conversation that you talk to them, ask them, is there anything I can do for you or help you with. And then eventually, when you get comfortable with them, ask them to join the Legion. Two, the Buddy Checks, greatest thing that ever came down. It allows you to go out and check with each of your members, which you should put it in your agenda to find out not only the veteran but their family. You know, we don't want to forget our family members, because they make our veterans. Three, membership in my areas through your list that you obtain from the department and national. Reach out to them. At the department level, assign them to a post. Make that post, then contact that individual. We don't want them to be forgotten. Thank you for this award. Thank you. *(Applause)*

*...National Commander Oxford resumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The Consolidated Post Report is a summary of what the American Legion posts have accomplished in their communities. It's an opportunity to tell the story of your post in an easy-to-fill-out form. For the past 20 years the average response rate nationally has been about 60 percent. When I testified before Congress in February, only 7,740 posts had submitted their report. In order to increase our response rate, I continued with the challenge to all departments to improve responses from their posts. Even so, this year's response rate decreased 9 percent over last year. Our response rate declined to 62 percent with 7,740 posts reporting out of 12,453. As you can see, there is still plenty of room for improvement. Those department commanders that met my challenge of a 70 percent response rate were Indiana, Florida, Maine, Ohio, California, Wisconsin, Utah, Tennessee, Montana and South Dakota. I think they all deserve a round of applause. *(Applause)*

Now, I have asked to join me on stage today for special recognition those departments that exceeded my challenge and had a response rate of 95 percent or better. At this time, we will present their plaques to the department commanders.

*...National Vice Commander Heigert assumed the Chair.*

#### **Presentation: Consolidated Post Reporting 2019-2021**

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HEIGERT: Last year we had seven departments that achieved their Consolidated Post Reporting goal. And they are: the Department of Idaho, the Department of Maryland, the Department of Montana, the Department of New Mexico, the Department of Oklahoma, the Department of Oregon, and the Department of Florida. *(Applause)*

This year the winner's are: Eugene D. Brown, Department of Idaho; Philip R. Dorsey, Department of Maryland; Gary D. Wooten, Department of Nebraska; Milton B. Johnson, Department of New Mexico; James D. Moore Jr., Department of North Carolina; and William S. Feasenmyer Jr., Department of Virginia.

Once again, congratulations to these six departments that went above and beyond the call of duty. Please don't stop the hard work. We have a long way to go before we get our reporting numbers up. And with your help we will. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*  
*...National Commander Oxford resumed the Chair.*

**Presentation: Certificate of Appreciation**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The gentleman who has served as our national chaplain the past two years has been an articulate spiritual leader. A veteran of both the Korean and Vietnam wars, he retired as an Army master sergeant. He has served as a post, district and department chaplain in Indiana, as well as a district commander. He was given a life membership by Indiana Post 249. He has developed a "Before and After Ceremony" to be conducted at veteran's and Legionnaire's funerals. It is an honor for me to present a certificate of appreciation marking his service as national chaplain to Edward L. Harris, Jr. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Certificate of Appreciation, presented to Edward L. Harris, national chaplain of The American Legion, 2019-2021. Given in recognition of faithful and honorable service to The American Legion. Signed Daniel S. Wheeler, national adjutant. James W. "Bill" Oxford, national commander.*

**Presentation: Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: 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 Florida. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Daniel J. O'Connor Americanism Trophy awarded to the American Legion Department of Florida in recognition of their most outstanding Americanism program presented at the 102<sup>nd</sup> National Convention of the American Legion, Phoenix, Arizona, James W. Bill Oxford, national commander, Richard W. Anderson, chairman, American Legion Americanism Commission.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: At this time, we would like to recognize Richard Anderson of Connecticut, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Americanism, for the purposes of a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Americanism  
 Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut, Chairman**

Thank you, Mr. Commander. Before I offer my report, I'd like to take an opportunity to thank the posts that sponsored the youth champions that we were afforded to see yesterday. To them, thank you so much for your dedication and commitment to the programs. And also to you, each and every delegate out here, I wish to extend my personal congratulations to you for the part that you have played in offering to the well over thousands of youth in our country the opportunity for a betterment in their lives, in their future and in the future of our great country, whether it be through the offering of youth programs or through the many, many scholarships that you're responsible for. Therefore, I give you my report.

At 8:30 a.m., Sunday, August 29, 2021 there were 84 delegates present assigned to the Convention Committee on Americanism, consisting of the two subcommittees of Americanism and Children & Youth, who met in the Phoenix Convention Center, North Building, North Ballroom, Sections 120A-C, 100 Level in Phoenix, Arizona. Roll call was

taken and a quorum declared. 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 regularly moved, seconded and carried that the chairman of the Americanism Convention Committee be authorized to accept the actions of the two subcommittees assigned to Americanism regarding the resolutions assigned to each of 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 upon 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 29, 2021, there were 40 delegates present assigned to the Convention Subcommittee on Children & Youth who met in the Phoenix Convention Center, North Building, North Ballroom, Section 120D, 100 Level in Phoenix, Arizona. Roll call was taken and a quorum declared. Herbert Petit (LA) was elected chairman and Michael Westergren (AR) was elected secretary. The Children & Youth Convention Subcommittee had no resolutions assigned.

**Americanism**  
**Richard Anderson, Connecticut, Chairman**

At 9:00 am, Sunday, August 29, 2021, there were 44 delegates present assigned to the Convention Subcommittee on Americanism who met in the Phoenix Convention Center, North Building, North Ballroom, Sections 120A-C, 100 Level in Phoenix, Arizona. Roll call was taken and a quorum declared. Richard Anderson (CT) was elected chairman and Mark Avis (MA) was elected secretary. The committee considered a total of one resolution with disposition as follows:

**Referred to the Americanism Commission**

**Resolution No. 4 (CO): Flag Code Amendment for Disposal of Unserviceable Flags**

Before I conclude my report, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Americanism staff in Indianapolis, Indiana, and for Director Jill Druskis' guidance and leadership for the fine job they did facing the adversities that we face and the challenges that the COVID pandemic has given us. With that, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Connecticut, I move for the adoption of this report. ...*Second*.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Any discussion? All in favor say aye. Any opposed, say nay. The report of Americanism is adopted. Having completed the adoption

of the Americanism report, it is appropriate to announce the winners of two Americanism awards.

**Presentation: Frank N. Belgrano, Jr., Trophy**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Frank N. 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 Boy Scouts of America program during the 12-month period beginning August 1. This year's winner of the Frank Belgrano, Jr., Trophy is the Department of Missouri *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: 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 of the Ralph T. O'Neil Education Award is the Department of Montana. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: 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 \$18 million has been awarded to nonprofit organizations to assist the children of this country from the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure 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 2020-2021. 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. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: It is now time for me to present the U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award. Udie as 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 the 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, the Child Welfare Foundation and the affiliated Eight and Forty 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 year's prestigious award, 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 2020-2021, in recognition of outstanding support for the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. We thank you.*

**Presentation: Child Welfare Foundation Meritorious Achievement Award**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Next, we will be presenting the Child Welfare Foundation Meritorious Achievement Award for the highest increase in per capita giving for the past program year. The winner of this award is the Department of Nevada. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Meritorious Achievement Award achieving the highest increase in per capita giving for 2020-2021, the American Legion Department of Nevada. 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.*

**Presentation: Child Welfare Foundation Excellence Award**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: We just recognized the department that had the highest 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 during the past year. Again, the winner is the Department of Nevada. *(Applause)*

*ANNOUNCER: Excellence Award, achieving the highest in per capita giving for 2020-2021, the American Legion Department of Nevada. 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 OXFORD: Now I would like to 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**

CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION PRESIDENT BOLAND: Good morning. Commander, on behalf of the board of directors of the Child Welfare Foundation, it is indeed an honor for me to present to you a Child Welfare five-diamond lapel pin. I have two of them for your excellent service for the last two years. I know one would be well-observed on your lapel, and I'm sure Frances would like the other one. The only thing I ask you, don't give it to her for Christmas or her birthday. *(Laughter and applause)*

**Donations to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: At this time, anyone with donations for the Child Welfare Foundation, I will now accept those on stage.

*...National Vice Commander Liebenow assumed the Chair.*

DELEGATE SCANLON (VT): Good morning, Legionnaires. I'm Tom Scanlon, senior vice commander from the Green Mountain State of Vermont. Here with our delegation chair, our immediate past department commander and our NEC representative. We're proud to present a check for \$1,000 for the Child Welfare Foundation.

DELEGATE MORRISON (OH): Jim Morrison, Department of Ohio. With us is Delegation Chairman Roger Friend on behalf of the Department of Ohio Charities, I'm glad to present a check for \$10,000 to the Child Welfare Foundation.

DELEGATE KILE (WV): I'm Bill Kile, chairman of the Southern Bloc Caucus, I'm here to present the commander with two checks. One for \$7,650 for the NEF. And one for \$350 for the national commander's project. Of that \$350, \$20 belongs to the commander because we had to fine him this morning. Thank you.

DELEGATE KEEN (MA): Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department Children and Youth Chair Sandra Keen and accompanied by Past Department Commander Jodie Pajak and Commander Toni Dias. On behalf of Massachusetts, we're giving a check today for \$500, bringing our total to over \$2,000 this year.

DELEGATE WILEY (NH): Good afternoon. Tom Wiley here, department adjutant, temporary. On behalf of the great state of New Hampshire, live free or die, Commander Oxford, the delegation here, which I won't introduce because I'll screw up their names, we wish to present \$1,000 to the Child Welfare Foundation. Thank you very much.

DELEGATE OVERHOLTZ (MI): Sheila Overholtz, assistant sergeant-at-arms, to my left delegate chairperson Mr. Barry Wood, and second vice commander Post 54, Battle Creek, Michigan. We're proud to hand you \$2,000 to the Child Welfare Fund. Thank you.

DELEGATE BEAUREGARD (CT): Good morning, everyone. Commander Dennis Beauregard, Department of Connecticut, presents a thousand dollars to the Child Welfare Foundation.

DELEGATE IOTT (TX): I'm Alan Iott the 20<sup>th</sup> district adjutant with the 20<sup>th</sup> District Vice Commander Danny Moose and 20<sup>th</sup> District Commander John Hafner, on behalf of the mighty 20<sup>th</sup> District, home of the Alamo, and the great state of Texas, we present a check for \$812.30.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE FROM (NE): Good morning. On behalf of the State of Nebraska, go Cornhuskers, I'd like to present you, commander, with a check for \$1,444.42. ...*National Commander Oxford resumed the Chair*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I told you I was a numbers guy. In 2020, donations to the Child Welfare Foundation, \$460,795. In 2021, \$553,478.72 for a grand total for the past two years, \$1,014,273.72. Great work. *(Applause)*

*...The delegation viewed a series of videos.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Ladies and gentlemen, as a reminder, all the videos you're seeing yesterday and today are available on the Legion website. They're downloadable and they're available to be used for meetings, conferences, conventions, anything you might want to use them for.

Two years ago, The American Legion prevailed in one of the most important First Amendment cases in Supreme Court history. Thanks to our friends at the First Liberty Institute, veterans can enjoy their First Amendment freedom as they memorialize their fallen comrades. The award that they are about to present is named in honor of our dearly departed friend, The American Legion's longtime national judge advocate, Philip Onderdonk. With us today to present that award is a brilliant legal mind and the president and CEO of First Liberty Institute, Kelly Shackelford. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Philip Onderdonk Religious Liberty Award  
Kelly Shackelford, President and CEO, First Liberty Institute**

As I stand here, I think back, it was almost 20 years ago that we realized that something was happening in the country, that there were attacks on some of our monuments around the country. First it was the Ten Commandments and different things. And we realized, you know what? There are going to be attacks on our veterans memorials. This is just a sign of what's coming. So, we reached out and we said let's call The American Legion because I can't think of anybody who would be more committed to making sure that those monuments are never disturbed. So, we called. And we got a man by the name of Philip B.

Onderdonk Jr., the national judge advocate. And we told him what we thought was coming. And he agreed. And he said, "You know what? We'll allow you to represent The American Legion to begin filing briefs in the Supreme Court and other courts because we can't allow this to happen to our memorials and our monuments that are honoring those who have given all."

And so that started a process. And before we knew it, we were in court defending the Pledge of Allegiance with The American Legion. And we won that case. And then we were defending "In God We Trust," our national motto with The American Legion. And we won that case. And then the memorials did come under attack. And so, we had the memorial in Mt. Soledad. If you've never been there, I highly encourage you to go see that incredible memorial. It is outside of San Diego in La Jolla. And it was under attack. But what happened at the end of that lawsuit, that memorial, if you go today, is still standing and you can still see that memorial. And then we were in the Mojave Desert having to defend that memorial that was put up in 1934 by World War I veterans who just wanted to put something to remember those who were lost in that war. We went all the way to the Supreme Court in that case. And we won a victory. And that memorial is still standing. But that victory was on technical issues and so the issue was still out there.

And so, two years ago, we went to the Supreme Court, representing The American Legion in defending the Bladensburg Cross. The Bladensburg Cross was put up almost 100 years ago by The American Legion and by mothers who lost their sons in World War I. It was originally on American Legion land. But eventually it was outside of D.C., the government built roads around that and they took over the land for its safety and protection. But they didn't want to disturb the memorial. And then years later the American Humanist Association came along and filed a lawsuit and said, you can't have this monument on government land. And at the Federal Court of Appeals one of the judges said, "Why don't we just cut the arms off the cross; that way nobody will be offended, and we won't have to tear it down." We realized we were going to have some trouble. And so, they ruled 2-1 that after 100 years this memorial was going to be declared unconstitutional. So, we went to the Supreme Court. The result of that is that we had a victory at the United States Supreme Court. And that victory, and it will always read this way if you look in the law books, it's the case of The American Legion versus the American Humanist Association. And out next to it, it says: Win, American Legion. (*Applause*)

And that not only was a win for that Bladensburg Cross, that set a brand new precedent. It's really a landmark victory that all memorials and monuments across our land are now presumptively constitutional and these attacks are over. (*Applause*)

That's a huge change. But unfortunately, that's not the end of the battle. Because we have lots of other cases that we're having to defend that The American Legion is right behind us with. And that is, probably one of the most well-known, is a case we have right now with the Northeast POW/MIA Network, where they had put up a missing man table, like we saw last night at the banquet, a round table with all kinds of symbolism, the rose that's red for the blood that is spilled, the empty chair representing this person who is not there, the glass tipped upside down because they won't be there to drink it.

This missing man table, which is around the country because of the network, one of them was put up in the VA Hospital in New Hampshire. In that you see a little case with the Bible. And that's because many of the missing man tables have a Bible to represent something greater than themselves. And in this case, this was donated. If you look closely at the picture, you can see it says "Herk" on top of the case. The man who donated this bible was in a German prisoner of war camp for almost a year. He said that the bible was what got him through that experience. And so, he wanted to donate his bible for this display about the missing man table. And unfortunately, Herk just passed away recently in the middle of our lawsuit. But what happened is some radicals have filed a lawsuit to say, we want this table taken down. We want this Bible removed. The VA is standing its ground right now, as they should. And we're in that lawsuit representing the Northeast POW/MIA

Network. And we're going to keep fighting this case until at the end we win. But these are the battles that are still coming at us as we speak. *(Applause)*

And so, I would say to you, if you are not already getting the information or want information, you can go at any time, just spell out the words, firstliberty.org. It will have the list of all the military cases, all the different things that are going on, the wins, the ones that are in progress. And you can follow that. And you can even get an e-mail every week as to what's going on. So, feel free to go there and get the information.

But this POW/MIA case, among many others we have right now, is just a reminder that this battle is not over. And so, every year we're so proud to be with The American Legion and to give out a very special award to somebody or some group that is standing for God and country, which is what The American Legion is all about, and standing for our religious freedoms to make a difference. We named this award after Philip B. Onderdonk Jr. who is, of course, the great national judge advocate that we talked to almost 20 years ago. And so, I think it's the greatest award anybody could ever receive, not just because of what it means, but because of what they actually get, one of the coolest rifles you'll ever see. So, watch this video and then at the end I'm going to announce who gets the award this year. ...*The delegation viewed a video.*

We cannot thank Henry enough for donating this rifle every year because they believe in The American Legion and these freedoms that our country was built upon. We want to thank Henry. This year's award winner of the 2021 Philip B. Onderdonk Jr. Award is the Northeast POW/MIA Network for their fight for that missing man table that they're still in the middle of. I think David Ricketts is coming to accept the award. *(Applause)*

DAVID RICKETTS: Thank you, American Legion, First Liberty, Roger, Kelly, Mike and Hiram for all the work you've done with the Northeast POW/MIA Network. I'd like to give a shout out to our Legion posts that help with the table at the Manchester VA, the North Conway Post 95 in New Hampshire. And Bob Jones, Bruce Garry, Paul Martin chose me to come and receive the award for them today.

Bob Jones started the Northeast POW/MIA Network, not only in Meredith, New Hampshire, but also from Post 49 in Fair Haven, Vermont 34 years ago. The 24<sup>th</sup> of August was Bob and Paula's 53<sup>rd</sup> anniversary. They started on the evening of their 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Meredith, New Hampshire, where it is called the Rock. And the table at the Manchester VA is a symbol of what we will stand for forever until all our POWs and MIAs are returned home safely. Thank you and God bless. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: At this time the Chair would like to recognize Daniel J. Seehafer, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education, for the purposes of a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education  
Daniel J. Seehafer, Wisconsin, Chairman**

Good morning, Commander Oxford, national officers, past national commanders, fellow delegates, and, of course, our guests

On Sunday, August 29, 2021, Seventy-Eight (78) members of your Committees on Employment and Veterans' Preference and Veterans' Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness met at 9:00 am at the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown, Encanto, Second Level, Phoenix, Arizona, 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), Director appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Adam Treece and Stuart Lee II (DC), Employment & Education Policy Coordinators for the National Veterans' Employment & Education Commission, acted as staff liaison and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received and elected:

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Convention Committee Daniel J. Seehafer (WI), Chairman  
James C. Fratolillo (MA), Secretary

After the opening business, the following convention committees received nominations and elected:

Employment and Veterans Preference: James C. Fratolillo (MA), Chairman  
Eugene J. O'Grady (NJ), Secretary

Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness: Eric Measles (CA), Chairman  
Geraldine Hines (TX), Secretary

A Veterans' Employment & Education Resolutions Screening Committee met on Friday, August 27, 2021. 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 Daniel J. Seehafer, Chairman of the National Veterans' Employment & Education Commission, and was composed of the following persons:

James Fratolillo (MA)  
Geraldine Hince (TX)  
Eric W. Measles (CA)  
Lloyd H. Woods (ME)

There was one (1) resolution presented for the consideration of this Convention. The following actions on the resolution was taken by the Convention Committees:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment	1
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	0
Referred to the Standing Commission	0
Received and Recorded	0
Rejected	0

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committees' behalf.

A report of action taken on the resolution referred to the Standing National Veterans Employment & Education Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

**Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness Committee  
Approved Resolutions Or Approved With Amendment**

**Resolution No. 12: Housing Options For Homeless Veterans**

**Origin: California**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education  
(As Amended)**

WHEREAS, A total of 37,252 veterans were experiencing homelessness in the United States during January 2020, comprising eight percent of all homeless adults; and

WHEREAS, Finding and recruiting landlords is a significant challenge in getting veterans housed and the demand for housing exceeds supply; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program served more than 77,500 veterans in the year 2020; and

WHEREAS, The SSVF program provides grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives who utilize a shared housing model to house low-income and homeless veterans and families; and

WHEREAS, SSVF's shared housing model allows two or more people to live in permanent rental housing and share costs; and

WHEREAS, Shared housing is an adaptive housing approach to end veteran homelessness; and

WHEREAS, The shared housing model is in line with the concept of veteran homeowners leasing living spaces in their homes to homeless veterans; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021, That The American Legion urges the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to query empty-nest veterans who may be willing to rent out their empty-rooms, and for VA to collaborate with other government organizations and non-government organizations to find outside-the-box and innovative ways to compassionately end veteran homelessness; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs consider veteran homeowners who may be willing to lease living spaces in their residences to homeless veterans as a viable option to end veteran homelessness.**

Commander Oxford, as a duly elected and registered delegate of this convention from the Department of Wisconsin, I move for the adoption of this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: We have a motion and a second. Any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor say aye. Any opposed, say nay. The report of Veterans Employment & Education is adopted.

At this time, The American Legion is 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 Trevor Wilson of Fort Collins, Colorado.

*ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist 2020 Presented to Trevor Wilson, Fort Collins, Colorado, for your outstanding service to the veterans of the state of Colorado. Presented at the 102<sup>nd</sup> National Convention, Phoenix, Arizona, September 1, 2021. (Applause)*

**Presentation: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year Award  
Trevor Wilson, Fort Collins, Colorado**

Thank you all very much. It is a tremendous honor to be here today, to stand before you. I would like to give great thanks to every veteran I've worked with, the homeless individuals, everybody just going through a little bit of a struggle, everyone that's getting back from a deployment and trying to figure out what they're doing for their next step. It would not be possible to be here today without our workforce centers, the great people at Larimer County, everyone we worked with along the way, Volunteers of America, and everybody who has helped us. It's truly a team effort to be able to be here. Thank you all very much. (*Applause*)

**Presentation: Employer of the Year Award for Hiring Veterans, Large Category  
TriWest Healthcare Alliance, Phoenix, Arizona**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: 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 VE&E Convention Committee meeting for their work in hiring veterans. But we would like to recognize one company for its outstanding record of hiring veterans. In the large business category of 200 or more employees, TriWest Healthcare Alliance, Phoenix, Arizona. Accepting the award is a man whom I will introduce in just a minute, TriWest President and CEO David J. McIntyre, Jr.

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*ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for the Outstanding Large Employer of Veterans 2020 presented to TriWest Healthcare Alliance, Phoenix, Arizona, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans, presented at the 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Convention, Phoenix, Arizona, September 1, 2021.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The TriWest Healthcare Alliance is working to ensure that veterans in roughly half the nation have access to high-quality health care when it is unable to be provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our next guest is the president and CEO of TriWest and has more than 30 years of experience, success and accomplishments in national health-care policy development, business development and leadership in both government and the private sector. He holds a master's degree in administrative sciences from Johns Hopkins University. And he just accepted the Large Employer of the Year Award from us. Again, please welcome David J. McIntyre, Jr. *(Applause)*

**Address: David J. McIntyre, Jr.  
President and CEO, TriWest Healthcare Alliance**

Good afternoon. This month marks 25 years at which we've been privileged to be engaged in this awesome work that we are able to do as fellow citizens. It's a great honor for me and for TriWest Healthcare Alliance to join The American Legion's 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Convention here in our company's hometown of Phoenix.

On behalf of our nonprofit donors and all of our employees that are quite a bit more than 200, I would like to thank The American Legion for honoring our company's dedication to hiring and supporting our heroes. For 25 years, serving America's veterans has been our sacred mission. And we are privileged and dedicated to this important work. Currently, TriWest serves in support of the VA in meeting the health-care needs in the community for our nation's veterans, offering access to quality care and customer service through the VA Care Network in the Western United States, Alaska and the Pacific. We just concluded pinch hitting across the entire country because they had to let our colleague contractor go. And in 90 days, we and VA in a partnership stood up half the country and made it accessible. Before that, we were proud to administer the Department of Defense's Tricare program in the West for 17 years, until it got to the point of stable and we needed a new challenge. The majority of us at TriWest are intentionally veterans, military retirees, their spouses, their family members, Guard and reserve members and their families. So, we know who it is that we're working for and the importance of getting it right for our nation's most deserving citizens.

Making health care available. The health care that you've earned, where you need it, when you need it, and how you need it is absolutely imperative. And it's part of making good at the side of the government on the government's commitment to those of you that have worn the uniform of the United States and their families. Our work will always honor those we serve, and we are not going to stray from our commitments.

I'd like to thank The American Legion for the amazing work you do, for the leadership you provide, for being a needed moral compass when we lose our way and for your effective advocacy. Measuring up to your name and leading the way with effectiveness for 102 years. Watching that work and watching that determination and that drive gives us optimism in our work. For 35 years I've been associated with and admiring your organization, which began when I worked in the Senate for your 2019 Patriot Award recipient, my old boss, Senator John McCain. He for me defined patriotism. He got it right. And so do you. The American Legion defines for us what being patriotic is all about. I have so many examples of you walking the talk over the years. But being here in Phoenix, not far from the Phoenix VA, please permit me to share one of those stories with you.

As you know, 2014, Phoenix was the epicenter of the access to care crisis for our nation's veterans. After our organization and the VA were privileged to work at each other's

side to address the backlogs and eliminate them within three to four months, I went down to the VA to have a meeting with the staff and the leadership, to hear of the work that they were doing to refine their operations and how we might be helpful to them. I went to leave the hospital, and as I walked out the door, I looked to my left, horrified and disgusted at what I saw on the billboard facing the medical center, for all staff and those they serve to see as they drove into the VA Medical Center and as they walked in and from work. In bright letters, the sign read: "They're lying; veterans are dying." I turned to the person I was walking with and asked, "I wonder how long the billboard space has been purchased."

An hour later, I learned that the party who had put up that demoralizing billboard was one week behind in paying for the space. Within an hour, we wired the money to buy the space and signed a long-term lease for its use. We then contacted The American Legion, who led an effort to design a billboard and a message of appreciation to VA and community partners, providers, who work in partnership to render care to veterans in need. And that message of thanks, with The American Legion logo on it, continues to stand as a spring to the step of all who work for and all who receive care from the Phoenix VA and in the community. And it has helped the staff there to restore their morale. So, I'd like to say thank you. *(Applause)*

As Secretary McDonough, and God bless him for stepping up to the furnace, right, come into the furnace, opening the door, voluntarily shutting it behind him and getting to work. God bless him for doing that. Well, his work and the VA's work and our work at their side to refine the system is not yet done. The providers that we have called to join the course of those providing care in the community on our watch have now delivered nearly 50 million appointments. Everything from cancer treatment to hangnails to three-organ transplants and everything in between. Even babies have been born because of the IVF program that we administer in concert with the VA to couples that would not otherwise be able to have a child because of their complications from their service. 50 million appointments. That's not to replace the VA. That's to give the VA the elasticity that they need to serve veterans at or in their communities on a convenient basis and to supplement the direct system with the services that they do not otherwise have.

I'm really high on the new secretary. And he's the man for this moment. And he's going to be intense. He can be intense against us, and he should be intense against the system, because we have to continue to climb and forge the right steel to make sure that we deliver in the proper way on this nation's commitments to those who serve and their families. I have a feeling that the best is still yet to come, in large part because we're going to have you at our side.

In closing, I want to offer our heartfelt gratitude to our nation's veterans and their families, especially at this challenging time. I remember September 11. In fact, I was in this town waiting for my DoD colleagues to join us for a meeting to plot out the next stage of refinement in our DoD work. And I remember very vividly like it was yesterday standing and watching in horror the image on the television and comprehending or attempting to do so on why my colleague was not going to be flying to meet us from Colorado Springs. His life, our lives, all of our lives changed in that instant. And my six-year-old son was standing with his hands on the television trying to comprehend what he was watching on the television. Those who served in response to the events of 9/11 deserve absolutely nothing but our very, very, very best, from the VA and from TriWest. *(Applause)*

I'm here to tell you that if you pay doctors and hospitals on time and correctly, they're glad to see you. And that's what this is all about. It's important for us to remember each other and be there for each other, especially at this difficult time. And so, I would just say to all of you that for those that were lost several days ago, you're in our thoughts and our prayers, and your families as well. And we will, along with others across the country, do everything we can to honor their service.

As a fellow citizen, I simply want you to know we appreciate all that you have done and do for this great nation. And we consider it a privilege to stretch ourselves for you. Thank you. God bless you. And God bless America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: At this time, we'd like to recognize 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  
Vincent M. Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman**

Good afternoon. I usually have the pleasure of saying this is the last report of the day, but I'm not too sure about that right now. National Commander Bill Oxford, National Adjutant Dan Wheeler, national officers, Distinguished Guests, friends, brother and sister Legionnaires, this is the committee report on constitutional amendments.

The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 8:30 a.m., Sunday, August 29, 2021, in the Phoenix Ballroom C-E, Third Level at the Sheraton, Phoenix, Arizona. Mark Seavey (VA), Special Projects Counsel called the roll and announced that 39 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 Mark Seavey (VA), Special Projects Counsel, who acted as temporary Chair. He stated a quorum was present and proceeded to the first order of business, which was the election of a Chair and secretary.

Vincent M. Gaughan (IL) was elected Chair and Cathy J. Gorst (WI) was duly elected Secretary. Thereupon they assumed their respective places.

Copies of the Resolutions, the Report of the Standing Committee, the Charter of The American Legion, 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 at the meeting.

A motion was made by Larry J. Marcouiller (DE) and seconded by Mark Rick (CA) 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 called upon Mark C. Seavey (VA), Special Projects Counsel, to give a summary background report on the resolutions assigned to the Committee, which was done. The Chair said that he was in agreement with Special Projects Counsel, Mark C. Seavey (VA) and The Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws Report and ruled Resolution No. 19 (MN) was out of order.

Resolution No. 19 (MN) did not contain sufficient language in the resolve clause for the convention to vote on.

The Chair ruled **Resolution No. 19 (MN)** was out of order.

Byron Callies (SD) made a motion to affirm the Chair's ruling. Jim Demarest (IA) seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Notwithstanding that Resolution No. 19 (MN) was out of order a full discussion on the United States Constitution and American Legion Constitution was held. The purpose of Resolution No. 19 (MN) was resolved by the previous Judge Advocate's opinion (October 25, 2012).

The Chair then asked for a motion that the Chair and Secretary be permitted to sign the report to the Convention on behalf of the members of the Convention Committee. Charles Bowman (MI) made the motion and it was seconded by Laurie Bowman (IN). The motion carried unanimously.

Frank A. Porter (MD) made the motion, seconded by Tom Hicks (WV) to attach the Report of the Constitution and By-laws Committee to this report as an exhibit. The motion was carried unanimously.

Charles Boman (OH) made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chair. The motion was seconded by Tina Bush (AL). The motion carried unanimously.

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

Mr. Commander, as a delegate to the 102<sup>nd</sup> National Convention of the American Legion, I move the adoption of this report. ...*Second*.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor signify by saying aye. Any opposed, nay. The report of Constitutional Amendments is adopted. At this point the Chair recognizes Steven A. Brennan of Maryland, chairman of the National Convention Committee on National Security for the purposes of a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on National Security  
Steven A. Brennan, Maryland, Chairman**

At 9:00 am, Sunday, August 29, 2021, 251 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security initially met in the Sheraton Phoenix Convention Center, South Building, Exhibit Hall F, and elected Steven Brennan (Maryland) as Chairman and as Secretary Kenneth Trumbull (Illinois).

After the initial meeting, the following convention sub-committees met, held elections and dealt with the resolutions assigned to them:

Aerospace	Rick Oertel (VA), Chairman Ted DeMicchi (WI), Secretary
Conventional Armed Forces	Thomas Schottenbauer (MN), Chairman Alvin Diaz (AK), Secretary
Foreign Relations	James Lacoursiere (CT), Chairman Michael Landkamer (NE), Secretary
Law and Order & Homeland Security	George Wehrli (FL), Chairman Richard Keiser (NY), Secretary
Military Benefits & Quality of Life	William Flanagan (IL), Chairman James Holland (SC), Secretary
National Guard and Reserve Forces	William Goede (MN), Chairman Wayne Schorr (FL), Secretary
Unconventional Forces and Intelligence	Doug Haggan (FR)Chairman Dan Watrous (OH), Secretary

At 9:30 am, Sunday, August 29, 2021, the delegates and alternates assigned to the seven sub-committees attended breakout sessions in The Phoenix Convention Center North Building, 200 Level, rooms 221-222, 226-227, 229, and 231-232. The convention committee reconvened in South Building, Exhibit Hall F. Reports of all Convention Sub-Committees were read, and their recommended actions on resolutions were considered. A total of five resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security or prepared by the Committee to meet issues that were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. The Convention Committee authorized the Chairman 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 Oertel (VA), Chairman****No Resolutions****Conventional Armed Forces****Thomas Schottenbauer, Minnesota, Chairman****Rejected****Resolution No. 15 (OR): Support Department Of Defense Directive 1344.10 And The Hatch Act Of 1939****Foreign Relations****James Lacoursiere, Connecticut****Approved****Resolution No. 37: Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty Of Peace, Diplomatic Relations And Full Normalization Between The United Arab Emirates And The State Of Israel****Origin: Convention Committee on National Security****Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security**

WHEREAS, On August 13, 2020, a peace agreement between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the State of Israel was agreed upon and mediated by the United States; and

WHEREAS, With this agreement the UAE has become the third Arab nation, after Egypt in 1979, and Jordan in 1994, to agree to a normalized relationship with Israel, as well as the first Persian Gulf country to do so; and

WHEREAS, These accords have grown in part from a common concern over Iran's nuclear program, ballistic missile arsenal and support of Hezbollah and other militant groups; and

WHEREAS, With the signing of the Abraham Accords, Israel and the UAE have begun the transition to ensure they have lasting peace, stability, security, and prosperity while working to enhance their respective economies; and

WHEREAS, Since that signing, further agreements have been developed between Israel and Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan with Bahrain have formally appointed an ambassador to Israel; and

WHEREAS, The stipulations that have been agreed upon include: 1) Establishment of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Normalization, 2) Adherence to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law governing relations among States, 3) Establishment of embassies and exchange of resident ambassadors, 4) Promote mutual understanding, cooperation and coordination to provide peace and stability, particularly taking necessary step to prevent any terrorist or hostile activities against each other or from their respective territories, 5) Work through bilateral agreements to promote stability and prosperity in areas of mutual interest, 6) Foster mutual understanding, respect, co-existence and a culture of peace between their societies, and 7) Join with the United States to develop and launch a "Strategic Agenda for the Middle East" to expand regional diplomatic and trade relations; now therefore be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021, That the administration continue to pursue agreements between Israel and other Middle East countries similar to those developed under the name 'Abraham Accords'; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That the administration and the United States Congress maintain a tough stance and resist any agreement that could undermine the strategic rationale**

**for the normalization agreements between Israel and the Middle Eastern Gulf states; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That the administration and the United States Congress maintain and enhance the normalization pacts between Israel and a number of Arabs states in the Middle East, easing Israel's economic and diplomatic isolation and building a regional coalition of allies.**

**Law And Order & Homeland Security  
George Wehrli , Florida, Chairman**

**No Resolutions**

**Military Benefits And Quality Of Life  
William Flanagan, Illinois, Chairman**

**Rejected**

**Resolution No. 7 (CA): Department Of Defense Military Medical Malpractice  
Resolution No. 30 (WV): Opposed Tricare Fee Increase**

**Received And Recorded**

**Resolution No. 28 (OH): Adapt Surplus M-16 Type Service Rifles For Honor Guard Services**

**National Guard and Reserve Forces  
William Goede, Minnesota, Chairman**

**No Resolutions**

**Unconventional Forces & Intelligence  
Doug Haggan, France, Chairman**

**No Resolutions**

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: California**

Category II - 70,000 to 99,999 members

**Post & Individual Participation: Minnesota**

Category III - 40,000 to 69,999 members

**Post & Individual Participation: Maryland & Wisconsin**

Category IV - 25,000 to 39,999 members

**Post & Individual Participation: Massachusetts & Nebraska**

Category V - 10,000 to 24,999 members

**Post & Individual Participation: Oregon**

Category VI - less than 10,000 members

**Post & Individual Participation: Vermont**

Many of our Departments participated in the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) Awards Program this year. 6,884 medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The Winning Departments for 2021 were Illinois, Ohio, Texas, New York, and Michigan. On behalf of The American Legion and its nearly 2 million members, job well done to the Departments and to our youth of America enrolled in the ROTC programs.

Mr. Commander, as a Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Maryland, I move to adopt this report. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor say aye. Any opposed, nay. Report adopted.

**Video Address: Honorable Jon Tester  
United States Senate**

Greetings from the United States Senate. Thank you for inviting me to share a few words with you today. And thank you to the veterans here for the many sacrifices that you have made to keep our nation safe. For generations, The American Legion has played a critical role in supporting and strengthening the veterans community. And as chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, it is a privilege working alongside you to deliver tangible support to veterans across this country.

This past year has showed us what many have known for years, rural veterans are in desperate need of better access to health care. That is why I'm proud of our recent effort to expand rural veterans' access to mental health care through the signing of my bipartisan Sgt. Ketchum Rural Veterans Mental Health Act. This new law will help protect more veterans, especially those in Montana and other rural parts of the country, from slipping through the cracks by connecting them with lifesaving care they need and have earned.

With your help, we're also fighting to make good on our promise to provide toxic exposure veterans of all generations with immediate and lifelong access to VA health care through my COST of War Act. Together we'll keep pushing this bill every step of the way until VA delivers these veterans their earned benefits and care, no matter where or when they served. Again, thank you for the great work that you do on behalf of veterans and their families. Know that my door is always open. And I'll be continuing to get the job done and get it done right for all of you. *(Applause) ...The delegation viewed a video.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: For more than 20 years our next guest has worked to improve the lives of Riverside County California residents as an elected official and as a teacher at Rialto High School. That commitment also extends to our nation's veterans who know him as the chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. His grandparents were removed from their respective homes and sent to Japanese-American internment camps during World War II. The families would later settle in Riverside County, where our guest would graduate as high school valedictorian in 1979. He attended Harvard College and earned a bachelor's degree in government in 1983. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm American Legion welcome to the Honorable Congressman Mark Takano. *(Applause)*

**Address: Honorable Mark Takano, Chairman  
United States House of Representatives, Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

Thank you very much. Well, good afternoon, everyone. I am Congressman Mark Takano, chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. And I am honored to join you all today. And I want to thank National Commander Oxford for inviting me. It's been so long since I've seen many of you in person. But I'm glad that The American Legion has brought us all together again. *(Applause)*

Now, as chairman, I know of no group more resilient to the upheavals in daily life than our nation's veterans. And these past two years have been full of upheavals. The COVID-19 pandemic has upended our lives and added so much uncertainty. We communicated with our families and friends through screens and went to medical appointments in our own homes. And many veterans endured excruciating delays in benefit claims and home-care services. And thousands contended with job losses. Our country was

forced to adapt.

And now, after nearly 20 years of service and sacrifice in Afghanistan, our U.S. forces have officially withdrawn. And I know that old wounds have reopened for many veterans and their families, caregivers and survivors as the world watched the horrific images coming out of Afghanistan. But our servicemembers accomplished something miraculous. They safely evacuated more than 120,000 Americans, Afghan allies and citizens of allied nations in the largest airlift in U.S. history. My heart does break and has broken for the 13 servicemembers lost in terrorist attacks in Kabul last week. The families of the servicemembers killed and wounded are experiencing unimaginable pain. But they should know that their loved ones saved countless lives in the evacuation efforts. Their service was necessary, courageous and it will be eternally valued.

In the days and weeks following our exit, we must remember that compressing 20 years of our involvement in Afghanistan into three weeks of evacuations was always going to be messy. But this is not to diminish the honorable service of the hundreds of thousands of veterans who answered our nation's call and left behind their families and communities. Our servicemembers past and present performed and served with honor and never lost sight of their duty. And for all who served or supported us in Afghanistan, we thank you. There will be a time to sort out what could have gone better. But today we must remain focused on assisting Americans and Afghan allies who have been evacuated and those who are still seeking refuge. Ending the military mission was the best way to protect the lives of our troops and allow innocent civilians to leave in the weeks and months ahead. And I commend President Biden for taking this critical step.

I've heard from many veterans desperate to help their Afghan translators and colleagues that supported them during Operation Enduring Freedom and Freedom Sentinel. We remain forever grateful to those who have and continue to serve so selflessly and the families who made that service possible. Our thoughts are especially with our Gold Star families and those who bear the wounds of war. This is a difficult time for many who served and those who supported their loved ones in Afghanistan. Please join me in reaching out to those veterans in your lives. Check in with your buddies, and if you need help, please know that it is okay to not be okay right now. VA's crisis line is always there, at 1-800-273-8255.

Now, I'm acutely aware of the service and sacrifice you have all shown throughout this pandemic and the withdrawal from Afghanistan. And you have continued to serve your communities and the brave allies that supported you despite all the unknowns. But this resilience has not meant that these long months were less of a challenge. So, I want to thank all of you here in this room. Now, it's really time to say that hope is on the horizon. We have a safe, reliable COVID-19 vaccine. And because of my bill, the SAVE LIVES Act, VA has the authority to vaccinate all veterans, caregivers and veteran spouses for this and future pandemics. *(Applause)*

Now, VA quickly became a national leader in vaccinations, with this expanded authority. And I'm glad I could work with VA to ensure that all of you could get a vaccine as soon as possible. And, please, if you haven't already, I strongly encourage you to get the vaccine. Because of the American Rescue Plan, we have provided VA with the resources needed to handle the influx of patients, as many delayed care due to the pandemic or have come to rely on VA even more. And as compensation and pension exams were delayed, we provided additional resources to help the National Personnel Records Center and VA get through the backlog so veterans and their survivors can access critical benefits. We worked with VA to waive co-pays for veterans seeking care during the pandemic. There is no surprise bill coming your way. And if you already paid your co-pays, VA will reimburse you. *(Applause)*

We were also able to provide emergency funds to help student veterans as their schools closed due to the pandemic. Now, the pandemic showcased some of VA's triumphs, including the success of VA's long-term care and its ability to adapt to a global pandemic, and even expand its mission to care for civilians during the national emergency. And while

our nation's nursing homes and state veterans homes were hit particularly hard by the pandemic, VA's own Community Living Centers experienced minimal outbreaks and spread of infection.

It quickly became clear that VA has the know-how and experience exemplified by its talented medical staff to provide superior long-term care. And I'm so grateful these providers could share this wealth of knowledge through VA's fourth mission. I'm certain that this support to nursing homes and state veterans homes across the country saved lives. However, it also spotlighted issues with accountability and VA's limited oversight authority over state veterans homes. Congress provided key emergency funding for state veterans homes in the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan. But I wonder whether VA should be doing more to help ensure these facilities deliver safe, effective, high-quality care, and how to best invest VA funds for construction and renovation of these homes. And that's why I'm considering legislation to require state veterans homes to meet Medicare requirements for skilled nursing facilities, employ licensed, long-term care administrators, and to update VA standard for construction of these homes. We must learn the lessons from this pandemic and rethink VA's relationship with state veterans homes. We simply cannot allow the disastrous and deadly incidents that occurred in some state veterans homes to happen again. *(Applause)*

I know there are certain states that are represented here that were particularly hit hard. As the pandemic subsides, there is still much more we have to do, and I look forward to our continued partnership. We will continue to have a busy Congress, and while we keep responding to the pandemic, we must make progress in other key areas, and that's why I've directed my committee to prioritize nine issues: to create a more welcoming VA and build equity for veterans, address toxic exposure, reduce veteran suicide, ensure student veterans receive quality education, support VA's long-term care, advocate for women, modernize VA, improve VA's management and oversight, and ensure our legislative accomplishments are implemented effectively.

The foundation for all of our work depends on creating a VA that is welcoming and safe for all veterans that enter its doors. Our veteran population is rapidly changing with more women, LGBTQ+, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Native veterans than ever before. It's clear that VA needs a cultural change, and I believe we have seen so far that Secretary McDonough is making efforts to lead VA in that direction. No veterans should face barriers accessing the care or benefits they've earned, and no VA employee should face discrimination in the workplace. We have to look back to learn about past disparities to figure out how VA can rectify them and work to ensure that all veterans, regardless of gender, sexuality, gender identity, race, housing status, or citizenship can access VA equitably.

This will take hard work, and VA cannot do it alone. Given the emerging information about the troubling connections between the veteran community and domestic violent extremist groups, we need to rebuild bridges to veterans who may feel they are outside the community, and that's why my committee started looking into these groups last fall to better understand why domestic violent extremist groups specifically target veterans and how all of us, Congress, VA, and our VSO partners, can be a part of the solution. We have a duty to rehabilitate these veterans and bring them back to the VA community.

Together we can work to support women veterans and ensure that all feel safe entering a VA facility by eradicating sexual assault and harassment at VA. Last Congress we passed the Deborah Sampson Act into law, making huge progress, but there's still more to be done. We can help our nation reckon with the effects of discriminatory military policies and undo the damage that has been done to LGBTQ veterans since Don't Ask, Don't Tell. My legislation to establish an LGBTQ commission can help rectify the injustices and create a more welcoming culture for LGBTQ servicemembers and veterans in the military and at VA. I want to thank you for standing with me on this legislation.

We must not leave anyone behind in this work, including our deported veterans. Despite serving our nation honorably and bravely, non-citizen veterans are still exiled from

the country that they call home and fought to defend. They face significant barriers to access to benefits that they're eligible for under the law. So, I reintroduced the Veteran Deportation Prevention and Reform Act because their service matters too. *(Applause)*

I just want to say that that is so meaningful to hear that coming from this hall, and I want to thank The American Legion for supporting this critical legislation, and I want to thank you for your commitment to honoring the promises we made to our veterans regardless of their citizenship.

Similarly, I introduced the Korean Valor Act because we have a moral obligation to support our Korean-American veterans. My bill would correct a decades long gap in VA's allied beneficiary program and begin to rectify significant inequalities between our European and Asian allies living in the United States. For 63 years veterans of allied forces from World Wars I and II have been able to enroll in VA health care. Yet today veterans of the Republic of Korea who fought alongside us in the Vietnam War and who also went on to become U.S. citizens, they're denied what their European counterparts already have access to, that is veteran-centric high-quality care from VA. Over 300,000 Koreans fought alongside the United States in Vietnam. Nearly 3,000 of these veterans are now United States citizens, but they exist in a limbo, unable to receive care from either the Korean health-care system or VA. Providing care to these veterans will set a crucial precedent that Americans stand by their allies and welcome them with open arms. *(Applause)*

My intent is not to focus on just one group, but to adopt a global posture towards supporting our allies. Our veterans are our best ambassadors of American values, and by taking care of these 3,000 Korean-American veterans, we can sustain our alliance with a crucial ally and advance American ideals around the world.

Now, I'm determined to make good on the promises that we have made to our veterans, and every day I hear from more and more veterans living with the effects of toxic exposure. And I'm sure many of you here today have been affected as well. For decades we haven't honored our promise. Instead, we have tried to address this issue one disability or one location at a time, often leaving many veterans behind. In the last Congress I was proud to lead the effort to finally pass the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act. *(Applause)*

And by the applause, I can tell you all know that this was a major accomplishment. I could not have done this without you and others in the VSO community, but this victory is bittersweet. Our Vietnam veterans shouldn't have had to wait over 40 years to access the care and benefits they earned *(Applause)*

For many, it was too late. I'm going to tell you right now I will not let our post-9/11 veterans suffer the same fate. *(Applause)*

The cost of war is so much more than just the tanks and guns used in the heat of battle. For the veterans living with toxic exposure today, they still are in the heat of battle, and they're paying the price that our nation should be paying. When we send our servicemembers into harm's way, we do so with a promise to care for them and pay for that care when they come home. My Honoring Our PACT Act finally recognizes toxic exposure as a cost of war, and I'm so grateful to have the support of The American Legion. Our bipartisan bill will finally provide health care to more than 3.5 million veterans exposed to burn pits and airborne hazards and will concede exposure that is long overdue. *(Applause)*

It will establish a presumption of service connection for 23 respiratory illnesses and cancers, and crucially it will overhaul VA's presumptive decision-making process, so Congress does not have to keep intervening.

Now, I was pleased to see Secretary McDonough take action to begin processing claims for veterans experiencing asthma, rhinitis, and sinusitis following exposure to toxic substances and finally recognize these conditions as presumptive, but this is just one piece of the puzzle. 2021 will be the year we pass comprehensive legislation to address the needs of all toxic exposed veterans. With a VA secretary committed to this issue, wide VSO support, including The American Legion, and a president whose own son may have been impacted by toxic exposure, I believe we have the momentum to get this done. Especially with Afghanistan fresh in our minds, we cannot forget the promise we made to these

veterans.

And I know one of my top priorities is also yours, veteran suicide prevention. The American Legion has been stalwart in calling for its members to be there for each other with Buddy Check week, and I commend you for this constant reminder that connecting with each other is one of the most protective ways we can support veterans' mental health and well-being. This is especially true given the latest news from Afghanistan. In the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, the committee worked tirelessly to develop and pass the Veterans COMPACT Act, and the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act into law. These bipartisan bills were incredibly strong first steps to reduce veteran suicide, but as long as 17 veterans die by suicide each day, our work must continue. This year we've continued our efforts and already passed representative acts, the Sgt. Ketchum Rural Veterans Mental Health Act into law to increase access to mental health care in rural communities.

I also know that one of the most stressful periods for servicemembers occurs during their transition to civilian life, and that's why I introduced the Ensuring Veterans' Smooth Transition Act, or EVST. By automatically enrolling veterans into VA care during their transition, we can ensure they're connected to the VA system and its critical mental health resources, hopefully preventing these veterans from falling into crisis. Now, VSOs, including The American Legion, have been fighting for this for years, and I'm grateful to have you behind my bill, and with this very simple step, we can make VA's resources more acceptable to veterans at a time that is known to be very difficult. Guided by evidence-based approaches, we will continue to fight for expanded lethal means counseling for all veterans, cultural competency for community providers, and increased outreach to some of our most at risk veterans, including women, LGBTQ+, and Native veterans.

Now, we have big goals for this Congress to create a more welcoming and equitable VA, to finally recognize toxic exposure as a cost of war, and to make meaningful progress in the fight to reduce veteran suicide. And if we're going to move forward on these goals and build back veterans' trust in VA, we have to start making serious investments in the federal agency meant to serve them. That's exactly what President Biden's Build Back Better Plan will accomplish.

As many of you all well know, most VA hospitals are over 50 years old, and it's clear there are places where the infrastructure of these buildings is failing our veterans. Chronic underfunding of VA's capital asset portfolio has left the department trying to deliver 21<sup>st</sup> century health care in buildings designed to serve veterans who fought in World Wars I and II. This is simply unacceptable, especially as VA's footprint will need to increase even further to care for an expanded population of toxic-exposed veterans that will rely on VA for their healthcare. So, we need to start building that capacity, both in terms of brick-and-mortar infrastructure and human capital. The \$18 billion set aside for VA in the Build Back Better Plan will allow us to restore veterans' faith in VA by literally rebuilding the physical infrastructure of the VA system, investing in VA's workforce, and providing much needed updates to support structures that serve our veterans.

Now, I'm optimistic about the future of the VA, and I know that with the support and insight of veterans service organizations, Secretary McDonough and President Biden, we will be able to fulfill the promises that we've made to our veterans. Together we can build a stronger, more welcoming, and more effective VA. Our country may not be perfect, but it is full of promise, and veterans know that that is worth fighting for. So, thank you for having me. Thank you for your advocacy. Thank you for all of your service. God bless you and God bless the United States of America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: At this time, the chair would like to recognize Ralph Bozella of Colorado, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation for the purpose of a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation  
Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado, Chairman**

On August 29, 2021, 111 members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. in the Phoenix Convention Center, South Ballroom. This report is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The committee was called to order by Mario Marquez (PI), liaison representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. Ralph P. Bozella (CO), Chairman of the National VA&R Commission, was unanimously elected chairman of the Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation. Exercising the authority granted to him, the chairman accepted nominations for secretary to the Convention Committee. Pat Rourke (NY) was voted as Committee Secretary. During their breakout sessions the subcommittees elected William J. Smith (PA) as Chairman of the Veterans Benefits Subcommittee, and K. Robert Lewis (CT) as Secretary; Phil Youngblood (GA) as Chairman of the Health Administration Subcommittee, and James Stanko (CO) as Secretary; Richard Neville (NC) as Chairman of the National Cemetery Subcommittee, and P. Earl Gleason (NY) as Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Mario Marquez (PI), Director, National VA&R Division to the National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation; Marty Callaghan (MD) the Deputy Director for Claims Services to Veterans Benefits Subcommittee; Katie Purswell (MD) the Deputy Director for Health Policy to Health Administration Subcommittee; and Melvin Brown (VA) the Veterans Program Manager to the National Cemetery Subcommittee.

A committee comprised of department service officers and commission members in a pre-convention meeting on August 27, 2021, 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 (CO), the chairman of the VA&R Commission, and was composed of the following department service officers and Commission members:

- Adrian Gamboa (MD)
- Phil Youngblood (GA)
- Kate Hahn (MT)
- Pat Rourke (NY)
- Tracy Vawter (MO)

The 16 Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation resolutions presented for the consideration of this convention were referred by the Resolutions Assignment Committee. The following actions on the resolutions were taken by the Convention Committee:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment	10
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	0
Referred to the Standing Commission	2
Received and Recorded	2
Rejected	2

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 two (2) resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the adjutant of the department concerned.

**Approved Resolutions Or Approved With Amendment****Resolution No. 8: Child Care At Vet Centers****Origin: California****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Vet Centers, Mobile Vet Centers, and Vet Center Outstations across the country provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services; and

WHEREAS, These community-based counseling centers provide a numerous social and psychological services, including professional readjustment counseling to eligible veterans, active-duty servicemembers, National Guardsmen and reservists, and their families; and

WHEREAS, Readjustment counseling is offered to assist in the successful transition from military to civilian life or after a traumatic event experienced in the military; and

WHEREAS, Individual, group, marriage and family counseling are offered in addition to referral and connection to other Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or community benefits and services; and

WHEREAS, Vet Center counselors and outreach staff, many of whom are veterans themselves, are experienced and prepared to discuss the tragedies of war, loss, grief, and transition after trauma; and

WHEREAS, Thousands of veterans, active-duty service members (including Guard and reservists) and their families receive readjustment counseling at VA's 300 Vet Centers, totaling millions of visits; and

WHEREAS, There is a clear need to place additional Vet Center Outstations and/or Mobile Vet Centers in under-served metropolitan and/or rural areas; and

WHEREAS, Two of the most pressing concerns for single parents is for the VA to provide child care to veterans at Vet Centers in the same manner as it is provided to veterans at other VA facilities, and to have VA transportation to fixed Vet Centers and Outstations similar to transportation to VA Medical Centers and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs); now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021, That The American Legion urges the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to fund and expand Vet Centers, Mobile Vet Centers, and Vet Center Outstations, to provide child care at Vet Centers just like other VA facilities, and to provide VA transportation to fixed Vet Centers and Outstations.**

**Resolution No. 20: Veterans Health Administration Include Medical Emergency Transportation To The Episode of Care****Origin: Minnesota****Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is the largest integrated health-care system in the United States, providing care at 1,293 health care facilities, including 171 Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Centers and 1,112 outpatient sites of care of varying complexity to over 9 million veterans enrolled in the VA health-care program; and

WHEREAS, VHA states during a medical emergency a veteran should immediately seek care at the nearest emergency department (ED), a medical emergency is an injury, illness, or symptom so severe that a delay in seeking immediate medical attention would be reasonably expected to be hazardous to life or health; and

WHEREAS, VHA has two legal authorities under which emergency treatment in a community facility may be paid for by VA:

- Unauthorized Emergency Treatment (Service-connected)—Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) §1728; and

- Unauthorized Emergency Treatment (Nonservice-connected)—Title 38 U.S.C. §1725, both laws include land or air ambulance transportation in the emergency episode of emergency care for payment; and

WHEREAS, The passage of the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 "VA MISSION ACT" gives eligible veterans greater access to health care in the community including covering the costs for episodes of Authorized Emergency Treatment under a regulation change in Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §17.4020(c), although emergency medical transportation is not part of the emergency episode of care and is sent to the local Beneficiary Travel Office to determine eligibility for VA to pay; and

WHEREAS, VHA Beneficiary Travel eligibility states veterans must meet the following administrative requirements to qualify for authorized transport:

- Unauthorized Emergency Treatment (Service-connected)—Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) §1728; and
- Have a service-connected disability or combined rating of 30% or more, or
- be in receipt of VA pension, or
- previous calendar year income does not exceed maximum VA pension rate, or
- projected income in travel year does not exceed maximum VA pension rate or
- travel is in connection with service-connected disability or
- travel is for compensation & pension exam, or
- travel is to obtain a service dog, or
- travel relates to VA transplant care and VA clinician documents that special mode transportation is medically required; and

WHEREAS, VA's amended regulation changes under the MISSION ACT 38 (CFR) 17.4020(c) states that VA will determine veteran eligibility under this regulation first before considering for reimbursement under 38 (USC) 1725 or 38 (USC) 1728, with VA's extensive community care network via Optum, majority of emergency episodes of care are authorized under this regulation leaving hundreds of thousands of veterans with unpaid emergency medical transportation bills because not all veterans are eligible for beneficiary travel; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021, That the Veterans Health Administration amend regulation 38 (CFR) 17.4020(c) to include medical emergency transportation both air and land to the episode of emergency care.**

**Resolution No. 21: Extend The Presumptive Period For Service Connection For Gulf War Veterans With Undiagnosed Illnesses**

**Origin: Minnesota**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) presumes that certain disabilities were caused by military service, because of the unique circumstances of a specific veteran's military service, and if a presumed condition is diagnosed or in certain instances undiagnosed in a veteran in a certain group, they can be awarded disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, Veterans were coming back from service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations, they were experiencing unexplained illnesses and symptoms, as Congress passed S.2358 - Persian Gulf War Veterans Act of 1998 directing VA to administer a presumptive list of illnesses for Gulf War veterans under 38 CFR § 3.317; and

WHEREAS, For VA purposes, the Persian Gulf War refers to service in the Southwest Asian theater of military operations beginning on August 2, 1990, at the present time, the period for the Persian Gulf War extends to December 31, 2021, which means that service members who have served in the Southwest Asia theater of military operations after September 2001 are eligible for benefits under VA's Gulf War presumption; and

WHEREAS, Veterans in the following groups may qualify for “presumptive” disability benefits: former prisoners of war who have a condition that is at least 10 percent disabling; Vietnam Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and served in the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975; Atomic Veterans exposed to ionizing radiation and who experienced one of the following, participated in atmospheric nuclear testing, occupied or were prisoners of war in Hiroshima or Nagasaki, served before Feb. 1, 1992, at a diffusion plant in Paducah, Kentucky, Portsmouth, Ohio or Oak Ridge, Tennessee, served before Jan. 1, 1974, at Amchitka Island, Alaska; Gulf War Veterans who served in the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations that have a condition that manifested to a level of at least 10 percent disabling for a period of 6 months or longer by Dec. 31, 2021; and

WHEREAS, The only presumptive period which VA administers that has a sunset date is the Gulf War era, stating conditions must manifest to a level of 10% disabling for a period of 6 months or longer by December 31, 2021, for a veteran to receive service-connected disability compensation; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021, That the Department of Veterans Affairs amends 38 CFR § 3.317, removing the Gulf War presumptive sunset date and make it indefinite.**

**Resolution No. 22: Department Of Veterans Affairs Update Locator Tool To Include In-Network Community Emergency Care Providers**

**Origin: Minnesota**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, With the passage of the VA MISSION Act of 2018, veterans now have better access and greater choice in their health care through in-network community providers via improved eligibility criteria, with the new eligibility criteria going into effect in June 2019, after final regulations were published; and

WHEREAS, VA added language in its community care regulations during the MISSION Act revisions to include authorizing emergency treatment, specifically, 38 CFR 17.20(c) which applies only to emergency treatment furnished to a covered veteran by an in-network emergency room provider and does not affect eligibility for, or create any new rules or conditions affecting, reimbursement for emergency treatment under section 1725 or 1728 of title 38, United States Code; and

WHEREAS, Under the conditions set forth in this regulation, VA may authorize emergency treatment after it has been furnished to a covered veteran, for purposes of this paragraph (c), “emergency treatment” has the meaning defined in section 1725(f)(1) of title 38, United States Code, VA may only authorize emergency treatment under this paragraph (c) if the covered veteran, someone acting on the covered veteran's behalf, or the eligible entity or provider notifies VA within 72-hours of such care or services being furnished and VA approves the furnishing of such care or services under paragraph (c)(3) of this section. (3) VA may approve emergency treatment of a covered veteran under this paragraph (c) only if the veteran is receiving emergency treatment from an eligible entity or provider, the notice to VA complies with the provisions of paragraph that it is submitted within 72 hours of the beginning of such treatment; and

WHEREAS, VA created a Locator Tool via website for enrolled veterans to find “in-network” community providers to help veterans find the closest place of treatment; and

WHEREAS, VA has not updated its locator tool to reflect the recent regulation changes, which include in-network community emergency care providers; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021, That the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) should improve its transparency with veterans by adding a list of in-network emergency care providers to its locator tool website so veterans can find an**

**in-network emergency room closest to them in case of a medical emergency, knowing VA will cover the episode of care if notified within 72 hours.**

**Resolution No. 24: Awarding The Purple Heart For Traumatic Brain Injury**

**Origin: New York**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The denial of the Purple Heart Medal reflects a broader skepticism within the military over the severity of mild traumatic brain injury, often described as one of the signature wounds of recent conflicts; and

WHEREAS, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is a real damage to the brain caused by the vibrations of a loud explosion, or a severe blow to the head causing the brain to be jarred within the skull; and

WHEREAS, Even those with mild TBI may have physiological psychological symptoms that may occur at the time of the injury, or weeks or months later; and

WHEREAS, Physiological effects of mild TBI include loss of consciousness, dizziness, disorientation, confusion, headache, difficult sleeping, or oversleeping; and

WHEREAS, Psychological symptoms include sensory problems, sensitivity to light or sound memory of concentration problems, and

WHEREAS, Moderate to severe TBI can be diagnosed by a medical doctor; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Defense to award the Purple Heart Medal to active-duty military and veterans injured in a combat zone who suffer from a traumatic brain injury that is diagnosed by a medical doctor.**

**Resolution No. 25: Reconciliation Of Traumatic Memories Protocol For Treatment Of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

**Origin: New York**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a significant contributor to suicide ideation throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, Suicide of our military servicemembers is the highest on record and military veterans are committing suicide upwards of 20 per day; and

WHEREAS, The stress of multiple deployments, combat injuries, deaths, illnesses, and guilt challenge the healthiest of families both active duty and veteran; and

WHEREAS, Clinicians managing patients with PTSD have the following goals: establish a therapeutic alliance, provide ongoing assessment of safety and psychiatric status, address comorbid disorders, increase the patient's understanding of and coping with the effects of exposure to the traumatic event through implementing specific treatments (e.g. psychoeducation, psychotherapy and psychopharmacology) for PTSD; and

WHEREAS, It is time to face the fact that the currently accepted evidence-based protocols and drugs used in the private and government healthcare sectors aren't providing the care and relief PTSD patients need and require; and

WHEREAS, The Research and Recognition Project Inc., a New York based 501(c)3 non-profit, was formed for the express purpose of performing the comprehensive research necessary to validate the effectiveness of a treatment for PTSD; and

WHEREAS, Reconsolidation of Traumatic Memories (RTM) is a non-traumatizing, drug-free, reimagining process which removes nightmares, flashbacks, and the directly related emotional problems associated with PTSD stress in less than five hours; and

WHEREAS, 96% of the individuals completing the RTM pilot program had a total cessation of nightmares, flashbacks and directly related emotional problems; and

WHEREAS, These results were confirmed in a follow-up check conducted six months after treatment signifying the permanence of the relief; and

WHEREAS, The pilot was followed by three replication studies: first replication-30 male veterans-93% effectiveness-results maintained 12 months after treatment, second replication-30 female veterans-96% effectiveness, third replication-75 male veterans-90% effectiveness; and

WHEREAS, The 90%-96% clinical effectiveness results using the RTM Protocol compared to the 35% clinical effectiveness results for veterans treated with Department of Veterans Affairs accepted therapies makes the RTM Protocol a genuine breakthrough in PTSD treatment with national ramifications; and

WHEREAS, PTSD symptoms have lasted far too long, and the goal is not to manage symptoms, it is time to eliminate the nightmares, flashbacks and directly related emotional problems thereby reducing suicide ideation; and

WHEREAS, The RTM Protocol has been included in the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies' 2019 book "Effective Treatments for PTSD," the gold standard of evidence-based PTSD; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, Department of New York enthusiastically supports and strongly recommends the RTM Protocol and has donated \$25,000 to the Research and Recognition Project; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense to offer the Reconsolidation of Traumatic Memories (RTM) Protocol as a treatment option for veterans and active-duty military suffering from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to provide oversight and funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense, and the Research and Recognition Project for innovative PTSD research and clinical training in the RTM Treatment Protocol aimed at the national need.**

**Resolution No. 31: Expansion of the Central Missouri National Cemetery**

**Origin: Missouri**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**(As Amended)**

WHEREAS, The American Legion, a veteran's organization, chartered and incorporated by the U.S. Congress in 1919 as a patriotic organization devoted to mutual helpfulness; and

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 All Wars"; and

WHEREAS, The combat experiences, great and ultimate sacrifices, and commitment of the founders of The American Legion during World War One shaped their attitudes, values, sensibilities, and were paramount in their aspirations regarding what The American Legion should be and what it might become have been made to preserve the freedoms guaranteed by the United States Constitution; and

WHEREAS, The national cemetery has sadly been closed to the burial of veterans since 1969 for all veterans from Cole County and surrounding counties who have earned this honor and want to be buried in a national cemetery must be buried in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, which is over 135 miles to the east of Springfield National Cemetery, which is also closed and 137 miles to the southwest in which, almost all travel is by a two-lane country road; and

WHEREAS, For veterans from the Cole County and surrounding areas who want to be buried in a state cemetery, they must be buried either in Higginsville at 132 miles to the northwest of Fort Leonard Wood at 71 miles with a 1.5 or more hour drive to the south or Springfield at 137 miles to the southwest of Jacksonville at 92 miles to the north of Bloom

field 235 miles to the southeast in which, almost all travel is by a two-lane country road; and

WHEREAS, Many of these families of veterans cannot or are limited to how often they can visit their loved one's graves due to travel distance, seasonal weather, road conditions, and ability with either age or physical impairment; and

WHEREAS, Many families and veterans are underserved from the surrounding counties; Audrain (1.8K veterans), Boone (9.4k), Callaway (3.5K), Camden (4.4k), Cole (5K), Cooper (1.1k), Gasconade (1.1k), Maries (887), Miller (1k), Moniteau (1k), Morgan (1.7k), and Osage (872) of being interred close to their loved ones; and

WHEREAS, The expansion of the Central Missouri National Cemetery located in our beautiful capital city, Jefferson City, Missouri, will at a minimum, provide an honored resting place for 500 "in-ground interments and 5,000 columbarium interments for a minimal total of 5,500 honorable veteran interments; and

WHEREAS, The Jefferson City Park Board has voted to relocate the park adjacent to the cemetery to open approximately 0.5 acres for the national cemetery expansion that would honor our fallen by being buried in a veterans cemetery; and

WHEREAS, That upon approval of either National Cemetery Administration or the Jefferson City Council, the National Cemetery Expansion Committee with the support of American Legion Roscoe Enloe Post 5, The American Legion, Department of Missouri 8th District, will work with the Jefferson City officials to transfer land to the National Cemetery Administration for final design and funding; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021, That The American Legion recommends approval for the expansion of the Central Missouri National Cemetery.**

**Resolution No. 34: Department of Veterans Affairs Generate Reminder Letters For Expiring Claims Submissions**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**(As Amended)**

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have served honorably in our military and have dedicated themselves to the service of community, state, and nation; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a current procedure in place called "an Intent to File" which allows veterans and other claimants to contact the Veterans Administration either by phone, online, or by a prescribed form (21-0966); and

WHEREAS, Once this is received by the VA, the date received becomes the date of claim for either an increase in existing benefits or brand-new claim; and

WHEREAS, The claimant is sent an official letter advising them that they have one year from that date to finalize their claim with the official form, thus allowing claimants time to gather necessary documents and evidence; and

WHEREAS, The VA sets up an internal computer control and if the official form is not received within the prescribed year, the case is closed; and

WHEREAS, Department Service Officers have noticed that due to many reasons, e.g., change of jobs, health issues, family problems, relocations, etc., claimants may not file within the allowed one year, thus losing out on possible retroactive payments if they are later granted; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to adjust its internal computer controls on "Intent to File" claims and generate a reminder letter, 60 days before the one year is up, to the address of record at that time; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That this letter, in the strongest terms, remind the claimant that their deadline is coming up and if the official claim form is not received, the claimant runs the risk of losing any retroactive payments that might have been available.**

**Resolution No. 36: Prevent Gold Star Spouses Loss of Benefits**

**Origin: Illinois**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**(As Amended)**

WHEREAS, U.S. military service is well-known to be a life of sacrifice, long days away from home, and countless stressors to be borne by the military family, especially by military spouses, who are recognized as an integral part of the U.S. military support system, and as part of The American Legion Family; and

WHEREAS, Gold Star spouses, those who have lost their partners in the line of duty in the US Military, currently receive several benefits such as Death Gratuity, Family Survivor's Group Life Insurance, the Survivor Benefit Plan, and other benefits ranging from emotional support to free education; and

WHEREAS, Under current law, Gold Star spouses lose their benefits if they remarry before turning 55, and they also lose their Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefits if they remarry before turning 57; and

WHEREAS, This situation puts grieving spouses who have lost their partners in a predicament where earned benefits are lost when individuals hope to remarry and begin new families after losing a loved one in the service; and,

WHEREAS, This creates an unnecessary burden and these benefits should be protected by The American Legion, since this affects the following pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, as this can affect Gold Star spouses also serving in the military leading to a loss of benefits, it affects Americanism, as this relates to our American values of caring for the veteran, spouses, and orphans, and it affects Children and Youth, as individuals who decline to remarry in order to preserve earned benefits, may cause custody and child care issues; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021, That The American Legion takes the official stance that Gold Star spouses should not lose benefits when remarrying.**

**Resolution No. 38: Predatory Claims Companies**

**Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Predatory claims companies, also known as "pension poachers," are exploiting veterans and their dependents by charging unreasonable fees for assistance in filing claims for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits; and

WHEREAS, Some of these companies are lobbying Congress to legitimize their services, which are provided free of charge by The American Legion and other veterans service organizations (VSOs); and

WHEREAS, Legislation was recently introduced in the U.S. Senate that would authorize a VA pilot program to use the services of such predatory companies, services referred to in the bill as "pension claim enhancement assistance"; and

WHEREAS, Such "pension claim enhancement assistance" includes services that are performed free of charge by The American Legion and other VSOs, e.g., consultive services "based upon a review of each claimant's specific circumstances," help with "gathering all necessary supporting documentation," and the "creation of a fully developed application ready to be submitted" to VA's Pension Management Centers; and

WHEREAS, This recently introduced legislation erroneously claims that a backlog exists for VA pension claims, when, in fact, no such backlog exists; and

WHEREAS, As of August 2, 2021, the Veterans Benefits Administration listed in its Monday Morning Workload Report a total of 242 original pension claims nationwide that

have been pending for more than 125 days, an amount that cannot reasonably be characterized as a "backlog"; and

WHEREAS, Predatory claims companies lack VA accreditation and do not have legal access to veterans' personal information; thus, they must acquire eBenefits login information from veterans to track their claims and such acquisitions may be violations of the law; and

WHEREAS, These companies use confusing, lengthy contracts to lure veterans into paying unreasonable fees for services that are already provided free of charge by The American Legion's accredited representatives; and

WHEREAS, Companies that charge exorbitant fees for "pension claim enhancement assistance" will, more likely than not, discourage veterans from seeking benefits they are entitled to, which will adversely affect our most disadvantaged veterans who cannot afford to sacrifice a portion of their benefits; and

WHEREAS, VA's Office of General Counsel has advised that one of the best ways veterans can protect themselves from predatory claims companies is by reporting their activities to the Federal Trade Commission, which shares its data with federal law enforcement agencies; and

WHEREAS, Permitting such predatory companies to charge unreasonable fees for their services, and passing legislation that would protect such deplorable practices, is counterproductive to the goal of improving the quality of life for America's veterans and their dependents and hinders VA's ability to protect veterans' privacy; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021, That The American Legion urges Congress to oppose any legislation that seeks to elevate the standing of predatory claims companies by legitimizing practices that target veterans and their dependents; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General and Office of General Counsel to work more effectively with the Federal Trade Commission, Department of Justice, state attorneys general and state bar associations to identify and prosecute such predatory claims companies to the fullest extent of the law.**

#### **Referred To Standing Commission**

**Resolution No. 10 (CA): Veteran Support and Outreach**

**Resolution No. 32 (IL): Three Levels of Compensation for Tinnitus**

#### **Received And Recorded**

**Resolution No. 11 (CA): Expanding Veteran Outreach Efforts to Address Social Isolation**

**Resolution No. 35 (IL): Department of Veterans Affairs Child Care Program**

#### **Rejected**

**Resolution No. 13 (CA): Expansion of Veterans Affairs Services**

**Resolution No. 33 (IL): Department of Veterans Affairs Modify Intent to File Form 21-0966 to Allow for Supplemental Claims**

This concludes the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Convention Committee Report, and I move for its acceptance. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor say aye. Any opposed, nay. The report of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation is adopted.

**Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy**

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 2020-2021 program year, the Lenker National Service Trophy is awarded to the Department of Pennsylvania. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Spirit of Service Award**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: In our earlier presentation to the Spirit of Service winners, our Coast Guard Spirit of Service winner's travel was delayed. She was unable to be with us because of weather, but she is with us today. Let's hear more about Petty Officer Second Class Jessica Rooks, our Coast Guard Spirit of Service winner.

*ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient has demonstrated service before self by dedicating her time and efforts to many charitable organizations within her community. She demonstrates her commitment as co-pastor at Christian Muscle Wellness Academy while also volunteering at Penelope's House, an organization providing safety, protection, and support to victims of domestic violence and their children.*

*She also led a collection for Fostering Together Gulf Coast, donating over \$300 in clothing for local foster children and parents. Recognizing the unusual stress the pandemic had on her community, she organized and taught an eight-week course called Replenished for a Purpose. Representing the U.S. Coast Guard, please welcome Petty Officer Second Class Jessica Rooks. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I introduced her as second class. She recently promoted to first class petty officer. *(Applause)*

PO1 JESSICA ROOKS: Thank you. Good afternoon. I just wanted to first give honor and glory to God because without him I wouldn't be here. I would also like to thank my husband Julian and my three children for allowing me to do everything that I do. I would like to thank The American Legion for selecting me for this award. I'm very grateful and honored, and I would also like to thank my command, Aviation Training Center Mobile in Alabama, Captain Holzer, Chief Warrant Officer Gandy, Chief Warrant Officer Bean, for taking the time to write this up for me and to put me in for this. I'm just very grateful and thankful and thank you. *(Applause)*

**Salute to Colors and Recess**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Legionnaires, would you please stand and join me in a salute to the flag of the United States of America. One!

*...The delegates rose and saluted the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Two! The time is 1:02 p.m. The Convention will stand in recess until 8:30 a.m. tomorrow.

*...At 1:02 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, September 2, 2021, at 8:30 a.m.*



**PROCEEDINGS  
Third Day**

**Thursday, September 2, 2021**

*...At 8:30 a.m., the members assembled for the 102nd Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.*

**Call to Order**

**James W. "Bill" Oxford, North Carolina, National Commander**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The convention will come to order.  
Sergeant-at-Arms.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SHORE: Our nations Colors are in place, by the numbers. One.

*...The delegates rose and saluted the Colors.*

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS SHORE: Two.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Edward L. Harris, Jr., of Indiana.

**Invocation**

**Chaplain Edward L. Harris, Indiana, National Chaplain**

Dear God, thank you for this day. And as this petitioner continues to pray, thank you for allowing us to be a part of it. Dear God, it is the opinion of this servant that the crew is coming into port and our national adjutant has cleared a berth so our service can be rewarded, and the next crew take over. Thank you for the blessings of service that we have received. Thank you for the support from the national staff that has caused what we've tried to do be very easy to do. God bless our sick, our infirm and our bereaved. All this we ask in Your name. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Please remain uncovered as National Sergeant-at-Arms David S. Shore of North Carolina leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**David S. Shore, North Carolina, Sergeant-at-Arms**

Please join me as we recite the Pledge of Allegiance to our Nation's colors.

*...The Convention recited the Pledge of Allegiance.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Please recover. The Convention is now in session.

**Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: We begin this morning by recognizing outstanding achievements in journalism that has 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 also have to provide a tangible benefit to society.

Being honored in the Broadcast Category is WFTS of Tampa, Florida. In its comprehensive series "The Price of Protection, Problems with Court-Ordered Guardianship" the ABC Action News ITeam examined problems with many of Florida's court-ordered guardians who victimize vulnerable seniors while profiting from their care.

The reporting is believed to have influenced the firing of an agency head by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and reforms passed by the state's legislature. Please turn your attention to the video monitors. ...*The Convention viewed a video. (Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Ladies and gentlemen, Investigative Reporter Adam Walser.

**Broadcast Category**  
**WFTS, Tampa, Florida**

ADAM WALSER: Thank you so very much for this very prestigious award. And first of all, thank you so much for your service to our country. If it wasn't for the men and women who have fought for our freedoms and our rights, we wouldn't be able to do the job that we do. So, thank you very much. Thank you to my wife for coming here to Phoenix with me and always supporting me in this. I'd also like to recognize the people on my team who were involved in this year's long project, including photographer Randy Wright, producer Melanie Payne, Assistant News Director Mark Zonca, News Director Sarah Moore and general manager Nick Nicholson. I'd also like to thank my company Scripps for its investment and dedication to investigative journalism.

Now Britney Spears' court battle and the Netflix hit "I Care a Lot" have brought some of these problems of guardianship and conservatorship into the national spotlight. But it still remains a secretive system in which many of our most vulnerable citizens are isolated, financially exploited and abused. When I moved to Florida in 2013, I had been in the news business for more than two decades, yet I'd never heard of guardianship. As we started digging into these issues, it became more and more apparent how corrupt and dysfunctional this system can be.

In Florida, under guardianship, you can lose all your rights, including the right to vote. To marry. To choose where you live. To make decisions about your medical care. To manage your money. To hire a lawyer. And even to choose who you can see and talk to, and that can even include your friends and family. You can lose all these rights in a very brief court hearing, which you may not even be allowed to attend. That comes after a brief examination by a committee of three strangers who decide whether or not you are incapacitated, which is the legal term for no longer able to take care of yourself. Even scarier, in Florida, anybody can petition a judge to put you into guardianship. It could be a child that's left out of a will, an angry business partner, or even a neighbor who wants to buy your property. And once you find yourself in this system, it's nearly impossible to get out.

In guardianship, that money you saved your entire life to enjoy your golden years, will likely be consumed by guardians and their attorneys who can charge hundreds of dollars an hour. You have no choice when it comes to paying their bill. And if you try to fight it to get your rights restored, you'll end up spending thousands more. We've seen all this and more during the years we've done these stories. And I can tell you the fact that this type of outcome could even happen in one case should frighten every single American.

In the course of our reporting, we've seen officials take notice. A handful of the bad guardians we've profiled have been arrested. State laws have been changed, and Florida created a watchdog agency and eventually reorganized it on the order of Governor Ron DeSantis to address some of those worst offenders. Our job is far from over as bad actors continue to find new ways to exploit seniors, and judges are assigned far too many cases to tell what's really going on.

I urge everyone here to take a few minutes and learn about guardianship. There are free documents available online that you can fill out and have witnessed and notarized that allow you to name someone you know and trust to serve as your guardian and carry out your wishes should that need arise. You definitely don't want to leave your most important decisions to judges or to strangers. Most of the people who end up in guardianship don't have millions of dollars and millions of fans like Britney Spears. I can tell you, from talking

to hundreds of victims of this broken system from all over the country, that it can happen to anybody. And in eight years no one has put it more bluntly than the woman you heard in that clip a few minutes ago. We're more afraid of the word "guardian" than we are the word "cancer." You can see all our prior stories at [abcactionnews.com/protection](http://abcactionnews.com/protection). Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The Fourth Estate Internet/New Media Award goes to Military.com. Reporter Gina Harkins wrote about a short-lived proposal to close Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island. Military.com scooped all other outlets and was the first. The proposal outraged several members of the South Carolina congressional delegation and many Marines and led to the Parris Island Protection Act. We have a brief video about this.

... *The Convention viewed a video.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Gina is no longer with Military.com and unable to be with us today. But we have another outstanding reporter from Military.com. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Steve Beynon.

**Internet/New Media Category  
Military.com**

STEVE BEYNON: Good morning. Yes, I am not Gina. She's one of the most phenomenal reporters in the business and could not make it today. But thank you. I want to start by thanking The American Legion and expressing the deep gratitude Military.com has for this honor. The Legion's 100-plus history of advocacy on behalf of veterans, its commitment to ensuring that those who wear the uniforms are supported by the country whose flag adorns that uniform, is very much the model Military.com aims to emulate.

I have had the honor of serving myself, having deployed to Afghanistan several times as a cavalry scout. And I still serve today as a guardsman. But my obligation to our community and the democracy for which we pick up arms extends to my role as a journalist serving as a watchdog for our community. The journalist for which this honor includes reporting from Gina Harkins for consideration for coed boot camp for Marine recruits reporting encapsulates our role as scribes as well as advocates to ensure that every servicemember is afforded the opportunity and support they have earned through their willingness to stand and defend our country. Gina has moved on and now serves as an editor for The Washington Post. But she's left behind a newsroom that represents our role in writing the first draft of history and ensuring that voices from the military community are given a microphone that they deserve.

Right now, it's a particularly difficult time for veterans. The end of the war in Afghanistan, the country unraveling quickly, while a number of Afghans who helped servicemembers during two decades of war desperately attempted to escape ahead of Taliban rule. And a humanitarian evacuation that became a target of a terrorist attack that killed 13 servicemembers has triggered a resurfaced trauma for many veterans. Earlier this week we learned that there's been a surge of messages to the VA's crisis hotline coinciding with the Taliban's conquest of Afghanistan. Those who serve continue to grapple with the complex emotions surrounding the end of the long conflict.

But for all of us, it's a reminder that our community needs our help. The Legion has played a critical role in the history of this community, helping create strong supportive platform structures such as the GI Bill. And Military.com continues to ensure that those in uniform have the opportunity to utilize that support. With reporting like our recent investigation into how one university failed to help its student veterans obtain some of their GI Bill benefits with mental health crisis that so many grapple with now in the wounds of battle, both to their bodies and souls, the war of post-9/11 is unprecedented. We must commit ourselves to having the hard conversations that our community is feeling. And we at Military.com are committed to ensuring that those conversations are heard and that all

servicemembers know that they're not alone during this trying time. And that their needs will not be ignored.

While we're elated to receive this award from the Legion, it serves mostly as a reminder of the responsibility that we have to do that reporting helps our community move forward. And we pledge to do just that even when the conversations are difficult. Thank you for this honor and our continued partnership in helping share the stories of our community. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The Daily Herald of Arlington Heights, Illinois, is being recognized in the print category for its series of articles about veterans who died with no relatives who were willing to arrange funerals. The articles quickly went viral, prompting hundreds of people from the Chicago area to show support and attend memorial services for the veterans. The deceased veterans were given the military honors that they deserved. Let's take a look at this great work. ...*The Convention viewed a video.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Accepting the award is visual artist Rick West. *(Applause)*

**Print Category  
Daily Herald, Arlington Heights, Illinois**

RICK WEST: Thank you so much. I'm much more used to being on that side of the podium. First off, I'd like to thank The American Legion for this extremely prestigious award. Everybody at the Daily Herald is very proud of this work. And I would very much like to acknowledge Elena Ferrarin, who couldn't be here today. She did most of the heavy lifting on this. She got the story started. It was her relationship writing stories with Joy in the past that brought this story to us. I'd also like to thank Dan and Joy Symonds from Symonds-Madison Funeral Home, because without them none of this would have happened. They had taken care of funerals like this in the past like Joy had said, but they had done it quietly. This one time, when they decided to reach out and take a chance, they found out that the community cares about people. People like this, especially, and especially veterans. And they came out and they turned out for him, for John James Murphy, and for several others throughout the year.

We're a community newspaper. We cover local people. It's what I love to do. And the thing about that is that everybody's story is important. It's important to them. It's important to us. And so, we try to do our best on any story. But some stories just feel a little bit bigger. And they feel a little bit more important. And you feel a little bit better when you're done with them. These stories were like that.

Elena and I did four or five of these last year together. And like I said, as rewarding as it was, as much as they resonated with readers, I very much hope that I never do another one, because it's tragic. It's heartbreaking to hear the stories of someone who has gone through an entire life, experienced the brotherhood of military service, and then in the end they're alone.

So, if you know of anyone you haven't heard from in a while who just sort of fell off the radar, fell off the map, maybe now is the time to reach out to them and see how they're doing. Reconnect with people. And as long as this does happen, I know that Dan and Joy will be there for them, and we'll be there to tell their stories as well. So again, thank you very much. I wish Elena could have been here today. Her work was amazing. That is all. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Our next guest attended the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and U.S. Naval Post Graduate School. As a naval aviator, he flew 39 combat missions during the Gulf War. As an astronaut, he flew four missions into space and flew the final flight of Endeavor in 2011. He lives in Tucson with his wife, former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords. On December 2, 2020, he was elected to finish the term

of the late Senator John McCain. Please welcome, from the state of Arizona, the Honorable U.S. Senator Mark Kelly. *(Applause)*

**Address: Honorable Mark Kelly  
United States Senate**

Good morning, everybody. It's great to be here. Such an honor to be invited and to be in the presence of Americans who are dedicated to serving our country and dedicated to one another. I want to thank, first of all, James Oxford, national commander, Vice Admiral Yancey Lindsey, the commander of the Navy Installations Command, and Legion Auxiliary State President Jennie Molina for having me here today. I really appreciate the opportunity. But most of all I want to thank all of you, every Legionnaire that's here today, and everybody across the country, thank you for your selfless service. Thank you for your sacrifice. And thank you for your dedication to our country.

Now, growing up in New Jersey, both of my parents were police officers. They taught me a lot about public service. And it was their example that inspired me to join the United States Navy. From 39 combat missions and Operation Desert Storm, to four trips rocketing into space on the space shuttle, to this new job serving in the United States Senate, I have always found my purpose in public service. I know that's something that many of us in this room and around the country share. I say this often. I may be a bit biased about this, but I know that those who join our armed forces, those who put on our nation's uniform and take the oath, they are the very best, the very best that our country has to offer. *(Applause)*

Never, never has that been clearer than over these past couple of weeks. We saw the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, which is where my dad served in the early 1960s. We saw Marines and Air Force pilots deploy on an hour's notice to facilitate an airlift that got more than 120,000 people out of Afghanistan. An incredible effort. No one but the United States military could have pulled that off. No one. I'm so grateful for their professionalism and their courage in the face of constant threats.

Now, it's important we take a moment to recognize those who made the ultimate sacrifice last week. Eleven Marines, one Navy corpsman and one soldier killed in a terrorist attack while they protected the airport. Today, we think of their families and loved ones. And we remember them, and we reflect on their lives and their service and their love of our country. I know that many of you in this room understand personally that level of sacrifice better than most. And today you all continue to serve. So, thank you for that.

The Legion's service is as far reaching as our military. And the positive impact of your work is admirable. Whether it's assisting veterans with their benefits, helping veterans and their families explore career options, providing family and community support or offering opportunities for homeless veterans. The American Legion ensures that "Veterans Strengthening America" is more than just a motto, it's a practice. A practice ingrained in American values. And one that, both in my past as a naval aviator, as an astronaut and now as a U.S. senator, I try to put into action every single day. That's because the legacy of this Senate seat, the one that I'm in, is one of service. It's one of integrity, independence, and the love of our country.

Like many of you, I imagine like me, you know, your first impressions of John McCain may not have been of him as a senator. It wasn't for me. But my first impression of him was of his service in the United States Navy. I remember being at SERE school in 1987, and John McCain was the example of how you continue to serve your country honorably and bravely in the most impossible circumstance of being shot down and captured. He was a hero to young Navy pilots like me. I never expected that I would get the opportunity to meet him later in life or to call him a friend. And I certainly never expected to be serving in this senate seat, his senate seat. And though his legacy of service cannot be matched, it is my intention to carry on this mission both on the Senate Armed Services Committee, where I work to strengthen our national security and Arizona's role

in it, and on veterans' issues, ensuring that the federal government serves veterans with the same respect and integrity as our veterans have served our country. *(Applause)*

Thank you. With that in mind, one of the first things I did after taking office was to form a veterans advisory group, made up of Arizona veterans. Community leaders. We meet regularly to discuss how to strengthen the partnership between our state's communities and its servicemembers and veterans and their families. This group's input and recommendations are central to my work in guaranteeing that every policy, every program or resource that flows from Washington supports veterans and their families here at home.

That starts with legislation like the VA Quality Healthcare Accountability and Transparency Act, which is making progress in the Senate this week. Here in Phoenix, veterans know what it means when the VA doesn't keep its promise. We know what that's like. Congressman Ruben Gallego and I introduced this bipartisan legislation to address issues identified by the Government Accountability Office with how the VA was failing to disclose information in a way that could be utilized by veterans. This legislation would require the VA to work with veterans service organizations and veterans and caregivers to improve the display of staffing and vacancy information and patient wait times and patient safety and quality of care measures in a way that is easy for veterans to use so they can make informed decisions about their health care. It would also require the VA to annually audit the data that is released to the public to ensure that it is both accurate and complete. That means improving transparency. And giving veterans and veterans service organizations like yours the tools to better help veterans get the care that they need. And the care that they've earned. I'm glad to say that just a few weeks ago it advanced unanimously out of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. Together, with my senate colleagues, I'm working on cutting through red tape to make sure that our veterans get the care they need without unnecessary delays or hardship.

Earlier this year, as the vaccine was just starting to be distributed, I urged the VA to expand COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to all veterans and their spouses and ensure that family members of veterans who passed away due to COVID-19 received the dependent benefits that they count on. And just last week I joined Republicans and Democrats, my colleagues, on calling on the VA to do more proactive engagement with post-9/11 veterans during what is such a difficult time for many, right now with what's happened over the last couple of weeks.

I've also introduced bipartisan legislation named after fallen United States Navy Petty Officer Brandon Caserta, who was from Arizona. The Brandon Act would allow servicemembers to confidentially seek mental health treatment to prevent tragedies like Brandon's. We are here to serve Arizonians and Americans. That's our mission. My Senate office is guided by that philosophy. Day in and day out our staff stops at nothing to assist veterans. In the nine short months since we opened our office, my team has helped prevent a disabled veteran from being evicted. We've assisted countless Arizonians with obtaining survivor benefits. We've helped veterans trace and retain their disability benefits. And we've connected a chronically injured veteran with much needed care closer to home. These are only a few examples of the cases that we have had the privilege to have an impact on. And I'm sure that everybody in this room knows exactly the kind of rewarding feeling you get from successfully helping a veteran.

In recent weeks we've also been all hands on deck to assist Americans and Afghan partners evacuating Afghanistan. We've worked on hundreds of cases. We've helped many get out. But this work doesn't stop. And while I'm here, I want to say that my office is at Arizonian's disposal. It's at your disposal. Please, please reach out if you or somebody that you know needs help navigating a federal agency. Sometimes it is really hard. We are here to help. Organizations like The American Legion inspire and inform my service. Working together we can hold the VA accountable to provide world-class care, cut through unnecessary bureaucracy, and offer educational, financial and career support to those who gave so much in service of our nation.

These are not Democrat or Republican issues. These are American issues. And that's something Senator McCain understood; that there is common ground to be found, especially when it comes to strengthening our national defense and taking care of our servicemembers, veterans and their families. I'm proud to be working alongside with all of you towards that mission. Mission success. So, thank you once again for your service. Thank you for your continued dedication to our country and have a great rest of the convention. Thank you very much, everybody. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: At this time, we'll be accepting Operation Comfort Warriors donations. ...*National Vice Commander Liebenow assumed the Chair.*

### **Collection of Donations to Operation Comfort Warriors**

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): Minnesota donates \$1,000 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

DELEGATE GRIGSBY (MO): Gary Grigsby, commander of the state of Missouri. Missouri, the home of President Harry S. Truman, is proud to contribute \$200 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (VA): Good morning. On behalf of American Legion Post 16 in the great city of Lynchburg, Virginia, we'd like to contribute \$220 to the NEF.

DELEGATE WATSON (TX): I'm Brett Watson, department commander of the Lone Star State, home of Past National Commander John Brieden and home of leading candidate for national commander Paul Dillard. We donate \$1,500 to OCW.

DELEGATE EIRICH (WI): Greg Eirich, department commander, Department of Wisconsin, Wisconsin proud, Wisconsin rocks. The Wisconsin American Legion Family, at the last minute, raised \$810 for Operation Comfort Warriors.

DELEGATE FLEMING (FR): Good morning, John Fleming from China Post 1, we're donating \$3,500 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CA): On behalf of Charles P. Rowe Post 30, Pomona, and the 18<sup>th</sup> District we're donating \$150 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ (IN): Thank you, commander. With me on the stage, Department Commander Mark Guillion, our NEC Jerry Jordon and our alternate NEC Ed Trice. As you know, Operation Comfort Warriors is a special program, and it means a lot to me. So, I'm trying to be out there and raising as much money as we can for Operation Comfort Warriors. I know it probably wasn't announced here this week, but the Department of California just received a \$20,000 grant from Operation Comfort Warriors on Tuesday. So, we're out there helping the veterans, helping the wounded. So, we want to thank you for that.

Our donations this year, I'm going to read this list because I think it's very important that everybody gets their name mentioned. Elberfeld Post Legion 351, this is a group of active-duty soldiers that come home every Christmas, put on a snowball softball tournament and raise money for Operation Comfort Warriors. In 2020 they raised \$1,802. And another \$225. Then we had a donation of Don and Lucy Sutherland, \$55. Me and my wife \$50. We had one donation that I got back there for NEF for \$20. American Legion Department of Ohio, the 14<sup>th</sup> District, \$700. American Legion Post 685, Hudson, Ohio, \$300. Bloomville American Legion, \$500. Sue Dorner, \$20. And 2019 we had another softball tournament at Elberfeld Post 351, raised \$2,292. Branchville Correctional American Legion Post 390, \$1,000. Beech Grove American Legion, 276, \$500. Burlington American Legion 414, \$250. Marengo Post 84, \$250. Fort Wayne American Legion 241, \$1,000. Elberfeld Juniors American Legion Auxiliary, \$1,318.76. And Osceola SAL Squadron 308, \$1,000. Jack and Marylou Cook, \$1,000. Alfonso Polito, \$100. Larry Lavery, \$300. Richard and Andrea Woodke, \$100. Indiana members of the credit union, \$815. Jasonville Sons of The American Legion 172, \$200. And Wheatville Squadron 406,

\$1,000. Our total donation today, \$14,757.76. Thank you all very much for supporting Operation Comfort Warriors. *(Applause)*

DELEGATE WILEY (NH): Good morning. Tom Wiley, department adjutant, temporary, from the great state of New Hampshire, live free or die. I personally, from Lebanon Post 22, I personally donated, \$100. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Folks, I told you I'm a numbers guy. The total Operation Comfort Warriors donations, for 2020, \$210,588. For 2021, \$447,477, for a grand total of \$658,065. Operation Comfort Warriors in our two years. And we talked about these numbers yesterday. But all fundraising, all American Legion charities for 2020, \$7,732,771. For 2021, \$14,785,145. Grand total for our two years, \$22,517,000. Wow. Great, great, work. *(Applause)*

### Special Presentations

We're now to the point on our agenda that everybody has been waiting for. I would like to call my family to the lectern. I'm going to start with this beautiful young lady right here. This is going to be tough, folks, I'll tell ya. This is my daughter-in-law, Deah Reid Oxford, and this is my son Charles. And my wife Francis. We love you all. *(Applause)*

Thank you all. And you all can go ahead and sit down. I'd like to invite the national vice commanders, please come forward. These guys have represented me, and us, extremely well during the past twenty-four months. I appreciate your devotion and sacrifice for our great organization. As a token of my appreciation, I would like to present you a small gift. I turn the microphone over to Rich Heigert. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HEIGERT: Commander, on behalf of your leadership that you've shown us both years, you've been an inspiration to all five of us and on behalf of all five of us, we'd like to present you with a gift.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Thank you. Goblets. They're trying to tell me something here. Beautiful.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HEIGERT: This is a hand-engraved decanter with six glasses that are engraved with each of our names on it, including yours. And also, so that you can keep that decanter refilled, we have another gift for you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Thank you. Love you guys. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HEIGERT: I like to now call on the national historian, sergeant-at-arms, chaplain and my aide to come forward. You each played important roles in the success of our organization. I salute you for your service. I ask you please accept these gifts as a token.

AIDE TO THE NATIONAL COMMANDER CLINE: When we were trying to come up with some good ideas for presents, at the commander's homecoming, he gave out American Legion World Series baseballs. So, we figured what the heck, we'll give some back to him. And we got three of them. And we tried to get signatures from every department and present them to the commander here. That's our first. It took us a long time between the four of us to get those different signatures written on there. *(Applause)*

The second one was, there was always a rumor going around that the commander had been in Marine aviation when he was younger. So, through a lot of research and such, well, actually Francis gave me a few pictures that proved it. We got him a wooden model of the aircraft in his original squadron markings accurate. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I told you this was going to be hard. But I'd like to have a few words from National Adjutant Dan Wheeler.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, it has been a rare honor and privilege to serve you and America's veterans under your leadership. We are all grateful to you for your friendship and your mentorship. And if we had to have any commander serve more than one term, we unanimously vote for you. And if you want to stay on, we'll tell Paul Dillard another time. *(Laughter)*

Look, your slogan was the Foundation for the Future. And you know a bit about foundations, and you've made it your theme. You know something about building foundations. I'm not much of a handyman myself. Only toolbox I have is right here. And there's not many tools in it. But today your executive directors, national treasurer, myself, and your division directors purchased a Lowe's gift card for you for \$1,500 to help you build your foundations and your other handiwork. And we hope that as you're doing this, you'll remember your loyal friends back at national headquarters. We love you and we thank you so much for your leadership. And don't make yourself a stranger. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: They don't know what kind of projects that I've got coming up, but that will be well used.

*...National Vice Commander King assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER KING: After serving the last two years as national vice commander, I'm honored to represent all members of The American Legion in presiding over the next order of business. At this time, we will present to National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford the colors of his year in office and plaque. At this time, I call on Past National Commander Daniel A. Ludwig to present the colors.

**Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander  
Daniel A Ludwig, Minnesota, Past National Commander (Colors)  
John P. Comer, Massachusetts, Past National Commander (Plaque)**

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER LUDWIG: Thank you, National Vice Commander King. Legionnaires, distinguished guests, please rise as we present the colors to the national commander. I call on the color guard from Harrisburg Post 472, Houston, Texas, to bring the Colors of the national commander to center stage. Hand salute.

*...The delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER LUDWIG: Two. Please be seated. National Commander Oxford, I invite you to join me at the lectern. Commander Oxford, you have now cemented your legacy as the longest-serving national commander in the history of our great organization. *(Applause)*

You enlisted for an additional year, not because of personal ambition or a drive for power, you did it out of devotion and obligation to serve The American Legion through challenges not seen since World War Two and the Great Depression. You remained optimistic and steadfast. Society may have shut down during the pandemic, but The American Legion continued to serve in communities around the world under your leadership. From blood drives to online job fairs, you kept this engine running. We have built an incredible relationship with Ganassi Racing and adopted the motto "Veterans Strengthening America," all during your term of office. Perhaps most importantly, you have raised public awareness about The American Legion's commitment to end veterans suicide.

National Commander Oxford, you are about to earn a new title, that of past national commander. This coveted title says you did your duty and left your imprint on our enduring legacy. You have also earned a well-deserved rest, and the eternal gratitude of our American Legion Family. And so, commander, I am pleased and honored to present these Colors, your Colors, to you. I present them on behalf of all Legionnaires who 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 Bill Oxford, your Colors. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Color Guard, please retire my Colors. Hand Salute! *...The delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Two! Thank you, Dan. When this thing started two years ago, I didn't have a clue, but I am just so thankful for the opportunity. I want to take a couple of moments to express thanks to some different folks. First of all, I'd like to thank my family for being here. They have been so supportive. *(Applause)*

I'd like to thank Commander Ludwig for doing the ceremony. I'd like to thank Dan Wheeler for his help, support, advice, direction and his staff. I mean, the folks in the Indianapolis, the folks in D.C. all do great work. We need to recognize their commitment, but Dan, thanks very much for your help and support. *(Applause)*

And a special thanks to our national vice commanders, Dave, Frank, Rick, Bruce and Rob. They have represented us across this country well. Gentlemen, thank you. *(Applause)*

But to the people most important, to our department, our division, our district, our post commanders, and county commanders, that's where the rubber meets the road. That's where the boots are on the ground. Thank you for your help, support, advice, direction and the welcome we received in your different departments. *(Applause)*

And to the adjutants of those same organizations. Department, division, county, district, post adjutants, they're the first sergeants of our organization, thank you all for your help, support, advice, direction and promoting our American Legion ideals. *(Applause)*

Absolutely. But the most important people in our organization, that's the Blue Cap Legionnaires. Without you, we could not do the job that we do. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. *(Applause)*

I'd like to group every one of those people together. That's most of all the friends that we've met and got to know across the country, across the world. But those friendships that we made and are developing and will continue to have are most important to us. But I'm going to finish this section with a special thanks to my aide, Larry Cline, many hours, we didn't always agree, but hours of do this, don't do that, where did he go? Those kinds of things are an extremely valuable contribution to the commander's job. But Larry, thanks very much for what you have done. *(Applause)*

*...National Vice Commander Feuerbach assumed the Chair.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER FEUERBACH: I now call on Past National Commander John P. "Jake" Comer to present the plaque to our outgoing national commanders.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Thank you very much. What an honor that's been given to me in the presenting of this plaque. Each year those are special appointments. Commander, will you please join me.

We can never truly predict what will happen during our time as national commander. Lynn Stambaugh was the Pearl Harbor commander. Ric Santos of Delaware was our 9/11 commander. And now, American Legion history will list you as our COVID-19 commander.

When you were elected in 2019, nobody had ever heard of the coronavirus. A year later, we all knew what it was and the enormous threat it represented to all. Your steady and responsible leadership throughout the crisis was essential. You frequently reminded us that America has made it through many challenges and that we always overcame them. Zoom, social distancing, PPE. Who even knew what these things were two years ago? But you understood the need to embrace these changes and prioritized the safety of our members and our youth program participants. Even during long stretches when department visits were cancelled and you worked from home, you kept advocating for veterans, families and our allies in Afghanistan.

No other national commander was given a second year. But you used that extra time wisely. 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. It is given in appreciation of your dedicated leadership and in recognition of your devoted service to God and country, and in token of the high esteem of your fellow Legionnaires. It is presented this second day of September, before the delegates assembled at the National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. Congratulations, Commander Oxford. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: During my previous remarks, I neglected to mention the Department of North Carolina. Thank you all! *(Cheers and applause)*

I've had many thoughts about how this would be and what it would be like. And I've changed my comments several, several times since I started. But I think that I just want to

talk about just a couple of things. I could talk about all of the fabulous places that we've seen, the wonders of the country, the wonders of the world. And I mean there are multiple, White House, and many others, all across the world. Well, maybe I could talk about all of the fabulous and famous people that we've met. I mean, multiple presidents, congressmen, Chip Ganassi, Jimmie Johnson, the list goes on, congressmen and senators. But I decided not to do that. I wanted to put some emphasis on one of the most memorable things that sticks in my mind. It is the most selfless act that I have seen.

We were in Puerto Rico last year, during the earthquakes. We got to Post 87 in Guanica, Puerto Rico. Post Commander Clemente Delgado was at the post collecting relief supplies, food, clothing, medical supplies for the people who had been affected by the earthquakes. We got to the post. In Puerto Rico, some of the streets are narrow. So, we parked half on the street, half on the sidewalk. We got ready to get out. The van goes blblbl. The driver says, "Oh, that was the wind." It was another earthquake. But we got into the post. The post commander was there. He gave us the tour, explained what he was doing, the needs. And we probably spent a couple of hours, but that post commander was working to support his fellow countrymen from his post. His post was pretty much destroyed. There were cracks this big in his building. And I have not heard how that has turned out. But the building was pretty much demolished. But we spent several hours.

After we got through, Clemente said, "Follow me over to my house." And we didn't know what to expect. I thought maybe we'd have a glass of tea or a sandwich. But we got to his house. His house was relatively new. Within three to five years old. But his house was on its side. This post commander was more worried about his countrymen, his fellow citizens, than he was his own well-being. The most selfless act I've ever seen. *(Applause)*

But I'm sure your new commander will tell you about his theme and his plans and where he wants to take the organization. But please don't forget about my theme. The Foundation for the Future. The American Legion is 102-years-old. And we've got to remember just as valuable just as important just as relevant as we've ever been. But we, you, me, we, us, we are the future of our organization. The decisions that we make today, the ones we made yesterday and the ones we will make tomorrow are affecting our organization and will for decades to come. Please remember that. Make that consideration in every decision that you make.

Two parts. We've got to make sure membership gets back to a level that we can accept. We've had some hard membership years. COVID has dealt us some hands that really we didn't want to hold, but we've didn't have a choice. We've got to continue to move forward and make sure everybody gets to be a recruiter, retainer an inviter. We have to have the whole Legion Family as part of our membership team. I can't do it. Commander Paul can't do it, but we can do it. We've got to make sure we remember the future of our organization when we think about membership. *(Applause)*

But when we think about the future, we have to make sure we understand we can also impact the future of our country with our children and youth programs. We are teaching, coaching, developing, mentoring the future leaders of this country with our children and youth programs. The numbers are astonishing. The graduates that we have from our programs is astonishing. They're involved with every level of government. We've got to make sure we continue to support, endorse, promote and make sure those children and youth programs are continued to be supported. Please remember the future of our organization when you think about these past two years. The foundation for the future starts here. We are it. Thank you, all. *(Applause)*

*...National Commander Oxford resumed the Chair.*

### **Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: We have come now to a special order of business, the election of national officers. Counsel, will you read the rules.

HONORABLE JUDGE GAUGHAN: These are the rules for election of national officers are as follows, and these are the rules that we'll follow. 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 he 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 his 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 office, 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 this 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. Thank you, Commander Oxford. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: As chairman of this convention, I now appoint as judge of the election, John Derner, adjutant of the Department of Iowa; and as tellers of the election, William West, adjutant, Department of Texas; Richard Santos, adjutant, Department of Delaware, and Nathan Gear, adjutant, Department of Wisconsin. Will the judge and tellers of the election please come forward in place. Mr. Wheeler, will you 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 called each department in turn.]*

DELEGATE BRADSTREET (AL): Mr. Commander, Ron Bradstreet, delegate from Alabama, the home of Alabama Crimson Tide, Mr. Commander, Alabama yields to Texas.

DELEGATE PERKINS (TX): Commander, Jeff Perkins, delegate from Texas. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize Past National Commander John Brieden for the purpose of a nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The Chair recognizes Past National Commander John Brieden of the Department of Texas.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BRIEDEN: Thank you, Mr. Commander. Delegates, I have heard past national commanders introduced as, "A person who has spent a year of their life serving The American Legion." That has always offended me. It does not take into account the years spent working at the post level or serving as an officer. It does not recognize the years spent at the district level serving on committees or as an officer. It does not recognize the years spent at the department level serving on committees, commissions, many times as chairman, or serving as an officer. It does not recognize the years spent at the national level serving on committees, commissions, many times as chairman, or serving as an officer. The national commander does not spend a year of their life serving The American Legion; they spend their life serving The American Legion.

Today, I nominate a man who has spent his life serving The American Legion. He's a 45-year Paid-Up-For-Life member of Post 265, Lake Kiowa, Texas. At the post level, he served as post commander, vice commander, adjutant and judge advocate. In addition, he served as post Boys State chairman and over 10 years coaching American Legion Baseball. At the district level, he served as the Fourth District vice commander and district commander. He served the Department of Texas as department sergeant-at-arms and department commander. In addition, he served the department on the Finance Committee, the Long-Range Planning Committee and as the Membership and Organization chairman, the National Security chairman, the Uniformed Organizations chairman and Board of Trustees chairman.

He served the national organization as Texas' alternate National Executive Committeeman and as national vice commander in 2013-2014. Also on the national level, he served on the Distinguished Guests Committee, the Children & Youth Committee, the Media & Communications Council, and as a consultant to the Insurance Committee. Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. Chairman of the Veterans Employment & Education Commission and chairman of the Legislative Commission.

His wife Donna is a past department president. His two sons, daughter-in-law and grandsons are all members of the American Legion Family. And in addition, his mother-in-law, Catherine Morris, was my national president. It's my honor to nominate for national commander of The American Legion for 2021-2022, my friend, for over 40 years, Paul Dillard, from the great state of Texas. *(Applause)*

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AK): Mr. Commander, the delegation from the great land of Alaska yields to Kansas.

DELEGATE KRUPKO (KS): Mr. Commander, Mary Krupko, delegate from Kansas, Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize Dan Wiley for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The Chair recognizes Dan Wiley.

DELEGATE WILEY (KS): Good morning. National Commander Oxford, National Adjutant Wheeler, national officers, past national commanders, delegates and guests to the 102<sup>nd</sup> National Convention of The American Legion, I am Dan Wiley, a delegate from the state of Kansas. It is my distinct honor and privilege to second the nomination of Paul Dillard of the Lone Star State of Texas, to the high office of national commander of The American Legion.

Paul was born in Whitesboro, Texas where he graduated from Whitesboro High School in 1965. Paul possessed a college scholarship to play football but instead volunteered to serve his country by joining the United States Navy and serving during the Vietnam era from 1965 to 1969. Paul's service to country followed in the footsteps of his father, William "Billy" Dillard, a World War II veteran, who served in Japan and the Philippines. And his uncle, Eldridge Mayo, a World War II Army veteran, who landed at Omaha Beach on D-Day.

Paul was stationed aboard the destroyer, the USS Sproston, and served two WESTPAC deployments, one in 1967 and one in 1968. Paul spent significant time at Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin where the Sproston provided shore bombardment for troop support in South Vietnam as well as participating in Operation Sea Dragon. The mission of which was to destroy supplies and radar stations, boat repair facilities, bridges and surface-to-air missile sites. The Sproston also served as an escort and plane guard and provided trawler surveillance of Russian ships. The Sproston was decommissioned in 1968, and Paul was transferred to the USS Carpenter, where he served yet another WESTPAC deployment with operations including plane guard station, trawler surveillance and medivacs in South Vietnam. The USS Carpenter was assigned to the Apollo 11 recovery mission. You might remember Apollo 11 as the first man on the moon.

Paul received an honorable discharge as a radarman 3<sup>rd</sup> class petty officer. And after joining the reserves for two years, he received a promotion to radarman 2<sup>nd</sup> class petty officer. Paul served his country with honor, and now will admirably serve as your

American Legion national commander with his theme of "No Veteran Left Behind." As a duly registered delegate, I proudly second the nomination of Paul Dillard to be your next national commander. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I now call on the national adjutant for continuation of the roll call.

DELEGATE QUEEN (AZ): Mr. Commander, Ken Queen, delegate from Arizona, the Grand Canyon State. Mr. Commander, Arizona yields to Colorado.

DELEGATE JACKSON (CO): Mr. Commander, Greg Jackson delegate from Colorado. Mr. Commander, I request that the chair recognize John Bowen for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The Chair recognizes John Bowen.

DELEGATE BOWEN (CO): Thank you. National Commander Oxford, National Adjutant Wheeler, national officers, past national commanders, delegates, members of the American Legion Family and guests, good morning. It is my honor to stand before you and second the nomination of Paul Dillard from the Department of Texas for the high office of national commander of The American Legion.

Paul was born in 1947 in Whitesboro, Texas to William and Massey Dillard. He was the younger of two children. He graduated high school in 1965 in Whitesboro. After completing his military service, in 1971, Paul began his civilian career when he was hired to work for Anderson Industries in Sherman. While there, he served as an engineer in a clothing manufacturing company and as president of the Anderson Industries Credit Union. In 1972, Paul attended East Texas State University in Commerce where he honed his engineering skills. Afterward, he moved to Jamestown, Sparta area in Tennessee, and began working for the Colonial Corporation of America as an area engineer. The experience gained as an engineer made him very marketable. In 1974, he was offered and accepted a job with Clay Apparel Company in Celina, Tennessee as plant manager and director of manufacturing. But Paul's heart as a Texan never faded. So, in 1980 he moved back to Sherman and was hired to work for the Sherman Foundry in outside sales covering five states. Additionally, he served as the foundry's airplane pilot.

Then in 1983, Paul's life once again changed when he married Donna. As with most women, she completed him. They had the first of their two children a year later, when William was born. Paul understood that family must come first. And in 1985 he changed careers so he could stop traveling as much and spend more time at home. He landed a job with New York Life as an insurance agent. Staying at home worked well for Paul. In 1987, he and Donna welcomed their second child into the world, when Jonathon was born. That same year, Paul was elected to serve as the president of Texoma Association of Black Underwriters in Sherman, and he formed the Dillard and Gann Insurance Company in which he served also as an independent insurance agent. In 1993, Paul and family moved back to Whitesboro where he was elected to serve as the president of the Whitesboro Chamber of Commerce, as well as president of the Two-Way Water Special Utility District.

After Jonathon graduated high school in 2005, the Dillard family moved to Lake Kiowa, a gated community with a golf course and a lake. Now, when time permits, Paul enjoys his other passions, golf and fishing. The entire Dillard family understands what it means to serve our nation, our American Legion Family and the local community. Paul will continue that dedicated service as commander of the largest and greatest veterans service organization in the country.

As motivational speaker Mac Anderson once stated, "Great leadership usually starts with a willing heart, a positive attitude and a desire to make a difference." I wonder if Mr. Anderson met Mr. Paul Dillard and coined this quote as a result. Regardless, this describes Paul pretty well. He is a great leader, and he will make a difference and ensure there is no veteran left behind while serving as our national commander.

Comrades, as a duly registered delegate from the Department of Colorado, it is my distinct honor and privilege to second the nomination of a great Legionnaire, Paul Dillard,

from the Department of Texas, to the high office of national commander of The American Legion. Thank you. *(Applause)* ...*At this time, a demonstration of support ensued.*

*ANNOUNCER: Due to COVID restrictions, we ask all other departments please remain seated as the Department of Texas parades around the floor.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Call the convention back to order. Mr. Adjutant, will you continue the roll call.

DELEGATE ERDMAN (AR): Mary Erdman, delegate from Arkansas, casts all 17 votes for our neighboring state of Texas, esteemed Mr. Paul E. Dillard.

DELEGATE SANTOS (CA): Harley Santos, alternate NEC from California, the home of Past National Commander Bruce Thiesen, seconds the motion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BEAUREGARD (CT): Delegation Chairman Dennis Beauregard, Department of Connecticut, seconds the nomination for Paul Dillard for national commander.

DELEGATE SAUERS (DE): Barry Sauers, Department of Delaware seconds the nomination for Paul Dillard.

DELEGATE BRANDT (FL): Jerry Brandt, Department of Florida, great Sunshine State, cast all 124 votes for Paul Dillard.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FR): Mr. Commander, the Department of France, home of The American Legion, seconds the nomination.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SHREVE (GA): Mr. Adjutant, I'm Mark Shreve, delegation chairman for the great state of Georgia, we second the nomination for Paul Dillard for national commander.

DELEGATE RIDDELL (HI): Aloha, Fran Riddell, alternate NEC from the Department of Hawaii seconds the nomination for Paul Dillard.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ID) Mr. Adjutant, the Department of Idaho seconds the nomination for Paul Dillard.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IL): Mr. Adjutant, Department of Illinois, home of Past National Commander Marty Conatser, Past National President Sharon Conatser, seconds the nomination for Paul Dillard, national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN): Mr. Adjutant, the state of Indiana casts all 77 votes for Paul Dillard.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): Mr. Commander, home of Past National Commander Dave Rehbein, Iowa seconds the nomination for Paul Dillard.

DELEGATE COSTIGAN (KY): John Costigan, delegate from Kentucky, votes 26 votes for Paul Dillard.

DELEGATE BELL (LA): Louisiana in the house. State Commander Richard Bell, all delegates in the state of Louisiana for Paul Dillard.

DELEGATE WOODS (ME): The Department of Maine, Lloyd Woods, NEC registered delegate to this convention, seconds the motion for Paul E. Dillard.

DELEGATE TROTTER (MD): Will Trotter, delegate to this convention, department commander of the State of Maryland, home of our National Anthem, we give our entire delegation vote and second to Paul Dillard.

DELEGATION DIAS (MA): Tony Dias, delegate chairman from Commonwealth of Massachusetts, home of Past National Commanders John P. Comer and Paul A. Morin, I second the nomination for Paul Dillard for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MX): Mexico seconds the nomination of Paul Dillard.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WOOD (MI): Barry Wood, delegation chairman, the Great Lakes State of Michigan, the home of Past National Commander Tom Cadmus proudly supports the nomination of Paul E. Dillard of Texas for the high office of national commander.

DELEGATE DVORAK (MN): Mark Dvorak, delegate from Minnesota. Minnesota unanimously seconds the nomination of Paul Dillard for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GRIGSBY (MO): Gary Grigsby, department commander and delegation chair. The delegation from the Department of Missouri, home of Past National Commander Joe Frank, seconds the nomination.

DELEGATE SHARBONO (MT): Mr. Adjutant, Glen Sharbono commander for the state of Montana, delegate, we second the motion of Paul Dillard for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WOODEN (NE): Gary Wooden, delegate chair, Nebraska, the Cornhusker State, further seconds the nomination of Paul Dillard for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NV): Mr. Adjutant, Nevada seconds the nomination of Paul Dillard for the high office of national commander.

DELEGATE MAYNARD (NH): Mr. Commander, Ken Maynard from the Live Free or Die State of New Hampshire casts all 21 votes for Paul Dillard.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NEWELL (NJ): Mr. Adjutant, New Jersey, the Great Garden State, I'm delegation chairman Robert Newell, do second the nomination.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NM): Mr. Adjutant, great state of New Mexico and our delegation from the Land of Enchantment, cast all 16 votes to Paul Dillard.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): Department of New York votes all delegate strength for Paul Dillard for national commander.

DELEGATE MOORE (NC): Mr. Adjutant, James Moore from the great state of North Carolina casts all our votes for Paul Dillard.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN (ND): Mr. Chairman, as delegate chairman for the Rough Rider State, Department of North Dakota, we cast all unanimous seconds for Paul Dillard.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN (OH): Mr. Commander, delegate chairman for Ohio, second the nomination for Paul Dillard.

DELEGATE O'LEARY (OK): Mr. Commander, Charlie O'Leary, delegate from Oklahoma, we proudly second the nomination of our neighbor from Texas, Paul Dillard.

DELEGATE WEBBER (OR): Mr. Adjutant, Don Webber, Department of Oregon, proud home of Past National Commander Charles Schmidt, places all votes for Paul Dillard.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): Mr. Chairman, the great state of Pennsylvania, largest department in the organization, home of Past National Commanders Ron Conley and Dominic DiFrancesco, proudly seconds the nomination.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PR): Mr. Commander, Puerto Rico always seconds Paul Dillard for new national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LEVASSEUR (RI): Mr. Chairman, Ron Levasseur, department chairman, Department of Rhode Island, seconds the nomination.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SC): South Carolina seconds the nomination of Paul Dillard.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NELSON (SD): Fred Nelson, delegation chairman of South Dakota, Mount Rushmore State, birthplace of American Legion Baseball, proudly seconds the nomination of Paul Dillard OF Texas to the high office of national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KERSIG (TN): Mr. Chairman, department commander for the state of Tennessee, Larry Kersig, and also delegate chairman, we second the nomination for Paul Dillard as national commander, sir. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (UT): Department of Utah casts 13 ballots for Paul Dillard.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LAROSE (VT): Ron LaRose, delegate chairman for the great Green Mountain state of Vermont, we second the nomination of Paul Dillard for national commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (VA): Mr. Adjutant, the great Department of Virginia seconds the nomination for Paul Dillard as national commander.

DELEGATE CLARK (WA): Mr. Adjutant, Bob Clark, delegation for the great state of Washington, home of the Past National Auxiliary President Mary Davis, the Seahawks,

famous for three-and-a-half-hour boat rides, we second the nomination for high office of national commander to Paul Dillard.

DELEGATE HUNT (WV): Bill Hunt, department commander from the great state of West Virginia, in west by God Virginia, cast all 21 votes for Paul Dillard.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN EIRICH (WI): Greg Eirich, delegate chairman great state of Wisconsin casts 51 votes for Paul E. Dillard for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN COOK (WY): Mr. Chairman, Mike Cook, delegation chairman for the Equality State of Wyoming, we proudly support and second the nomination of Paul Dillard of Texas for national commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: District of Columbia. The Department of the Philippines. The Department of Mississippi. That completes the roll call, Mr. Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I'd now like to recognize microphone number one from the floor.

DELEGATE FISHER (NY): Mr. Commander, Eileen Fisher, Department of New York, Mr. Commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the national commander and the nomination and election of the national vice commanders which rules shall be reinstated at the conclusion of the election of national vice commanders.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: There is a motion before us to suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the national commander and the nomination and election of national vice commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election of national vice commanders. Is there a second? ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Hearing 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. Carried. I now recognize from the floor, microphone two.

DELEGATE NELSON (SD): Mr. Commander, Fred Nelson, delegate from South Dakota. Mr. Commander, I move that nominations for the office of national commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: We have a motion that nominations for the office of national commander be closed. Is there a second? ...*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 saying nay. Approved. I now recognize from the floor, microphone one.

DELEGATE FANTER (IN): Mr. Commander, Yvette Fanter, delegate from the great state of Indiana. Mr. Commander, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire strength of this Convention and that Paul E. Dillard be elected national commander by acclamation. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: There is motion before us that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention and Paul E. Dillard be elected national commander by acclamation. All those in favor of the motion signifying by saying aye. Those opposed by saying nay. Approved. I now call on the national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, delegates to the convention. As national adjutant, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for the election of Paul E. Dillard as the national commander of The American Legion. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I declare Paul E. Dillard elected national commander of The American Legion. 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 Department of Texas Commander Brett Watson. (*Applause*)

The Chair recognizes Past National Commander Jake Comer for the purpose of administering the oath of office to the new national commander of The American Legion.

**Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander**

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Commander Dillard, repeat after me using your name where I use mine. I, Paul E. Dillard, do solemnly pledge myself, to perform faithfully and impartially the duties of the office of the national commander of The American Legion, which I'm not to assume. I further pledge that I will support and defend the Constitution of The United States of America and the National Constitution and By-laws of The American Legion. I do not subscribe to the principles of any group opposed to our form of government. So, Help Me God. Commander, it is my honor to be the first to congratulate you. *(Applause) ...The Convention viewed a video.*

*NATIONAL COMMANDER DILLARD (via video): Howdy folks. Welcome to Arizona and the National Convention of The American Legion. My name is Paul Dillard, and I'm the leading candidate. My theme or slogan is "No Veteran Left Behind."*

*I'm a Navy veteran during the Vietnam era, and I joined right out of high school in 1965. Three years, 11 months, 22 days later, I came home, and I got involved in The American Legion. I think anyone that has served in the military and went to foreign countries, they ought to really feel the appreciation of being an American and the way we live here, if you see the way people and kids are brought up and raised over there. So, life meant more to me because there's so much more special than what I'd seen the way people live and are brought up in the conditions over there. In fact, everybody ought to be able to experience and see how proud you ought to be to be an American.*

*I think the national commander is at the beck and call of the national organization. Where they want him to go, how they need him to represent the organization, whatever it is. So, you're at the beck and call, and I may be completely wrong, I may have a wide eye-opening experience, but I feel like you are pretty much the PR person, the picture, the face of The American Legion for those 12 months.*

*I never really looked for an office in The American Legion, to be an officer. I just never did. So, I was always wanting to give to The American Legion instead of worrying about trying to take from The American Legion or be somebody in The American Legion because I feel like I was somebody when I served my country. And now I just want to try to keep this going for our veterans to help them, to make sure that no veteran will ever be treated like the Vietnam veteran was when we came home. My theme or slogan is "No Veteran Left Behind," and I believe in that. I believe in that because I believe the founding fathers of this great organization, that was intent, no veteran left behind, when it comes to active-duty, former military, or their spouses or their children. And this is where our Four Pillars actually came from. *(Applause)**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to present the 2021-2022 national commander of The American Legion, Paul Dillard. *(Applause)*

**Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander  
Paul E. Dillard, Texas**

Thank you, National Commander Oxford, past national commanders, distinguished guests, fellow Legionnaires, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, thank you very much. First, I would like to thank Commander Oxford for your dedication and service to our great organization, not only one, but two years. I know it's been a trying time, commander, but thank you for a job well done. *(Applause)*

You hear records are set to be broken. Commander, I hope this record will never be broken. For the forever commander and for the forever national leading candidate, as the national adjutant liked to refer to me, it's over now. That title's gone but thank you. It is indeed an honor and privilege to be elected your national commander of this great organization. As we continue to build a foundation for the future, we will ensure no veteran left behind. *(Applause)*

I would like to start introducing my family. First, my friend, my soul mate, my biggest supporter, my wife Donna. I could not be doing this without you and without your support, and I love you very much. *(Applause)*

Next our two sons and my daughters-in-law and those two little rascals I'll introduce later. First, William and his wife Allison. Next, Jonathon and his wife Karri. And the youngest of the Dillard clan, my grandsons Jarrett and Lukas. *(Applause)*

A person that came a long way, my brother-in-law, Frank Durr took a leave from his job in Hawaii. *(Applause)*

Thank all of y'all for being here. Thank you very much. It means so much. Two special people that are not here today. One, my father-in-law, mentor and a person you could always count on, Past National Vice Commander John B. Morris. We lost him in July of 2019, and my mother-in-law, Past National President Katherine Morris, who could not make the trip although she was bound and determined she was going to be here. *(Applause)*

I would like to thank Past National Commander John Brieden III for his nomination speech, and Dan Wiley and even Jay Bowen for their seconding speech. I'd like to thank Past National Commander Comer for administering the oath of office. And I will thank Past National Commander Marty Conatser. He will be presenting my colors later. Just a little short story about one of the first times I ever got to meet Past National Commander Jake Comer. It was in Fort Worth, Texas. Past National Commander Joe L. Matthews called me over there and said, Jake, I would like you to meet an upcoming Legionnaire. I was just a vice commander of the district. Keep an eye on this boy. You done a good job keeping an eye on me. Thank you, Jake. *(Applause)*

Now, to thank, really to thank, the great state of Texas. *(Cheers and applause)*

Team Texas. The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of the American Legion, and the Riders of the American Legion of that great state of Texas. And a special thanks to some of the following folks, and I will miss some, I guarantee it, but not in my heart. Bill West, department adjutant of Texas, who was my campaign manager for three years. Michael Griffith, who took charge of my hospitality room and his wife Kathy, who overseen and ran the kitchen. And Brett Watson, for hauling my trailer to and from Indianapolis, and his wife Rochelle for working with Kathy in the kitchen. Jim Prendergast and his wife Mickey. Tom Marty, the bartender, and his wife Susan. John Hines and his wife Geraldine. Gary Winters, John McKinney, Walter Ivey, Kimberly Biggerstaff, Tom Duarte, Glen Scott, Herb O'Dell, Cam Mueller, Butch and Lynn Sparks, and Department Commander Jeff Perkins for all the long hours you put into my campaign, your campaign, and I can never thank you enough, but thank you again. *(Applause)*.

I would like to congratulate American Legion Auxiliary National President Kathy Daudistel, and Sons of the American Legion National Commander Michael Fox on their recent election to their office. We will work side-by-side promoting our pillars of our great organization to ensure no veteran left behind.

As we kicked off our membership year, I had one-on-one Zoom meetings with each department's membership team. And this year we have adjusted each department's goal. Most of them really thought it had been needed, and they're really excited and think it will be very attainable. But we're also issuing in that membership report another challenge, retention of 90% of your 2021 members, and that will be added to the membership report. We must make personal contact to our members to thank them for their continued support of the American Legion by keeping their membership current. And ask them if we can count on them again this year. Again, ensuring no veteran left behind.

An article was published in the "The Wall Street Journal" 50 years ago this past May. The headline, "The American Legion's once civic and social power is slowly fading away." The article goes on to say the old members are dying off and the young ones aren't interested. Well, many of us here today were the young veterans then, and we are interested, and we would not be here today if we weren't. And many of our next generation of veterans are also here today with us. *(Applause)*

The American Legion has played a key role in crafting crucial veterans legislation, such as the new GI Bill, the creation of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and even forcing the resignation of a VA secretary during the height of a health-care crisis. We have hosted every president of the United States at our National Conventions since this article was published. And remain the nation's largest veterans service organization. But the report goes on, the report of our demise was not only exaggerated, it was outright false. The media reports were wrong then, and they are wrong now.

With the recently enacted LEGION Act, our current membership eligibility dates all the way to December 7, 1941. That means there's an addition 4.2 million war-time veterans that were not eligible prior to July 2019. They can now become members of The American Legion. This year you heard the theme is "No Veteran Left Behind." We will continue to advance the legacy of their service by sharing their love for this country with the next generation.

We do this through our youth programs such as Boys State, Boys Nation, oratorical, baseball, junior shooting sports, JROTC and supporting Scouting. We also reach out directly to veterans through our Veterans & Children Foundation, Operation Comfort Warriors, National Emergency Fund, Buddy Checks and many scholarship programs. We will continue to testify before the Joint Veterans Affairs Committee, but in order to give a full report during my testimony of The American Legion, we must strive for 100 percent consolidated post reporting. I need to report on the hours donated, the moneys raised to support our veterans and our programs. Although this is being done at the post level throughout the nation, we must complete and fill out the forms. The mission is not completed until the forms are filed. The moneys raised each year for Operation Comfort Warriors, the National Emergency Fund, the Children and Youth Foundation has been very successful and needs to continue to be.

My Commander's Project will be to raise \$2 million for the Veterans & Children Foundation. As I said earlier, I have chosen "No Veteran Left Behind" as my theme. There are many consequences of a veteran who is left behind, isolation, denied benefits, lost opportunity, lack of decent housing, or unemployment are just a few. But the most tragic outcome for a veteran left behind is suicide. We must not let them down, male, female, Iraq vet, Vietnam vet, Korean vet, World War II vet, it doesn't matter. We all serve, and we must be there for each other.

The most recent statistics, 22 a day. Twenty-two a day, veteran suicides. Some other numbers I would like to share with you that I found on the Stop Soldier Suicide website, veterans are 50% higher at risk than their non-serving peers. More than 114,000 men and women who have served in the armed services have taken their own lives since 2001. That is nearly double the American lives lost in Vietnam. By 2030 it is estimated that the total veteran suicide will be 23 times the number of post-9/11 combat veterans. Just think, we save one, that's 365 a year. Save one. It is so much that life but think of all the other lives that it just affects.

Each statistic represents a real man, a real woman, and impacts thousands of real families. That is why we must, folks, we must regularly continue our Buddy Checks, not just for the past and present members, but for every veteran that we know. If you have any other ideas about what we can do to stop these tragedies, please share those ideas with fellow Legionnaires and members of the national staff. There are many important issues facing veterans, but no issue is more important than this: To save a life. Real stories. Real people. *(Applause)*

No veteran, and I mean no veteran left behind. Well, I'm a Texan, but that doesn't mean my speech is supposed to be as big as Texas. So, I apologize if I've gone on too long. But The American Legion is important to me, and I know it's important to all of you as well. So, let's go to work. God bless you. God bless you all as you return home. God bless the men and women serving in uniform today. And God bless these great United States of America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

**First Lady Presentation**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Thank you, commander. As a point of personal privilege, I'd like to call on Mary Ludwig, wife of Past National Commander Daniel Ludwig, for a presentation by the first spouses to the new first lady.

MARY LUDWIG: Donna, would you join me up here at the podium, please. Donna, it's with great privilege that we welcome you as our newest first lady. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Thank you, Mary. I now recognize microphone two.

**Election of National Vice Commanders**

DELEGATE KEE (MA): Mr. Commander, Sandra Kee, delegate from Massachusetts. Mr. Commander, since the rules of this convention have been suspended, I move that nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor of this Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: There is a motion that nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor. Is there a second? ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Hearing a second, the motion is nondebatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Those opposed by nay. Approved. We will now entertain nominations for the office of national vice commander from the floor. I now recognize microphone one.

DELEGATE ROMANO (CA): Mr. Commander, Jere Romano, delegate from California. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Autrey James for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: So recognized.

DELEGATE JAMES (CA): National Commander Oxford, National Commander Dillard, distinguished guests, and my fellow Legionnaires, I rise for the purpose of placing the name of an honored Legionnaire in nomination for the office of national vice commander for the Western Region. His membership eligibility has been vetted by his honorable service to his country as a member of the United States Army during a time of conflict. This Legionnaire has more than 52 years of honorable, faithful, and dedicated service to The American Legion and the Department of California.

Beginning at the post level all the way to the national level, he has proven himself time and time again to be the right person for the job. This Legionnaire's long list of credentials are too numerous to recount here, but I will name a few. He has been a post commander, a district commander, and a department vice commander, and along with serving on many committees and commissions associated to those levels. He has excelled at the national level by serving on the Legislative Commission, the Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials Committee, Distinguished Guest Committee, National Convention Commission, and finally as the national historian, where he made and maintains many long-lasting relationships through the departments of The American Legion.

I can personally attest to his unselfish service to others in our organization because he has been a mentor to not only myself, but to many others across the Department of California and across The American Legion. Legionnaires, it is my honor and privilege to place in nomination for the high office of national vice commander for the Western Region an outstanding member of the 19<sup>th</sup> District in the Department of California, my friend and fellow Legionnaire James T. Higuera. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Commander calls on microphone two.

DELEGATE FRIEND (OH): Mr. Commander, Roger Friend, delegate from Ohio. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Jean Wilson for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I'd like to recognize Jean Wilson.

DELEGATE WILSON (OH): Commander Oxford, past national commanders, distinguished guests, Legionnaires, today I'm here to nominate a 40-year post-awarded life member who has served our organization on many levels, serving at every level of his post, Yeager-Benson Post 199, Hamilton County, his fabulous 4<sup>th</sup> District. He served as Ohio department commander in 1995-96, alternate National Executive Committeeman in 1998-2000 and National Executive Committeeman in 2000-2002.

He earned his eligibility in the American Legion by serving in the United States Army, 1968 through 1971, where he served as a medic and later as a drill sergeant. He's a member of the Sons of the American Legion through his service of his father Carl and through the American Legion Auxiliary through my service in the United States Army, 1969-1971. He was inducted into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame in 2016.

Jerry believes the lifeblood of our organization is always membership. But he does more than just believes. When joining Yeager-Benson Post 199, he began working to recruit new members. He helped take our membership from approximately 200 members to today where our post has 1181 members. He's been a Gold Brigade winner more than 15 times and is always working the three Rs, retain, recruit, and reinstate members.

Thirty years ago, he worked tirelessly for our post, helping take our post from a 1,400-square-foot building with only on-street parking to a 9,000-square-foot building sitting on over 10 acres. He had an idea that not only could we have a very nice new post home where we could also help our community on several levels. First by leasing a daycare facility located in our building who has paid over \$1 million in rent over 30 years. Also leasing part of our acreage to a youth football organization, and they pay \$1 a year, and they have been with us for over 30 years. Ten years ago, he saw a need that our post needed to expand, and he spearheaded the project of building an additional building of 6,000 square feet for a hall where weddings, bingo and additional activities could be held.

In 1990 he helped organize the first Stand Down for Homeless Veterans at the Cincinnati VA. He served many veterans who needed assistance on many levels. He has served on the Harrison Mayor's Fund for over 15 years, which helps families in our community that need assistance with food, electric, rent payments, and the vast majority of the families we help are veterans. Our family is an American Legion Family. Our son, Command Sergeant Jerrold "Woody" Wilson, will be retiring tomorrow, September 3, with 29 years and 10 months of active duty. He is a member of The American Legion. He's a member of the Sons of the American Legion. He is also a member of the Auxiliary. He is a member of the Auxiliary by the service of his wife. Jackie also belongs to the American Legion as well as the Auxiliary. And they have three children who all belong to the American Legion Family. Our daughter Tammy, her husband Rob, and their three children all belong to the American Legion Family.

It's very hard to sum up someone's 40-year commitment to our organization in a few minutes and in a few words, but Jerry's commitment to our organization has always been there and always will be. He is always striving to help our organization on every level. Mr. Commander, it is my honor and privilege today to place into nomination Jerrold "Jerry" Wilson for national vice commander for the Central Region for the years 21-22. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I'd like to call on microphone number one.

DELEGATE ARROYO (PR): Mr. Commander, Antonio Arroyo, delegate from Puerto Rico. Commander, I request that you recognize Juan A. Cruz for the purpose of the nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I'd like to recognize Juan A. Cruz.

DELEGATE CRUZ (PR): Good morning, Commander Oxford, National Adjutant Wheeler, past national commanders, national officers, distinguished guests and fellow delegates. My name is Juan Cruz-Rodriguez, department adjutant for the great commonwealth of Puerto Rico in the United States of America. It is my honor and with great pleasure to come before you today to nominate Angel Narvaez to the high office of national vice commander.

Angel, as we learned to call him in the Legion, earned his membership eligibility in The American Legion by serving honorably 24 years in the United States Army, joining at the age of 30 on October 28, 1980, and retiring in 2004 with a rank of first sergeant. Angel joined the ranks of our great organization in 2004 and has been active ever since. Angel has held many offices and earned numerous accolades during his 17-year American Legion career, including post sergeant-at-arms, post adjutant, post commander, district commander, department commander, and National Executive Committeeman. In 2014, as department commander, he reached the goal of 100% membership and received the Department Commander of the Year Award.

He's a graduate of the National Legion College class 2012, past president of Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion, a member of Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada and the United States and National Legion College Alumni Association. He's also a dual member with the Sons of the American Legion with Squadron 129 in Carolina.

At home he is the co-chair of My Vet Community, a member of the State Veterans Home Board of Directors, a member of the Parochial Board of the Episcopal Church of Puerto Rico. He served with distinction as chairman on the following department committees, American Legion baseball, Centennial Celebration and Veterans Employment and Education. At the national level, he served as Veteran Employment & Education NEC liaison and Media & Communication NEC liaison. Angel's family is very active in the American Legion Family. His wife Rosa served as unit president and department finance officer. His son Angel is an active member of the Sons of the American Legion in Squadron 129.

As a duly registered delegate to this National Convention, it is with honor and pride that I place the name of Angel Osvaldo Narvaez-Negron into nomination for the high office of national vice commander of The American Legion for the year 2021-2022. Thank you.  
(Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I'd like to recognize microphone two.

DELEGATE LEVASSEUR (RI): Mr. Commander, Ron Levasseur, delegate from Rhode Island. Mr. Commander, I request that you request that you recognize Eugene Pytka for the purpose of nomination for national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I'd like to recognize Eugene Pytka.

DELEGATE PYTKA (RI): Commander Oxford, National Adjutant Wheeler, delegates, alternates, ladies and gentlemen all, it is a great privilege to be here today to put into nomination a member of my department.

It has come full circle as I am able to do something that was done for me 11 years ago. Now I'm on the other side, but it feels like a real tradition and protocols have been set. Cory D. Bates is eligible for membership in The American Legion through his service in the United States Army. He has served as all levels in the Department of Rhode Island and is still commander of his post where he has served for several years. He's a past county commander. He's a past department sergeant-at-arms. He served two years as vice commander before becoming department commander. He served two terms as alternate NEC and two terms as NEC. He is currently the baseball chairman for the Department of Rhode Island and serves on both the oratorical committee as well as the Boys State and finance committees. He is a member of the Department of Rhode Island's Convention Corporation and is a past president of the Past Department Commander's Corps. And yes, he is a Legion College graduate.

I've given you his credentials, but the reason that Cory is here today is more because of the person that he is. Motivational speaker Stephen Covey says there are three constants in life. Change. Cory is a young man with 21 years' service in the Legion, but he's changing and adapting to all the things that are going on around us now, especially in technology. The second constant is choice. Knowing Cory, the way I have, he will be able to make the right choices, not only for himself but for the Legionnaires. And the last constant in life is

a mixed bag of things. It's honor, loyalty, dedication and more. And that constant is called principles. And I know that Cory has the principles to be a good national vice commander.

The Department of Rhode Island humbly asks for your support of our candidate, Cory D. Bates, as national vice commander for 2021-2022. Safe travels. God bless. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I'd like to recognize microphone one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FEASENMYER (VA): Mr. Commander, Bill Feasenmyer, delegation chairman from the Department of Virginia. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize George Lussier for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I'd like to recognize George Lussier.

DELEGATE LUSSIER (VA): National Commander Oxford, fellow delegates to this 102<sup>nd</sup> National Convention, and all those special Legion members who are unable to be here with us and are watching us on the Internet today.

I stand before you to place into nomination for national vice commander an outstanding Legionnaire who served our country in the United States Army for 21 years and our outstanding organization at all levels for over 30 years. I can assure you that each time he had the opportunity to serve he considered it an honor and privilege. And I know, if elected, he will see this opportunity as not just a privilege, but a very high honor.

In Virginia we understand national officers need to be individuals who have distinguished themselves as leaders at the post, district, and department. They need to have demonstrated a commitment to the ideals and goals of The American Legion, and they need to have a comprehensive understanding of American Legion programs. And as I stand here before you, I can assure you that Mike Mitrione of Bass-Bowen-Brittenham-Bundy-Franklin-Knox Post 55 in Fredericksburg, Virginia meets those criteria. To cover everything Mike has done since joining The American Legion would take more time than I've been allowed, so I'll just cover a few major highlights.

Since joining The American Legion, Mike has remained active, serving in many positions at the post and district while learning about American Legion programs. He has been part of and chaired numerous committees, contributing to the growth of his post, two different districts, and the department. He has held many elected and appointed positions at all levels. During his early years in the Legion, while serving the Woodbridge, Virginia Post 364, he concurrently served as a district vice commander in our 16<sup>th</sup> District for three years, which led to his election in his first term as a district commander in 2001. After his year as district commander, he continued to serve at all levels, but it was while serving as our department membership chair in 2003 that he became aware of the need for help in the neighboring district. After careful consideration and consultation with our department leadership team, he decided to transfer his membership to Post 55 and become more active in our 12<sup>th</sup> District to provide some much-needed help in revitalizing a once-active district that had fallen on hard times. While establishing himself in the district, he was honored to serve as the Post 55 commander, and soon after elected to serve again as the district commander, this time in our 12<sup>th</sup> District. I should note that Mike also served as district membership chair on more than one occasion, did a stint as district adjutant, and then a second tour as department membership chair while working to revitalize our 12<sup>th</sup> District.

For those who know Mike, this comes as no surprise, for he does not attend meetings just to listen. He is there to contribute. I have known Mike for over 20 years, and I know his involvement and contributions have never been to receive recognition. While he has been recognized several times and will share with you what it takes to receive a Gold Brigade award, something he has done three times, unless you ask him, you will probably not hear him speak of his being Post Commander of the Year at the regional level, recognized twice as Department District Commander of the Year, receiving recognition from national as achieving the second highest membership in the nation for a district his size, and being honored as a Department Vice Commander of the Year. You will also have to ask him about his military service, where he was awarded the Legion of Merit, Bronze

Star, two Meritorious Service Medals, three Air Medals and an Army Commendation Medal five times. And he also holds Combat Infantryman's Badge.

Today he continues to serve as chair of the finance committee and a host of other responsibilities within our department. At the national level, he will complete his term as our NECman at the end of this convention, a position he has held for the past four years. He will also complete terms as the NEC liaison to the national Finance Commission and as a member of the Subcommittee on Committees. In the past, Mike was extremely active on the Butch Miller, Dan Dellinger and Brett Reistad campaigns for national commander. He has served as a member on the Naval Affairs Subcommittee of the National Security Commission, as vice chairman of the National Guard & Reserve Forces Committee on the National Security Commission as a member of the National Security Council. And for those who attend the Washington Conference and National Convention, I am sure you have seen him at these events.

I could continue, but now, National Commander Oxford, my fellow delegates, alternates and guests to this 102<sup>nd</sup> National Convention, as a duly registered delegate from the Department of Virginia, it is my pleasure, my honor and my privilege to place in nomination for the high office of national vice commander of The American Legion, the name of a good friend and outstanding Legionnaire, Mr. Michael Mittrione. And I so move.  
(Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: After the five candidates have been nominated, no seconding speeches are needed. Rules are suspended. Leading candidates are James T. Higuera, Jerrold W. Wilson, Angel O. Narvaez, Cory D. Bates, Michael F. Mittrione. I'd like to now recognize microphone two.

DELEGATE VANZANTEN (SD): Mr. Commander, Courtney VanZanten, delegate from South Dakota. Mr. Commander, I move that the nominations for national vice commander be closed. ...*Second*.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Hearing a second, the motion is nondebatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All in favor, say aye. Any opposed, nay. Carried. The chair recognizes microphone one.

DELEGATE SMITH (OK): Mr. Commander, I, Tim Smith, a delegate from Oklahoma, move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote five times for the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that the nominated five candidates, James T. Higuera, Jerrold W. Wilson, Angel O. Narvaez, Cory D. Bates, and Michael F. Mittrione be elected national vice commanders by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: We have a motion that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote five times for the entire delegate strength of this convention and that the five nominated candidates, James T. Higuera, Jerry W. Wilson, Angel O. Narvaez, Corey D. Bates and Michael F. Mittrione, be elected national vice commanders by acclamation. ...*Second*.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Hearing a second, the motion is nondebatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Any opposed, nay. Carried. I call on the national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, delegates to the Convention, as national adjutant for The American Legion, I cast one vote five times with each representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for James T. Higuera, Jerrold W. Wilson, Angel O. Narvaez, Cory D. Bates and Michael F. Mittrione for the offices of national vice commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: I declare James T. Higuera, Jerrold W. Wilson, Angel O. Narvaez, Cory D. Bates and Michael F. Mittrione elected national vice commanders of The American Legion. Will the new national vice commanders come to the platform to be introduced and sworn in (Applause)

**Installation of National Vice Commanders**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Gentlemen, at this time I am honored to swear you into 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 required of you. I challenge you to familiarize yourselves with the duties of your office and carry them out with the same spirit from which The American Legion was founded.

The welfare, success and integrity of this great organization depends on you, as you travel in the departments and throughout this country promoting the mandates of The American Legion as approved by the National Convention and the National Executive Committee. It is your duty to protect the good name of The American Legion with the people of our great nation that you meet as you travel; help them to know the Legion's purposes and policies. Remember the Four Pillars that motivate us, as members to serve this nation. As you serve, always remember there is no rank, for we all serve as equals. We all are aiming for the same goals, the ideals of justice, freedom, democracy and loyalty.

This means you should always employ the cardinal principles of The American Legion to all of those that we serve: The rehabilitation of all disabled veterans and the care of those who are now suffering from wounds, disease and want to include the care of their family members; the education of our children; educating citizens on the ideals of true Americanism; 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 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, national vice commanders. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Just as a point of personal privilege, I would like you all to recognize my family. *(Applause)*

And I'd also like to give a big shout-out to my daughter. She's not here. She's quarantined with the coronavirus. She would have been here, but I just want to give a big shout-out to Jackie. *(Applause)*

I now call on Past National Commander Martin Conatser, to present the Colors to our incoming national commander.

**Presentation of Colors to Newly Elected National Commander**

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Thank you, Mr. Commander. Commander-elect Dillard, please join me at the lectern. Legionnaires and distinguished guests, please rise for the presentation of our National Colors by the Harrisburg Post 472, Department of Texas to our national commander elect. Color Guard, present the Colors to the new commander. Hand Salute!

*...The delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Two! The audience may be seated. Paul, I know the delegates know, as I know, how well qualified you are. I know they know, as I know, that you're the man of the time. You've got a unique challenge to be faced, to be the leader and lead us out of this pandemic. Commander Oxford has done an outstanding job of setting that base, that foundation. Now it's your job and your leadership team's job to motivate, excite and move this organization to the level we'd expect you to do. That's a unique challenge that only certain people ever get to face. It's a challenge that The American Legion, all veterans and the American Legion Family need you to fulfill. It's an exciting time, as you start a year, but you have a unique challenge. And I have every

expectation that you'll meet and exceed that challenge. I'm very pleased to congratulate you as national commander, but I'm even better pleased to greet you as a friend. *(Applause)*

Congratulations. Please rise. Color Guard, return the Colors to post. Hand Salute!

*...The delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.*

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Two!

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: It's an exciting time for any National Convention. We have elected a new national commander and look forward to a new chapter and historic times as our new leader commits that there will be "No Veteran Left Behind."

This is also the time when the American Legion Auxiliary elects a new president. 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 American Legion Auxiliary Unit 203 in Latonia, Kentucky. Eligible for Auxiliary membership through her father, Korean War-era Army veteran Bill Kaelin, she recently retired from a Fortune 500 company after more than 33 years of service in the information technology department. She has two daughters, four grandchildren and two sons-in-law. She also has a Bachelor of Science degree in Information Technology. Please give a warm welcome to National President of The American Legion Auxiliary Kathy Daudistel. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Newly Elected National President, American Legion Auxiliary  
Kathy Daudistel, Kentucky**

Good morning. First, I would like to thank you for your service. It is very much appreciated. I also want to thank you for electing such a fine, hard-working, good-hearted man as your next national commander. I'm really looking forward to serving with him and Michael and with the "No Veteran Left Behind" campaign. I can assure you that the American Legion Auxiliary is 100 percent behind you. Congratulations, Paul. And congratulations to all the new vice commanders. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: The man chosen to lead the Sons of The American Legion was signed up to the organization moments after he was born. He is the son and grandson of veterans. Family is obviously important to this member of the California detachment, who along with his fiancée, Crystal Reagan, is raising their combined seven children. With his father, Ned, the two became the first father and son to both serve as Detachment of California commanders. He is a member of Squadron 521 in the Golden State. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome National Commander of the Sons of the American Legion Michael Fox. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: Newly Elected National Commander, Sons of The American Legion  
Michael Fox, California**

Good afternoon, everybody, and thank you very much. It's an honor and a privilege to lead one of the greatest programs of The American Legion this coming year with a fine man, Mr. Paul Dillard, the new commander, and Kathy with the American Legion Auxiliary. I can guarantee you that the Sons of the American Legion will be working hard together to make sure that "No Veteran Left Behind" and helping in caring for those who care for others. So, thank you very much. You guys have a wonderful day. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Commander Fox, please remain in place for just a moment. National Commander Dillard and National President Daudistel, please join us. Ladies and gentlemen, National Commander Dillard, National President Daudistel and Sons of The American Legion National Commander Fox, our leadership team for the upcoming year. Your American Legion Family leaders. *(Applause)*

Just as a reminder, the Post-Convention NEC meeting will occur in the Convention Center, North Building, Exhibit Hall 6 immediately following adjournment. All the new national officers are to attend. I'd like to call on National Chaplain Harris for the benediction. Please uncover.

**Benediction**

**Chaplain Edward L. Harris, Indiana, National Chaplain**

Dear God, as we come to the conclusion of this, our 102<sup>nd</sup> anniversary, we give You thanks for the endurance of giving leadership abilities to our commander. For giving us the support and guidance of our national adjutant, thank you. Please do the same for our commander and our officers of our American Legion Family coming forward for the 103<sup>rd</sup> year. Bless all of the delegates from all of the American Legion Family who attended this occasion. Guide them safely back home. All this we ask in Your name, Amen.

**Retirement of Colors and Adjournment**

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Sergeant-at-Arms, retire the POW/MIA Flag. ...*The POW/MIA flag was retired.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Please recover. The Colors of our nation in place. Hand Salute! ...*The delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER OXFORD: Two! The time is 11:40. I now declare this 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention of The American Legion adjourned. (*Applause*)

*...At 11:40 a.m., Thursday, September 2, 2021, the 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Convention of The American Legion was adjourned.*

**2021 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:** Diane Carlson Evans

**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:** Brandon Woodruff, Milwaukee Brewer

**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:** Aaron Savary from Dubuque County Post 137, IA

**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:** Idaho Falls Post 56, Idaho Falls, ID

**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:** Stone Collier and Easton Hood both from Tupelo Post 49, MS

**The 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:** Honolulu (OS), HI

**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:** Nate Rose from Idaho Falls Post 56, ID

**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:** Idaho Falls Post 56, Idaho Falls, ID

**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):** Idaho Falls Post 56, ID coaching staff

**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:** Stone Collier from Tupelo Post 49, MS

**The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Air Rifle National Championship Award:** Presented annually to the national tournament champions of the individual and team categories in Sporter and Precision disciplines of The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program. (Originally named the American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Trophy)

**RECIPIENT(s): Precision Team:** Granbury High School MCJROTC – (TX)  
Ashton Arlington, Sarah Folsom, Parker Haydin, Kaylynn Slaughter

**Precision Individual:** Natalie Perrin, Grand Rapids Rifle & Pistol (MI)

**Sporter Team:** Nation Ford MCJORC (SC)  
Maya Cameron, Isabelle Fetting, Kayla Kalenza, Alana Ruggiero

**Sporter Individual:** Maya Cameron, Nation Ford MCJROTC (SC)

**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:** Kobe Senn from Fargo Post 400, ND

**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 Montana

**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:** Jackson McCoy from Tupelo Post 49, MS

**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:** None Awarded

**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:** None Awarded

**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 Florida

**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):** Anthony Mitchell (IN), Michael R. Moore (TX), Robert M. Haglund (WI), Leonardo Campos-Moya (WI), William S. Crewe (CA), Mickey Avalos (OH), Joshua Lively (NE)

**The American Legion National Education Award:** Awarded annually to an individual, group or organization which has conducted the best all-around promotion of the education programs of The American Legion, education programs that correspond to the goals of The American Legion or has promoted or advanced education programs at the national level.

**RECIPIENT:** None Awarded

**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 – None Awarded  
INDIVIDUAL – None Awarded

**Department Award for 100% Post Children & Youth Reporting:** Awarded annually to those Departments which achieve 100% of Posts indicating Children & Youth activity on Consolidated Post Reports.

**RECIPIENT:** Alaska and New Mexico

**National Employer of Veterans Award Recipient(s):** Awarded to an employer in recognition of outstanding achievement in the employment and retraining of veterans.

<b>RECIPIENT(s):</b>	<b>Category I</b>	Awarded at 2022 National Convention
<b>2021</b>	<b>Category II</b>	Awarded at 2022 National Convention
<b>Winners</b>	<b>Category III</b>	Awarded at 2022 National Convention

**Note: The 2020 National Employer of Veterans Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2021 National Convention.**

**National Employment Service Award Recipient(s):** Awarded in three categories: Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) of the Year; Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) of the Year; Employment Service (ES) Office of the Year.

**RECIPIENT(s):** LVER of the Year: Awarded at 2022 National Convention  
 2021 DVOP of the Year: Awarded at 2022 National Convention  
 Winners ES Office of the Year: Awarded at 2022 National Convention

*Note: The 2020 National Employment Service Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2021 National Convention.*

**Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award Recipient:** The program is a joint project between the National Organization & the AETNA Company, to award those Posts that enhance the lives of disable persons by providing opportunities for their participation in community activities.

**RECIPIENT(s):** Awarded at 2022 National Convention  
 2021 Winner

*Note: The 2020 Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award Recipient will not be announced until 2021 National Convention.*

**National Employer of Older Worker Award Recipient:** The program provides an Employer of Older Worker Award for a company that consistently hires older workers, especially veterans and serves as an inspirational recognition of a company with a record of support and commitment to the hiring of America's older workers.

**RECIPIENT(s):** Awarded at 2022 National Convention  
 2021 Winner

*Note: The 2020 National Employer of Older Worker Award Recipient will not be announced until 2021 National Convention.*

**National DEPARTMENT History Contest Awards:** Awarded annually at the Fall Meeting of the National Executive Committee to those contestants entered in the National Department History Contest having submitted the One-Year History *Narrative* or *Yearbook* of the Department which best meets the standards established for that particular competition.

**RECIPIENT(s):** Narrative – Indiana  
 Yearbook - Missouri

**National POST History Contest Awards:** Awarded annually to those contestants entered in the National Post History Contest deemed by a duly authorized panel of judges to have submitted the One-Year History of the Post which best meets the standards established for the competitions.

**RECIPIENT(s):** Narrative - Frierson-Nichols Post No. 8, Winter Haven, FL  
 Yearbook - Julius L. Shryer American Legion Post No. 430, Dur

**International Amity Award:** Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of an authentic veteran organization established in the territory of any of the nations associated as war-time allies of the United States of America. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans affairs and for service and contributions made in the development of international good will and comradeship between their organization and The American Legion.

**RECIPIENT(s):** None Awarded

**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):** Representative Julia Brownley, CA

**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.

<b>RECIPIENT(s):</b>	<b>Category I</b>	Detachment of South Dakota
<b>2021</b>	<b>Category II</b>	Detachment of Alabama
<b>Winners</b>	<b>Category III</b>	Detachment of Iowa
	<b>Category IV</b>	Detachment of Arizona
	<b>Category V</b>	Detachment of Florida

**General Henri Gouraud Trophy:** Awarded annually to that Department in each of six categories established by the National Membership and Post Activities Committee, each of said Department having been the first in its respective category to attain or exceed its nationally assigned membership quota (effective 1986).

<b>RECIPIENT(s):</b>	<b>Category I</b>	None qualified
	<b>Category II</b>	None qualified
	<b>Category III</b>	None qualified
	<b>Category IV</b>	Department of North Carolina
	<b>Category V</b>	Department of Colorado
	<b>Category VI</b>	Department of Utah

**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 Utah

**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:** Department of Utah

**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:** Martha A. Bigbie, Department of Utah

**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 2021

**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 South Dakota

**The American Legion Air Force Academy Award:** Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class at the Air Force Academy who demonstrates the highest proficiency in all academic subjects.

**RECIPIENT:** Cadet Robert B. Gansrow

**The American Legion Coast Guard Academy Award:** Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class of the United States Coast Guard Academy who is considered to have personally excelled in athletics.

**RECIPIENT:** Ensign Kaitlyn Mooney

**The American Legion Merchant Marine Academy Award:** Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the Merchant Marine Academy, enrolled in the Pre-Commissioning Seminar Course, and selected by the Academy Faculty, as achieving the highest grade pertaining to a 1,000-word composition dealing with the subject of National Security.

**RECIPIENT:** Midshipman Amanda Catherine Hall

**The American Legion Military Academy Award:** Awarded annually to cadet of the graduating class at the United States Military Academy with the highest standing in Chemistry.

**RECIPIENT:** Cadet Mark H. Jaskot

**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:** Midshipman William "Quinn" O'Loane

**National Commander's Blood Donor Awards:** Presented to departments in different sized categories for participating in The American Legion's Blood Donor Program.

**RECIPIENT(s):** **Category I Departments with 85,000 or more members:**

**Post Participation:** Department of California

**Individual Participation:** Department of California

**Category II Departments with 65,000 to 84,999 members:**

**Post Participation:** Department of Minnesota

**Individual Participation:** Department of Minnesota

**Category III Departments with 40,000 to 64,999 members:**

**Post Participation:** Department of Maryland & Wisconsin

**Individual Participation:** Department of Maryland & Wisconsin

**Category IV Departments with 25,000 to 39,999 members:**

**Post Participation:** Department of Massachusetts & Nebraska

**Individual Participation:** Department of Massachusetts & Nebraska

**Category V Departments with 10,000 to 24,999 members:**

**Post Participation:** Department of Oregon

**Individual Participation:** Department of Oregon

**Category VI Departments with less than 10,000 members:**

**Post Participation:** Department of Vermont

**Individual Participation:** Department of Vermont

**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:** Sgt. Daniel Martin of Omaha, NE

**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:** Robert Nagle of Gallitzen, PA

**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):** None Awarded

**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:** Broadcast: ABC Action News (WFTS-TV) I-Team in Tampa, FL  
Print: Daily Herald of Arlington, Heights, IL  
Internet: Military.com

**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):** None Awarded

**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):**

<b>Army:</b>	SGT Joselito Cabang
<b>Navy:</b>	PO2 Michael Monahan
<b>Marine Corps:</b>	Cpl Darla Dunning
<b>Coast Guard:</b>	PO1 Jessica Rooks
<b>Air Force:</b>	SSgt Zachariah Austin
<b>Space Force:</b>	No submission
<b>Air National Guard:</b>	PFC Alejandro Sanchez

**Arch M. Cantrall Trophy:** Awarded annually to that American Legion Band winning first prize in competition with all other American Legion bands during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.

**RECIPIENT:** None Awarded

**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:** None Awarded

**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 Pennsylvania

**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:** Awarded at 2022 Washington Conference

**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:** Awarded at 2022 Washington Conference

## **The American Legion 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report**

### **FOREWORD**

The American Legion continued to have a strong year under the leadership of National Commander James W. Oxford, North Carolina. Membership was strong with nearly 2 million veterans in more than 12,000 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 American Legion; no members shall be addressed by their military or naval title in any convention or meeting of The American 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 with a minimum of one thousand members and these in turn in Posts. There may be one Department in each state, the District of Columbia, and in each territory and insular possessions 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. An individual is eligible for membership in The American Legion only if the individual -

(1) has served in the Armed Forces of

(A) the United States at any time during -

(i) the period of April 6, 1917, through November 11, 1918; or

(ii) any time after December 7, 1941; or

(B) a government associated with the United States Government during a period or time referred to in subsection (A) of this section and was a citizen of the United States when the individual entered that service; and

(2) was honorably discharged or separated from that service or continues to serve honorably during or after that period or time; provided, however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation, or continued honorably during or 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 themselves 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 one time of more than one Post.

Section 4. No person, who has been expelled from The American Legion by a Post, and such expulsion reported by the Department to the National Headquarters within thirty (30) days, 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, such person 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 two weeks before the National Convention at Department Conventions or in any other manner specified by any 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 one's Department. Alternates for registered delegates shall have all the privileges of registered delegates, except that of voting. A registered delegate is a person who has received one's credentials after one's registration fee has been paid.

Section 5. A quorum shall exist at a National Convention when sixty 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 persons 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; however, 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 of The American Legion shall be vested in the National Executive Committee, which shall be composed of the National Commander, the National Vice Commanders, and one National Executive Committee Member 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 Committee Member.

Section 2. The term of office of such National Executive Committee Member and alternates shall be two years. The term of office of each National Executive Committee Member 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 their capacity as chair of the National Convention.

**Past National Commanders**

John P. Comer, Massachusetts  
Miles S. Epling, West Virginia  
Robert S. Turner, Georgia  
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  
 Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin  
 Brett P. Reistad, Virginia

#### National Executive Committee Members

Willis Frazier, Alabama  
 James Pisa, Alaska  
 Judith S. Beischel, Arizona  
 Mary V. Erdman, Arkansas  
 Mark Foxworthy, California  
 Thomas J. Florez, Colorado  
 D. Joseph Jackson, Connecticut  
 Robert L. Michael, Delaware  
 George E. Roundtree, D.C.  
 Dennis R. Boland, Florida  
 James M. Settle, France  
 Charles F. Wessinger, Georgia  
 David R. Carlson, Hawaii  
 Robert L. Skinner, Idaho  
 Tom Marciciak, Illinois  
 Jerry L. Jordon, Indiana  
 Jerry D. Sebben, Iowa  
 David O. Warnken, Kansas  
 William O. Moore, Kentucky  
 Charles D. Aucoin, Louisiana  
 Lloyd H. Woods, Maine  
 Patricia A. McCoy, Maryland  
 James E. Brehio, Massachusetts  
 Michael D. Wood, Mexico  
 John W. Knox, Michigan  
 William C. Barbknecht, Minnesota  
 Steve Sweet, Mississippi  
 Kenneth J. Goth, Missouri

David A. Driver, Montana  
 William D. Crosier, Jr., Nebraska  
 Jeanette Evans, Nevada  
 Kenneth B. Maynard, New Hampshire  
 Charles K. Robbins, New Jersey  
 Paul L. Espinoza, New Mexico  
 William R. Kearsing Jr., New York  
 Jeff W. Joyner North Carolina  
 Robert L. Krause, North Dakota  
 Robert M. Klostermeier, Ohio  
 Timothy W. Smith, Oklahoma  
 Robert A. Millar, Oregon  
 E. Michael Stelacio, Pennsylvania  
 Lawrence E. Wade, Philippines  
 Angel O. Narvaez Negron, Puerto Rico  
 David A. Williams, Rhode Island  
 Michael D. Strauss, South Carolina  
 James Huls, South Dakota  
 David G. Alexander, Tennessee  
 C. W. Sparks, Jr., Texas  
 Terry D. Schow, Utah  
 Frederick E. Latour, Vermont  
 Michael F. Mitrione, Virginia  
 Dale F. Davis, Washington  
 William W. Kile, West Virginia  
 Robert L. Shappell, Wisconsin  
 Douglas Uhrig, Wyoming

#### Alternate National Executive Committee Members

Hardwick "Rico" Hall, Sr., Alabama  
 Steven L. Huisman, Alaska  
 Andres Jaime, Jr., Arizona  
 C. Jacob Greeling, Arkansas  
 Harley T. Santos, California  
 John W. Bowen, Colorado  
 Robert S. Murray, Connecticut  
 Jeffrey K. Crouser, Delaware  
 Carlton T. Durham, D.C.  
 Arthur J. Schwabe, Florida  
 Hans J. Stockenberger, France

Phil Youngblood, Georgia  
 Vacant, Hawaii  
 George A. Woodman, Idaho  
 Willard W. Erickson, Illinois  
 Edward J. Trice, Indiana  
 Dennis J. Soppe Iowa  
 Raymond L. Vail, Kansas  
 Michael W. Moses, Sr., Kentucky  
 Rudolph A. Bourg, Sr., Louisiana  
 Randall G. Kluj, Maine  
 David J. Johnson, Maryland

Michael P. Davis, Massachusetts	Jim Willis, Oregon
Jerry A. King, Mexico	Paul M. Kennedy, Pennsylvania
Jerry D. Lynch, Michigan	Michael Napsey, Philippines
Peggy Moon, Minnesota	Isaac Rodriguez, Puerto Rico
Bobby Cook, Mississippi	Neil M. Tack, Rhode Island
Thomas K. Goodin, Missouri	Robert D. Scherer, South Carolina
Peter Hal Rice, Montana	Dennis O. Brenden, South Dakota
Frederick C. Craigie, Nebraska	Robert W. Hensley Tennessee
Yvette L. Weigold, Nevada	Kenneth W. Mueller Texas
Robert E. Dionne, Sr., New Hampshire	Richard G. Fisher, Utah
Berley Hanna, Jr., New Jersey	David Woodward, Vermont
Edward Cheatham, Jr., New Mexico	Linden B. Dixon, Jr., Virginia
W. Michael Bowen, New York	David C. Hodgeboom, Washington
Patricia A. Harris, North Carolina	Frank L. Cooley, West Virginia
Dean Overby, North Dakota	Dale H. Oatman, Wisconsin
Stephen M. Masowick, Ohio	Keith R. Davidson, Wyoming
John L. Bloxom, Oklahoma	

**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 and 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 THE NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER  
Bruce C. Feuerbach, Iowa**

Due to the COVID pandemic I was extended one year as National Vice Commander of the Midwest region to serve the 2020-2021 Legion year since the National Convention of 2020 was cancelled. My states were as follows—North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Minnesota, and Iowa. We changed our way of communication to conference calls and zoom calls due to the pandemic.

On September 1, 2020, it was announced that we could begin to travel again.

September 29, 2020, participated at a national membership meeting virtually. On October 1, 2020, participated in a virtual membership training program. October 14-15, 2020, I attended the Fall National Executive Committee which held their meeting virtually.

October 21-24, 2020, I was scheduled to attend the Minnesota Fall Conference in Breezy Point, Minnesota. It was cancelled due to snow, ice and COVID but on October 22, I was on a radio interview with the Department of Minnesota, and it was done virtually.

On October 27, 2020, I attended National training virtually.

October 31, 2020, I attended my own Third District Conference which was held in Waverly, Iowa.

On November 4-8, 2020, I was invited to a membership tour in Kansas. It was cancelled due to COVID concerns.

November 7, 2020, I attended the Department Executive meeting in Des Moines, Iowa and addressed the DEC.

On November 11, 2020, the Veterans Day program at Benton Community High School at Van Horne, Iowa was cancelled due to COVID.

I was invited to an Iowa Membership Tour November 15-20, 2020, which was cancelled due to COVID.

On November 17, 2020, the National Executive Committee had an emergency meeting to rule on the race car resolution.

On November 18, 2020, I had a zoom meeting with the Midwest Region Department Commanders to discuss membership and how to accomplish our goals and ideas.

As a substitute to the Iowa Membership Tour, I gave a report on membership to the Department of Iowa on November 21 at Department Headquarters via zoom.

On January 15-17, 2021, I attended Nebraska's Midwinter Conference. Spoke to the joint meeting on Saturday, January 16, 2021. I participated in a round table discussion where we were asked questions from the American Legion family. While there in Nebraska I attended their Department Oratorical Contest. Visited the Columbus American Legion Post home.

The National organization set up zoom calls with all five regions during January 27-29, 2021. As a National Vice Commander, I had the opportunity to participate in each of them.

I was scheduled for a trip to Kansas for January 29-31, 2021. I had to cancel due to just getting over COVID-19.

March 1, 2021, we all had a new experience doing the Washington conference. The conference was done through a zoom meeting. I tuned into the National Security Commission and listened to several speakers. I also attended the joint National Security and the VE&E panel. On Tuesday, March 2, attended the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission meeting. There were several good speakers. That afternoon I continued attending the VA & R afternoon session. Also attending the Veterans Benefits Committee meeting.

Wednesday, March 3, 2021, attended the TBI/PTSD Suicide Prevention Committee meeting. Speaker Matt Wetenkamp was a very interesting speaker.

On Thursday, March 4, 2021, I attended the virtual National Commander's testimony to the Joint Veterans Affairs Committee. All in all, being we could not be in person, I feel the virtual meetings were beneficial and successful.

Thursday, March 17, 2021, attended the Gladbrook, Iowa American Legion post for a visit from National Commander Oxford. He was doing the Iowa Membership Tour.

May 5-6, 2021, the National Executive Committee met virtually to consider resolutions and other business of the American Legion. As a National Vice Commander, I had to give a progress report of the Midwest Region of which I was responsible for.

The Department of Kansas invited me to attend their Department Convention on May 13-16, 2021. Spoke to the joint delegation, visited the Sons of the American Legion Department Convention, and presented an outstanding American Legionnaire, David O. Warken, with a national award.

Had the honor of going to the Coast Guard Academy to present a Proficiency Award presented to Catlin Mooney on May 18, 2021. Had a great time and Catlin Mooney is an outstanding Cadet.

North Dakota invited me to their Department Convention on June 24-27, 2021. Was the guest speaker at their evening banquet.

On July 9-11, 2021, I attended the Department of Iowa convention in Des Moines, Iowa. Was the guest speaker at their joint meeting on July 9.

Minnesota invited me to their Department Convention on July 14-July 17, 2021. I spoke to the delegation on July 16.

In all my travels it was my duty to promote National Commander Oxford's goals and ideas along with promoting membership.

On August 25, 2021, my wife, Velda, and I left for Phoenix, AZ. While at the convention city I attended TBI/PTSD Suicide Prevention Committee meeting on August 27. I also attended the Marketing Commission meeting and brought greetings to the group on August 28. I attended the Iowa party and brought greetings to the attendees. On Sunday, August 29, my wife, Velda, and I attended the Patriotic Memorial Service. Later that day I attended the Iowa Caucus and there to I gave greetings to the group. I was invited by National Commander Oxford to the Diamondback baseball game. On Tuesday, August 31, National Commander Oxford called the convention to order. As Vice Commanders it was our duty to fill in for the Commander when he had to leave the podium. That evening we were invited the National Commander's banquet. On Wednesday, September 1, the Convention continued. On Thursday, September 2, after the regular business was finished an election was performed and a new National Commander and National Vice Commanders were elected. Later that afternoon I attended a reception for the newly elected National Commander Paul Dillard to wish him a successful year.

In closing I believe the American Legion had a successful year working with the COVID pandemic which is still a prominent factor. We did adapt and overcome. It has been an honor and privilege to serve with National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford for the years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

#### **REPORT OF THE NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER David L. King, Kentucky**

Due to the COVID Pandemic and the cancellation of the 2020 The American Legion National Convention, the National Executive Committee voted to keep the National officers elected in 2019 for an additional year. This report is therefore submitted as my second year as National Vice Commander.

This additional year started with an in person Department of Kentucky Executive Meeting. The extension of officers and committees were approved with much discussion on how to operate during this pandemic. Programs and meetings would be decided upon as state mandates would allow.

I attended virtually the practice National Executive Committee meeting on 25 September and the actual Americanism Commission meeting on the morning of 26 September 2021. That afternoon, I chaired the Virtual American Legion's National High School Oratorical Contest Department Chairman's Conference. Much discussion as to the possibilities of having this contest virtually was had. It was the consensus that this contest should be done live and in person. Also discussed was to be more involved with the National Speech and Debate organization.

During the months of October, November, and December, I kept in touch through phone calls, emails and Facebook with my Department Commanders, Adjutants and Committee Chairpersons. Many of my visits were canceled due to the pandemic.

The Department of Kentucky's Fall Conference was held 9-10 October 2021 where I spoke about membership, committees and programs.

On 14-15 October 2021, I virtually attended the National Executive Committee Meeting. Although the comradeship was absent, all business and committee reports were handled in a professional matter.

I had the opportunity virtually on 20 October 2021 to meet with Kentucky Congressman Andy Barr and Indiana Congressman Jim Banks. Congressman Barr is member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and Congressman Banks is a Member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Congressman Banks served in the United States Navy and deployed to Afghanistan in 2014. We discussed legislative priorities of the American Legion. Both of these Congressmen are friends to Veterans.

Veteran's Day found me attending services in Winchester Kentucky along with Congressman Barr and many Clark County officials at the Winchester Church of God.

All American Legion in person visits were cancelled for December and January.

January, February and March were emphasized by the National Commander as Operation Comeback. A maximum effort of communications with Department Commanders, Adjutants and Membership Chairpersons was emphasized. This included working with Department's reference efforts for renewals, buddy checks, new members, my legion, mission statements, value statements, vision statements, post activities and more. I also contacted new Post officers and individuals who were excelling in membership.

On 4 February 2021, my friend and one of the greatest Legionnaires ever, Randy Fisher, passed away due to COVID19. Randy's love for the American Legion and his unparalleled Service Office work will long be remembered. I was honored to represent National at Randy's funeral.

I visited the Department of Alabama from 16-19 February 2021. Department Commander Ron Bradstreet had an ambitious itinerary despite the winter weather. The National Commander's flights were cancelled, so I picked up all the speaking engagements. We visited six Posts where we met with numerous members of the American Legion Family. Met with numerous Mayors, State officials and the Alabama Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Of particular honor was to meet and have lunch with Private "Major" Wooten, a 104-year-old WW2 Veteran, member of Madison Post 229.

At the end of February, I virtually attended to Washington Conference.

On 7 March 2021, I conducted the Department of Kentucky's National High School Oratorical Scholarship Contest. Although the National Contest was cancelled, Kentucky's winner received a \$5,000 scholarship from National.

During April 2021, I attended and spoke at numerous Posts in Kentucky.

In May, I attended virtually the Spring Meetings of the National Executive Committee. On Memorial Day, I was honored to be a part and lay a wreath at the Vietnam Wall. Accompanied by a member of our Washington DC office, Mr. Mario Marquez, we also scheduled a wreath laying at the Women's Memorial. This was truly a great honor.

June became a very busy month with the 4-6 June visit to Department of Tennessee's annual Convention. Department Commander Luther Holsonback created an outstanding agenda of Committee meetings, awards and general sessions. I was honored to address the Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion as a part of this Convention.

On 17-20 June, I attended the Department of Louisiana's Convention in Alexandria. Department Commander Byron Comeaux and staff planned another great convention. The committees, speakers, awards and sessions were second to none. Of especially noteworthy is how Byron includes activities for the children and youth. Louisiana hospitality is commendable.

A trip to Georgia began on 24 June and ended on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Department Commander Eddie Asberry and my old Airborne instructor Department Adjutant Zeste Debro made sure this trip was memorable. I was totally impressed by the committee meetings and speakers. With the solid leadership of this Department, I can see Georgia setting in the front of the National Convention very soon.

With only 48 hours at home I was off again, this time attending the Department of Florida's Convention in Orlando from 30 June thru 5 July. I was in awe of the magnitude of this convention. Because of the Department Commander's health issues, Department

Senior Vice Commander Jerry Brandt took charge of this large convention. Florida's committee meetings are larger than some Department's entire conventions. I was totally impressed with the training sessions and their children and youth activities. This Department's devotion to the Legion's Four Pillars is to be emulated.

I continued to attend numerous Department of Kentucky Post Meetings during the month of July.

Although not a part of my official travels, my wife and I attended the American Legion Baseball World Series in Shelby NC from 4-11 August. I cannot say enough of the city of Shelby, Cleveland County, the World Series staff and all who participated in this great event. The players and coaches were outstanding representatives from their regions. It was an honor and privilege to attend and be a small part of this great event.

Last but not least was our attendance and participation at the National Convention in Phoenix from 27 August thru 3 September. One of the greatest honors during this convention was to take part in the installation of National Auxiliary President Kathy Daudistel. She is a one in a million Lady. To be back with friends and family was great.

In closing, let me thank The American Legion Family for allowing me to serve and be a part of the greatest Veterans' organization in the world. The friendships made, the knowledge gained and the experiences will be in my mind and heart forever. I sincerely hope and pray that because of the past two years, I am better prepared to continue to be a contributing member of this organization. Thank you again and may God bless each of you, The American Legion and The Greatest Country in the World. HOOAHH!

**REPORT OF THE NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER**  
**Francis J. MacDonald, Massachusetts**

As the National Vice Commander for the Northeast Region, I was charged with assisting and supporting the National Commander's Programs for the following Departments: Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, France, Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont. Because of the COVID Virus my term was extended to the Phoenix Convention in August 2021.

The year started off slow as we were still restricted in travel due to COVID. We did continue to use the telecommunications programs such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams to conduct training and monthly membership calls with my assigned departments. During these conference calls, each Department explained what they were doing to reach higher goals with everyone striving for 100% or better. Sharing this information, each department was able to hear what different ideas are working for some and may work for them. Considering everything, the Northeast region had an acceptable year.

In October, I attended the Fall Meetings and the National Executive Committee meeting via Zoom. While conducting meeting this way was new, I believe we accomplished all our work and continued to improve the programs of the American Legion. Also, in October the National Organization initiated IT Training Tuesday whereby we utilize the last Tuesday of every month to provide training to the field on current programs that are important to us all. I have attended the training every month since.

During the Month of December, I attended Christmas Gift Shops at the VAMC Brockton, MA. This was a very restricted program and all we were allowed to do was meet in Voluntary Services and assemble holiday gift boxes for the patients. We were successful with limited staffing to prepare 280 Christmas gifts for all the patients that were currently in the VAMC.

End of February beginning of March the Washington Conference was conducted via Zoom. We had good attendance – heard about the issues and then via teleconference, email and snail mail notified our congressmen of the various positions of the American Legion. We were fortunate to hear the Commander's Testimonial to the Joint Session of the Veterans Affairs Committees of the U.S. Congress.

In April I was fortunate to travel once again and visited the Department of Vermont where I provided training on the Organization Structure and Membership. This training was held in person and via Zoom with over 45 members receiving this training. Also, in April the national organization released the new version of myLegion, our automated membership management program. We have experienced several issues and concerns with this new program, and I continue to provide guidance and assistance to my departments and their posts in overcoming these issues.

In May the Spring Meeting and National Executive Committee were held via Zoom.

Throughout the spring and summer, I was fortunate to be able to travel again and attended the annual conventions for the Departments of D.C., Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New York, and New Hampshire.

In July and August, I attended the Northeast Regional Baseball Championship won by Beverly MA and the American Legion World Series won by Idaho.

My time as National Vice Commander culminated in August at the National Convention in Phoenix, AZ. It has been a distinct honor to serve the American Legion in this position and I look forward to continued growth of the organization.

As I visited with each Department, either in person or via conference calls, the enthusiasm and support of our programs was evident. They will continue to march forward and strive to support and grow The American Legion in the Northeast Region.

#### **REPORT OF THE NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER**

**Richard A. Heigert, Missouri**

Greetings, Commander Oxford, Past National Commanders, National Officers, NEC's and guests.

This report covers the May 2021 to September 2021 portion of my term of office. To begin, I attended the virtual Spring NEC Meeting along with several other virtual meetings held in conjunction with the Spring Meetings.

I was able to attend the Wisconsin "Winter Meeting In May" conference from May 6 – 9, 2021 at the Wisconsin Dells. It was great seeing my fellow Legionnaires face-to-face again and attending the several meetings that take place during conferences. I was thrilled to see just how much was accomplished by the Department in spite of the Covid pandemic limiting travel and gatherings.

After being forced by attendance restrictions to cancel my US Naval Academy visit and view the proceedings virtually, my next road trip was to West Virginia June 10 –16, 2021. This was a grand tour of about twenty different American Legion posts all over the northern half of West Virginia. A very good turnout was shown at each post by the Legionnaires. My thanks to Department Commander John Powell, Department Adjutant Miles Epling and Alternate NEC Frank Cooley for setting up the travel agenda. Although the West Virginia Boys State program was cancelled, we did get to drop in on the West Virginia Girls State program which was held virtually. We were surprised to see National American Legion Auxiliary President Nicole Clapp there also and we were invited to address the attendees virtually. I also was privileged to install the post officers at two different posts and attend a luncheon hosted by NEC Bill Kile. This was a great trip through some very beautiful country.

Departing West Virginia, I drove to Ohio where I attended the last half of the Buckeye Boys State program 17 – 20 June, 2021. Having been on the staff of Missouri Boys State for 25 plus years, it was a pleasure to attend Buckeye Boys State and note the several variations that were in evidence from my previous experiences with Boys State programs. However, in spite of the different teaching methods, I found that the ultimate goal of teaching the intricacies of government and business had basically been achieved in the end and I left Ohio with a new appreciation for the American Legion Boys State program.

Returning home for a few days, I then went to southwest Missouri to participate in a four-day Missouri ALR Legacy Ride. Past Department Commander Dennis Woeltje was

kind enough to allow me to ride on his Can-Am Spider for the 435-mile run around the southwestern portion of Missouri.

Great fun was had by all and we were able to raise the major portion of our \$82,100 donation to the Legacy Scholarship Fund at the National Convention.

My final trip was to attend the Missouri Department Convention 8 – 11 July, 2021 in Cape Girardeau. I'm sure that most of the department officers were happy to end their two-year terms and move on to their next adventure. I was able to thank the Missouri Legionnaires for endorsing me for National Vice Commander a few years ago and show my appreciation for their confidence in me. I extended my best wishes for a very good year to incoming Department Commander Gary Grigsby and his staff for the 2022 membership year.

Finally came the National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. It was such a pleasure to be a part of all the activities and receive the many accolades that go along with the position of National Vice Commander. I also want to congratulate all of my Departments in the Central Region for their membership achievements. Although we did not achieve the goals that were set at the start of the year, the Central Region did finish in first place among the five Regions. I feel that the travel restrictions at the first half of this year along with the problems associated with the new mylegion.org contributed more than a little to not making our membership goals.

An historic two-year term as a National Vice Commander has now come to an end and I wish Commander Paul Dilliard and the new Vice Commanders much success in the coming year. Thank you.

#### **REPORT OF THE NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER**

**Robert D. Liebenow, Oregon**

The Western Region is made up of 15 departments. Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Mexico, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Philippines, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. This accounts for over 226,000 members.

The heavy restrictions placed on the Philippines, has made it almost impossible to get in or out of the country and local travel is very restricted also. But the legion members there seem to get the work done.

There is not a lot of new news coming out of the Western Region. They just keep on working their programs, helping our veterans, the youth of our communities and our elderly.

As members of The American Legion, we are here to help veterans and their families, whether it be monetarily or health issues. Our service officers handle thousands of claims each year. This could be first time claims or reevaluating existing claims. They bring millions of dollars to their local communities. More than that, they help improve the quality of life for our veterans.

Our members volunteer countless hours every year at VA hospitals and veteran's homes. Their time cannot be counted in monetary value but in the joy and comfort they bring to our veterans. From coffee carts to magazines or just setting and talking, they make a difference each and every day.

Post members volunteer thousands of hours and donate 10's of thousands of dollars each year to our children and youth programs. Boys State, American Legion Baseball, High School Oratorical Contest, Boy Scouts, Junior Shooters Program, Jr. ROTC, and Youth Law Cadet Camps, just to name a few.

Throughout the COVID 19 pandemic, departments, posts, and individuals have stepped up and helped to fill their local food banks and deliver food to those who cannot get out. They open their post homes to the needy when the weather gets bad and furnish clothing and blankets to those out in the cold.

As I travel the Western Region, it is amazing to see the work that veterans do to help their fellow veterans and their families. The time and work they put in to improve their

communities, states, and nation. Through my service in the US Navy, I have the privilege to be a part of this great organization. The members of The American Legion can be proud of the part they play in the lives of our veterans, their families, and their communities.

**REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN  
Edward L. Harris, Jr., Indiana**

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have served as National Chaplain of the American Legion during the American Legion Years 2019-2020 as well as 2020-2021. This is an activity that I developed and conducted as my Post Chaplain for twelve years and over twenty years in my District in the Department of Indiana.

This was my presentation at the virtual National Department Chaplains Conference of American Legion Year 2020-2021. I emphasized the importance of Chaplains considering ways to supplement the American Legion Funeral. As an American Legion Chaplain, I truly feel that there is no more important duty than to bestow upon our deceased Comrade the Honor of an American Legion Funeral in the presence of his Family, Comrades and Members of the Community. In my experience as a Chaplain, adding this Military Pageantry before and after The American Legion Funeral served to enhance the appreciation of the funeral by the family and fellow Legionnaires. It was my hope that, because of this presentation, that other Chaplains in The American Legion have considered similar ways to adding to The American Legion Funeral.

**The Military Pageantry Before and After The American Legion Funeral**

The Sergeant-at-Arms or other designated Legionnaires make sure that the United States Flag, The American Legion Flag and the Flag of the Legionnaire Service have been properly placed at the departed Legionnaire's casket.

**Before Military Pageantry**

The Commander assembles the Legionnaires outside of the immediate area of the funeral. The Chaplain and Commander leads the procession into the area that the funeral will be conducted. The Chaplain stops about three feet in front of the casket and salutes the US Flag smartly in the usual manner followed by the Commander. The Chaplain and Commander proceed to the podium.

The Senior Legionnaire present salutes and moves to the head of the casket. The next Senior Legionnaire present salutes and moves to the foot of the casket. The remainder of the Legionnaires approach, salute and move to the left or right as a semi-circle is formed. Leave an open area in front of the casket.

**The American Legion Funeral Is Conducted After Military Pageantry**

The Chaplain moves to the area of the casket, smartly salutes, and holds the salute and states: FAIRWELL COMRADE (NAME) and very slowly returns to order arms. About Faces or turns about and departs the area. When the last Legionnaire passes the Chaplain's waiting position, he states: THIS CONCLUDES OUR SERVICE.

During our recent National American Legion Convention in Phoenix, in addition to the Invocation and Benedictions at various programs, I presented my final address to The American Legion at the Patriotic Memorial Service. I used that opportunity to share a prayer on "Growing Old" and to reflect on a song that was played at the funeral of one of our Comrades. The tune is entitled, "What a Wonderful World." At a time of great division in our society, I felt it important that all Legionnaires and Members of our American Legion Family and Friends reflect on the wonderful opportunities to enjoy our country in part because of the tremendous sacrifices made by Members of our Armed Forces over the decades, including our proud Legionnaires. I would like to thank all who have helped to make my experience as National Chaplain truly a wonderful experience.

I particularly want to thank Director Jill K Druskis and Deputy Director Jeff L. Hendricks and their Staff for their tremendous support. And my wife, Vandella E. Harris, for standing by me during my period as Chaplain as she has throughout our 64 years of marriage.

Serving as your National Chaplain has been the experience of lifetime, and I hope that this period of service has helped to contribute to The American Legion, an organization that I will love forever.

**REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIAN**  
**James A. Mariner, New Mexico**

Our prayers go out to those in our American Legion Family, U.S. Armed Services, and those worldwide who have lost their loved ones due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. With restrictions of masking, social distancing, and stay at home our New Mexico Posts, Department of New Mexico, Posts in our worldwide American Legion, and our National Organization held virtual meetings through Zoom or Cisco WebEx including telephone conference calls.

Many cancellations of meetings and programs were done from late March 2020 to August 2020 where restrictions were loosened Posts were beginning to have Membership Drives and meetings with masking and social distancing. Posts still served their local communities with COVID-19 Test Sites, COVID-19 Vaccination Sites, Emergency Assistance, Escorting Fallen Service Members and Veterans to their final resting place, Food Drives, working with the Department of Health and our National Guard to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Our National Organization was holding national commission meetings, national committee meetings, national program meetings, and national executive committee meetings virtually or by telephone conference calls. We had a virtual practice session for our Fall 2020 national executive committee meeting on September 25, 2020, and the actual fall 2020 national executive board meeting was held on October 14 and 15, 2020 where both were at the call of our national commander James William "Bill" Oxford. This meeting is where national officers, national commissions, national committees, national programs give reports so our national executive committee or alternate national executive committee can carry on the business of our American Legion and vote on issues brought up at our fall national executive committee meeting.

Finding out that our Spring 2021 national executive committee meeting was going to be virtually on May 5 and 6, 2021 we as the National Association of Department Historians for The American Legion (NADHAL) decided to hold a virtual NADHAL practice session and actual meeting virtually, that was a first in NADHAL history. We held our practice-pre-event virtual meeting on April 10, 2021, and then our actual NADHAL meeting on April 17, 2021, where both were in the Zoom format. In attendance and participation, we had Past National Commander Deniece Rohan, Past National Historians and NADHAL Members in our practice-pre-event virtual meeting. At our actual NADHAL meeting we had Past National Commander Brett Reistad, Past National Historians and NADHAL Members. We want to thank our National Library-Museum Staff and our National IT Staff for making this possible.

In New Mexico with gathering restrictions loosened we held an in-person District 1 Meeting on April 18, 2021, where election of officers was held that is usually done in the Spring District 1 Meeting. This was done with masking and social distancing. Our Spring and Fall 2020 District 1 Meetings were cancelled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Our Department of New Mexico Convention was held June 24 through June 27, 2021, at Post 49 in Albuquerque that was a in person meetings. Then we held our 30-Day Executive Board Meeting and School of Instruction on July 17 and 18, 2021.

August 27 through September 2, 2021, our National Convention was held in Phoenix, Arizona. At our National Historian's Luncheon, we had two guest speakers. Both were

introduced with brief bios by our National Historian, Cathi Taylor who is the archivist and museum curator at The American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters. Cathi spoke of her family history and long list of servicemembers. Past National Historian Denise H. Rohan spoke of her achievements, her history, women in the military and the mentors she had in The American Legion in history and leadership.

Even with a new delta variant of COVID-19 restrictions tightened, we continue building a foundation for our next century even pandemics can't keep us from our commitment to community, state and nation for God and country as our founding members did in 1919 with the flu pandemic as we "Leave No Veteran Behind."

**REPORT OF THE NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE**  
**Mark C. Seavey, J.D., Virginia**

From October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2021, the National Judge Advocates office has managed numerous lawsuits throughout the country in which The American Legion has been served and/or contacted for legal purposes. All these matters are being handled as required and in conjunction with our co-counsel as needed.

In August of this year, National Judge Advocate Kevin Bartlett resigned, and the position remained vacant until I was appointed and ratified by the National Executive Committee at our Fall Meeting in Indianapolis on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021. During the 23 years I have been on The American Legion staff (only interrupted by my military duties in an Army infantry division in Afghanistan), I have worked in the Media and Communications and Legislative Divisions.

For the reporting year I have rendered over 1,300 written and oral opinions on questions which have been submitted by Departments, Posts, National Officers, staff and individual members of our organization.

In accordance with the then-established American Legion policy, the National Judge Advocate's office reviewed the manuscripts of every single article destined for future publication in *The American Legion Magazine*, *The Dispatch* and all other AL publications for the purpose of expunging statements or materials questionable in character which might subject The American Legion to a libel suit. For the reported date over 2,000 manuscripts were reviewed along with reviewing numerous videos and veteran's memorials submissions. We also reviewed nearly 100 contracts, numerous license agreements and podcasts.

The area which received a lot of attention this year was in our trademark protection and internet infringement business. All American Legion-owned trademarks were reviewed, and the appropriate ones were renewed. Copyrights were filed as needed. We actively pursued all known trademark infringers and actively removed nearly 2,000 producing trademark violators off of the internet.

The American Legion filed all necessary IRS returns, reports, and documents for the calendar year in connection with all of The American Legion programs and plans.

All submitted DD-214's were reviewed and numerous list protection agreements, cease & desist letters, post tax letters and tax indemnity letters were sent out. We were consulted on countless resolutions, while co-drafting new ones as requested.

Regarding my position as General Counsel for The American Legion Auxiliary, there were nearly 100 written opinions rendered, a number of contracts reviewed and numerous oral opinions given during the 20+ meetings attended, countless telephone consultations and 80+ hours of work this year for the ALA.

**ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES**

**Chanin Nuntavong, California  
Executive Director**

**James Baca, New Mexico  
Executive Director**

**MAIL**

**June 1, 2020 - May 31, 2021**

Incoming Letters and Parcels.....	1,013,350
Incoming Parcels .....	2091
Outgoing Letters (Excl. Emblem Sales) .....	6,589,565

**Freight & Express**

**June 1, 2020 - May 31, 2021**

UPS/FedEx - Out - Cartons .....	580
UPS/FedEx - Out - Pounds .....	23,636
UPS/FedEx - In - Packages.....	1,350
UPS/FedEx - Out - Packages.....	2,026

**LIBRARY AND MUSEUM**

**Howard Trace, Indiana (SAL), 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 12,800 items. Two virtual exhibits were completed this year. The first exhibit featured the collection of war posters, and the second featured the badges of the National Conventions. After identifying damage being done to the original posters on display nearly all posters have been replaced with reproductions.

Planning has begun for a reorganization of the archives to make them more accurately reflect the programs and activities of The American Legion. Work has begun on the archival management system and the physical collection will be reorganized to better connect the various formats of material. Reorganization of the photo collection continues. Over 60 percent of the cataloged photos have been reorganized by category and the new organization is already showing benefits in retrieval and protection of the material. Over 69,000 photos were transferred off nearly 400 discs to a digital archival system, and 6,000 digital photos were reviewed and over 1,000 of those were selected and described.

There continue to be no in-person researchers with restrictions placed on building visitors because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff have continued to field research and reference requests and many requests that might have required a visit to the building in the past can now be handled with material provided publicly on the Digital Archive.

Books and Pamphlets cataloged .....	137
Museum Collection Items Added or Assessed .....	654
Items added to Digital Archive.....	2,566
Pages Digitized.....	13,913
Boxes received for Archiving .....	85
Digital Files received for Archiving .....	7,265
Correspondence Answered by Staff .....	1,040

Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Sent.....	95
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Received.....	56

### **Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Library and Museum**

- Donated by Lynn Standley Coe: Legion service medal for World War I veterans.
- Donated by Judith L. Schaeffer: American Legion Junior Baseball sweater from Pennsylvania championship team, 1940.
- Donated by Diane Niermann: American Legion Extension institute graduation material, 1960 (patch, two certificates, cover letter); American Legion cap.
- Donated by Lawrence Helm: Three printing blocks of The American Legion emblem.
- Donated by Carolyn Macola: American Legion pamphlets and brochures, 1940s-1990s.
- Donated by G.L. Gippensteel: American Legion ambulance courtesy card.
- Donated by Nicole Fortin: 1927 American Legion Pilgrimage material (identification/passport, passenger list, menu, invitations, programs, tour guide).
- Donated by Past National Vice Commander Doug Haggan: "Centennial year of the Department of France: History of The American Legion Department of France, 1920-2020" (print and digital copies).
- Donated by Jackie Kalmes: "Castle Film Presents The American Legion Chicago" (1933 or 1939 newsreel).
- Donated by the Service Club of Indianapolis: "Service Club of Indianapolis Centennial Yearbook"; "Grenade" centennial issue.
- Donated by Charles Ward: Photographs from the 1961 and 1962 National Convention.
- Donated by Past National Historian W. Frazier Brinley: American Legion National High School Oratorical Contest dinner ticket, 1995; list of Department of Connecticut Oratorical Contest winners, 1939-2021.
- Donated by Janice Utterback: "Child Welfare Portfolio," 1940 (manual).
- Donated by Carol Bowen: American Legion pamphlets, documents, and poster from World War I and World War II eras.
- Donated by the Department of Florida: "Our History, 2019" (Department of Florida 100th Anniversary book).
- Donated by Paulette Cary: 1937 American Legion Pilgrimage material (three invitations, two programs, and admission ticket); one photograph.
- Donated by Ann Rosso and Lee Bodenhamer: Papers of Past National Commander O.L. Bodenhamer (1929-1930).
- Donated by John Mason (author): "Riding the Rails in Vietnam – 1965" (book).
- Donated by Vicki Iseminger: "Twenty-eighth Infantry Division, United States Army [in] Europe; pictorial review, 1951-1952" (book).
- Donated by Alex Parker: American Legion School Award medals (two medals).

### **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 a democratic government, and bringing more citizens to think seriously about the duties of citizenship;
- Give sound, practical service in our communities, and working to make 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 youth 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.

Additionally, the Americanism Commission has continued attentiveness in legislative matters affecting our way of life. Among legislative initiatives of The American Legion are: (1) continuing efforts to effect a constitutional amendment which would give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws; (2) coordinating a nationwide effort to combat the secular cleansing of our American heritage through Establishment Clause lawsuits; (3) establishing English as the official language of the United States; and (4) amending the U.S. Flag Code in order to clarify the intent of some stated display procedures and to include contemporary, accepted patriotic practices.

This commission has the responsibility for supervision and coordination of four standing committees: American Legion Baseball Committee, Committee on Children & Youth, Committee on Youth Education and Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Committee.

The following is a summary of several programs that are the responsibility of the Americanism Commission and have been conducted during the 2020-2021 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 at the state level.

It was 86 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 significantly threatened its future. Established in 1935, the overarching concept 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. The young men chosen are the brightest within their communities, gathering to form fictitious political parties. Within these parties their political platforms are introduced, built upon, debated, and voted for through proper parliamentary procedures. Elections are held, positions filled, and a state governor rises from among the ranks.

In a typical year 18,000 young Americans take part in American Legion Boys State programs across the nation, and throughout its over eight decades of history, the program has graduated well over 2,000,000 young men. In 2020 only two American Legion Boys State programs were able to conduct a program when the coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic gripped the nation and world. Public health and safety concerns related to the pandemic lingered into 2021 when 14 American Legion Boys State programs found it necessary to again cancel – conversely, however, 36 American Legion Boys State programs returned in 2021.

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. Boys Nation provides a practical, hands-on education to youth delegates about the structure and function of our nation's federal government. After having canceled in 2020 due to public health and safety concerns arising from the coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic, American Legion Boys Nation returned in 2021 to celebrate its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary session.

From each of the 50 American Legion Boys State programs, a rigorous selection process produces two outstanding graduates from each program who go on to represent their state as an American Legion Boys Nation “senator” during the week-long program in Washington D.C. The week of government training in the nation's capital combines lectures, forums, and committees with visitations to federal agencies, institutions, and memorials in order to punctuate the importance of our nation's creation and the sacrifices necessary for its conservation. In addition, The American Legion provides unique occasions by facilitating visits to the White House and the offices of U.S. Senators. This valuable time is used to deliberate topics of importance to the participants' generation with their own elected officials. This opportunity crafts a truly unique and educational experience for both the Boys Nation senators and our nation's leadership.

These young men are charged with writing legislative bills and resolutions to be presented, debated, and conceivably passed in the Boys Nation Senate. The entire process occurs over the time span of one week, accomplished through the organization of fictitious party conventions, creation of party platforms, and guidance from the program's legislative team of counselors. One of the program's many highlights is the nomination, debate and election of an American Legion Boys Nation President and Vice President. Ryan Jung of California was elected President and Cameran Cummings of Alabama was elected Vice President during the 2021 session of American Legion Boys Nation.

The volunteers who staff this program are comprised primarily of former Boys State/Boys Nation participants. Most specifically, junior counselors are program alumni, who during their tenure as a delegate at American Legion Boys Nation, were unknowingly evaluated for their leadership abilities, understanding of government, and grasp of legislative processes. Those who surpass their peers in these areas receive the honor of invitation to return as program staff. Boys Nation senior counselors and administrative staff are primarily comprised of Boys State directors and staff chosen for their technical abilities and unwavering faith in the American Legion Boys Nation program.

#### **Boy Scouts of America**

In calendar year 2020 The American Legion chartered 2,238 Scout units in local communities across the nation which involved 44,687 young people and 19,634 adult leaders. Its commitment to the principles of Scouting dating back to the Legion's first National Convention in 1919. The American Legion supports 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.

Also in calendar year 2020, a total of 1,872 youth were recognized by The American Legion with a certificate issued from the national level for achievements in Scouting programs (1,645 Boy Scouts of America Eagle Scout awards; 56 Boy Scouts of America Venturing Summit awards; 16 Boy Scouts of America Sea Scouts Quartermaster awards; 155 Girl Scouts USA Gold Awards).

The American Legion selected John McPhie from Irvine, California, as its 2021 Eagle Scout of the Year. Selection is based upon a Scout's outstanding religious, school, community, and scouting program achievements. McPhie will receive a \$10,000 scholarship from The American Legion. The three runners-up are Cale Abbot of Oklahoma; Thomas Kopasko of Pennsylvania; and Spencer Burke of Texas. Each runner-up received a \$2,500 scholarship.

Since its inception in 2003, there have been 683 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 (USCIS) to help newly arriving legal immigrants and legal residents become assimilated and seek citizenship.

#### **Flag Education**

The American Legion is a nationally recognized authority regarding proper display of the United States Flag. Each year, thousands of letters, phone calls and electronic mail messages are routinely answered pertaining to the proper 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.

In calendar year 2020 over 50,000 individuals and organizations received email notification each time the flag of the United States was to be displayed throughout the entire nation at half-staff. Subscribership to The American Legion's flag alert notification service continues to grow every year.

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 during several Congresses. In June of 2006, The American Legion spearheaded a drive for the amendment in the U.S. Senate,

coming within one vote of passage there. Legislation was again introduced in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress.

#### **American Legion National 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 to the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government. The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant, taking no less than eight minutes, nor more than ten, for delivery. Each contestant must also give an assigned topic presentation on a constitutional topic that is randomly selected during the contest from the four topics having been identified for each contest year. Assigned topic orations must take no less than three minutes, nor more than five, for delivery.

In 2021 the annual national oratorical finals contest of The American Legion was canceled due to public health concerns related to the prolonged coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic. Fortunately, however, 47 American Legion departments were able to complete their individual state-level oratorical contests earlier in the year and each of those department winners were awarded a \$5,000 scholarship made possible through a grant provided by the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation and The American Legion. The American Legion continues to enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship with the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA).

#### **Junior Shooting Sports Program**

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program is a national Americanism program administered through American Legion 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. Competition is divided into two disciplines: the precision three position air rifle and the sporter three position air rifle.

The American Legion found it necessary to cancel its 2020 Junior Shooting Three Position Air Rifle National Championship tournament in Colorado Springs due to the shoulder-to-shoulder competition eliciting health and safety concerns related to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic.

In 2020-2021 there were 1,344 individual athletes and 173 shooting clubs who entered the postal match competition rounds of The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports National Tournament, wherein competition is conducted remotely at the local level. The 30th Junior Shooting Three Position Air Rifle National Championship was successfully conducted in July 2021 at the USA Shooting range facility in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The national championship climaxed the two rounds of postal matches which began the previous September. At the national championship medals were awarded to the top scorers in each discipline, and to top scorers in the prone, kneeling and standing positions. The two marksmen winning national titles at The American Legion's 2021 Junior Shooting Three Position Air Rifle National Championship were Natalie Perrin of Coopersville, Michigan, in the precision discipline; and Maya Cameron of Fort Mill, South Carolina, in the sporter discipline. Each champion received scholarships totaling \$5,000 sponsored by 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 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 nation’s history, self-discipline, self-reliance, and 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 community level.

**BASEBALL COMMITTEE**  
**Gary Stone, Missouri, Chairman**  
**Steve Cloud, Indiana, Program Manager**

After finding it necessary to cancel the 2020 season of American Legion Baseball due to health and safety concerns associated with the unprecedented coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic, the 2021 season of American Legion Baseball rebounded with 2,975 teams registered to play American Legion Baseball. This encompassed 49,087 players representing 49 states.

In 2021 the team sponsored by American Legion Post No. 56 in Idaho Falls emerged as the back-to-back national champion at the 94th American Legion World Series. Idaho Falls is only the sixth back-to-back championship team in the history of the American Legion World Series. The 2021 runner-up team was from Honolulu, Hawaii.

The 2021 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year is Nate Rose, a player of the 2021 American Legion Northwest Regional championship team, sponsored by American Legion Post 56, Idaho Falls, Idaho.

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. Eighty-two Hall of Fame members played American Legion Baseball, including 2021 inductee Ted Simmons, a veteran of the U.S. Army Reserves. Other American Legion Baseball 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 is a fully compliant Pure Baseball youth baseball program, following an initiative supported by USA Baseball in accordance with the U.S. Center for Safe Sports. Pure Baseball features mandatory guidelines in accordance with Public Law 115-126 Child Sports Act of 2017 to monitor, educate and train parents, players and coaches in abuse awareness and foster long healthy playing careers for young athletes.

**COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & YOUTH**  
**Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Louisiana, Chairman**  
**Stacy Cope, 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 following our founding, The American Legion has become 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, the Sons of The American Legion and The American Legion Riders, as well as other 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.

At its 33<sup>rd</sup> annual convention in 1951 The American Legion adopted a resolution which for a third time re-emphasized the three major principles of its child welfare programs, with those principles remaining as a firm foundation yet today:

1. Maintaining the integrity of the American family home;
2. Utilizing and cooperating with existing sound facilities for children instead of attempting to establish competitive and duplicating resources; and
3. Maintaining a whole child program designed to meet the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs of children.

While these principles represent the heart of a whole child program, its action is rooted in:

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.

For its over 100-year history, The American Legion's Children & Youth Programs have contributed to significant advancements in the area of child welfare. 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, as well as the members of its affiliated and supporting organizations, for their efforts 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.

#### **2020-2021 Children & Youth Programs**

The American Legion has long demonstrated a strong concern for the safety of this nation's young people. Legion volunteers regularly disseminate child safety information to parents, children, and community leaders. Making children safety conscious, in the home and outside, is necessary to assuring that they have an opportunity to play and grow into responsible 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.

Unintentional injury is the leading cause of death and disability among our nation's youth according to a 2018 article in the New England Journal of Medicine. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 12,000 children and young adults, ages 1 to 19 years, die from unintentional injuries each year. Stanford Children's Health states that falls are the leading cause of nonfatal injury for children, with children ages 19 and under accounting for about 8,000 fall-related visits to hospital emergency rooms every day. In homes, playgrounds and parks, the potential for serious injury is always present. To help educate the public, the Committee on Children & Youth produces "Play it Safe", an electronic brochure to inform parents about the six most common causes of death among children and prevention strategies.

The American Legion is very concerned about youth suicide as a major threat to the welfare of our nation's youth. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide is the second largest cause of death among 10 to 24-year-olds. In 2019 the Journal of American Medical Association reported that the suicide rate among adolescents appears to be the highest since the government started collecting such statistics in 1960. The United Health Foundation reports that in 2017 there were more than 6,200 suicide deaths among adolescents and young adults ages 15-24. Suicide is a senseless tragedy but may possibly be preventable. The Committee on Children & Youth produces an electronic 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 an electronic brochure titled "Gateway Drugs...Choose not to Use". This tool can equip parents and children with the facts about 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. Rent may possibly be overdue, or veterans' children are hungry because a parent is sick, disabled, deceased, or left the family. Whatever the reason, these children become the concern of The American Legion, and the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) grant program is a vital tool our organization uses to help meet the maintenance and health needs of qualifying 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. Made possible by The American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation, the TFA grant program assists the households of qualifying veterans and military servicemembers meet the cost of shelter, food, utilities, and medical needs for their minor child(ren) when they are unable to do so. Through TFA, a Legion post may call upon the national level of The American Legion for cash grant assistance to help meet the basic needs of qualifying veterans' child(ren). Funds may be granted when it has been validated through assessment and investigation that the minor child(ren) are in need and that no other sources are available or those available are insufficient.

The minor child(ren) may not be older than 17, or 20 if still enrolled in high school or is physically handicapped. The minor child(ren) must be the biological child(ren), stepchild(ren), 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 are

considered without being a member of The American Legion. A single onetime non-repayable TFA grant of up to \$1,500 is permitted for the minor child(ren) of a qualifying veteran. During calendar year 2020 there were 95 minor children of 43 Legionnaires and service member throughout 17 states who received \$54,913\* in non-repayable cash grant assistance from the national level.

(\*subject to final audit)

#### **Children & Youth Efforts**

The initiation and support of worthwhile Children & Youth legislation is one means by which the Committee on Children & Youth attempted to accomplish its goals during the 2020-2021 program year. The following summarized resolutions are a sampling of the children & youth resolutions that were either approved or retained at the Fall Meetings of The American Legion held virtually on September 15, 2020:

- Res. No. 279: Support Funding Comprehensive Health Care for Children & Youth Programs. 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.
- Res. No. 112: Support Funding For All Drug Trafficking Prevention Programs. 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.
- Res. No. 282: Oppose Any Attempt to Weaken Present Laws Governing Penalties for the Production, Sale and Distribution of Pornographic or Obscene Materials to Minors. 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.
- Res. No. 285: Urge Congress To Appropriate Sufficient Funds For School Nutrition Program. 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.

#### **Children & Youth Expenditures**

The Committee on Children & Youth annually records children and youth activities of The American Legion Family, which includes posts of The American Legion, squadrons of The Sons of The American Legion, and units of the American Legion Auxiliary. Additionally, activities of salons of Eight and Forty are recorded as well. The contributions and expenditures of departments (states) and of the National Organization of The American Legion were obtained for the 12-month reporting period of June 1, 2020 through May 31, 2021 (see Table No. 1). Table 2 illustrates a historical record of expenditures from national temporary aid funds by American Legion departments (state) according to years.

During the same reporting period the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation recorded \$435,312\* in donations from members of the American Legion Family and individuals from across the country. Also, during the same reporting period of June 1, 2020

through May 31, 2021, the American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance program disbursed \$22,012\* in grants to 31 children of 14 veterans. Table 1 shows that for the June 1, 2020 through May 31, 2021 reporting period, The American Legion and its affiliated and supporting organizations reported a combined grand total of \$7,456,051\* in expenditures and contributions to benefit over three hundred thousand children throughout America.

(\* subject to final audit)

**COMMITTEE ON YOUTH EDUCATION**  
**Michael Westergren, Arkansas, Chairman**  
**Jeff Hendricks, Indiana, Interim Program Manager**  
**Ann Byars, Indiana, Program Manager (August 2021)**

The American Legion Legacy Scholarship continues its tradition of awarding needs-based scholarships to children of fallen Post-9/11 service members as well as children of those Post-9/11 veterans receiving a combined total disability rating of 50% or more assigned by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Children of fallen Post-9/11 service members remain our highest priority in awarding this scholarship.

For 2021 there were \$357,228 awarded in American Legion Legacy scholarships awarded to a total of 32 applicants, exhausting the total amount available to award. 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 American Legion National Oratorical scholarships, American Legion Boys Nation scholarships, American Legion Junior Shooting Sports scholarships, American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year scholarships, American Legion Baseball Leadership and All-Academic Team scholarships, and the Samsung American Legion Scholarship.

Samsung Electronics gifted The American Legion with a \$5 million endowment in 1996 as means a of showing appreciation for U.S. veterans who came to Korea's aid during its struggle against communist forces in the Korean War. As a result, the Samsung American Legion Scholarship program established a series of scholarships. Being good stewards of this generous endowment, The American Legion has continued to nurture and grow these funds through the years and since inception of the scholarship over \$6,501,500 Samsung American Legion scholarships have been awarded. This is achieved by annually awarding scholarships to (10) \$10,000 national scholars, (10) \$5,000 runners-up, and (80) \$1,250 department (state) finalists in conjunction with the American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State programs. Regrettably, Samsung American Legion scholarships were not awarded in 2020 due to the vast majority of American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State programs throughout the nation having canceled due to health and safety concerns associated with the unprecedented coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that gripped the globe. In 2021, however, a majority of Boys and Girls State programs were able to rebound from the pandemic to conduct a program, and as a result 86 Samsung American Legion scholarships were awarded totaling \$232,500.

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 21<sup>st</sup>-century youth.

**YOUTH CADET LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE**

**Larry L. Price, South Dakota Chairman**  
**Jill Druskis, Nebraska, Interim Program Manager**

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 our local communities, states, and nation should be regarded with respect and appreciation. The YCLE program serves as an influential steppingstone 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. Electronic materials are available on The American Legion website at [www.legion.org/youthlaw](http://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, CT – Chairman  
 Roberta C. Poulos, Ridgeland, SC – Vice-Chairman  
 Douglas Boldt, Callaway, NE – National Commander’s Representative  
 Eugene Thompson, Marseilles, IL – Consultant  
 Steve M. Tatro, Dunkirk, MD – Consultant  
 Gary Stone, Independence, MO – Chairman, American Legion Baseball Committee  
 Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Metairie, LA – Chairman, Committee on Children & Youth  
 Michael Westergren, Beebe, AR – Chairman, Committee on Youth Education  
 Larry L. Price, Redfield, SD – Chairman, Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Committee

**AMERICAN LEGION CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION, INC.**

**Dennis R. Boland, Florida, President**  
**Stacy Cope, 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 \$18 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 September 2020, the board of directors approved a total of \$740,889 in 19 grants awarded to nonprofit organizations for projects to be completed during the 2021 calendar year. These grants have been awarded to support youth-serving projects that seek to enhance the lives of children by addressing their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. The following is a brief summary of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation grants awarded for 2021:

**American Legion Auxiliary** of Indianapolis, Indiana, was awarded \$75,000 for their project, "American Legion Auxiliary National Youth Programs Scholarships." This grant will provide academic scholarships in the following areas: American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation program, the Children of Warriors National Presidents Scholarship, the Spirit of Youth Scholarship, the Honorary National Junior Division Vice President Scholarship, and the Junior Member Loyalty Scholarship. The American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion support this grant.

**American Printing House for the Blind** of Louisville, Kentucky, was awarded \$23,500 for their project, "Braille Tales: Sharing the Joys of Literacy." This grant will provide Braille Tales books to 1,800 visually impaired children throughout the United States. The Sons of The American Legion supports this grant.

**Angel Flights Soars, Inc.** of Atlanta, Georgia, was awarded \$50,000 for their project, "Connecting Kids to Care Program." This project seeks to fund flights for medically fragile children who are unable to get to their treatments otherwise. The project will also create a pilot recruitment video.

**Angel Flight Southeast** of Leesburg, Florida, was awarded \$9,700 for their project, "Angel Flight Southeast: Flying Kids to a Healthy Future!" This grant will print and produce advertising materials that will both recruit pilots and advertise their services.

**Autism Speaks** of New York, New York, was awarded \$35,000 for their project, "Autism Speaks Resource Guide: Digital Tools for Autism Families." This grant will allow them to update and expand their current digital resources to provide the latest information while expanding their services and providers. The Sons of The American Legion supports this grant.

**Children's Cardiomyopathy Foundation** of Tenafly, New Jersey, was awarded \$20,000 for their project, "Stories from the Heart Storytelling App Project." This grant will allow for the creation of a mobile storytelling app which will allow children and parents to share their stories with other kids, parents, and medical staff. The Sons of The American Legion supports this grant.

**Children's Hospital & Medical Center Foundation** of Omaha, Nebraska, was awarded \$12,400 for their project, "Safe Sleep Education Program." This project will fund Halo Sleep Sacks to more than 1,600 hospitals in North America to help reduce the number of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) cases each year.

**Father Flanagan's Boys' Home of Boys Town**, Nebraska, was awarded \$35,000 for their project, "Boys Town National Hotline." This project will fund 35 weeks of an online campaign encouraging young people to reach out for help. The American Legion Auxiliary supports this grant.

**Gift of Adoption** of Techny, Illinois, was awarded \$25,000 for their project, "Adoption Assistance for U.S Born Citizens." This project will help fund the final administrative cost of adoption of vulnerable children in the United States - giving them permanent families and the chance to thrive. The American Legion Auxiliary supports this grant.

**Illinois Spina Bifida Association** of Chicago, Illinois, was awarded \$9,847 for their project, "Diagnosis Day Brochure about Spina Bifida for Expectant Parents." This project will print and produce brochures with the latest update medical information on Spina Bifida.

**Kansas Braille Transcription Institute, Inc** of Wichita, Kansas, was awarded \$9,062 for their project, "Red, Sight and Blue, I can "See" Her too." This project seeks to produce and distribute educational materials about the American Flag in braille to more than 1,500 blind students.

**Mercy Medical Angels** of Virginia Beach, Virginia, was awarded \$25,000 for their project, "Children's Charitable Medical Transportation Program." This grant will cover the transportation costs for children when their medical treatment is out of their area. This grant will also allow for the updating of promotional materials.

**Military Child Education Coalition** of Harker Heights, Texas, was awarded \$10,000 for their project, “Supporting Military Families.” This project will provide interactive workshops that encourages face-to-face interactions of parents and children through shared reading experiences and related activities while supporting development and resiliency skills.

**National Autism Association** of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, was awarded \$30,000 for their project, “Big Red Safety Box.” This grant will fund Big Red Safety Boxes designed to educate, raise awareness, and provide tangible tools that may assist in preventing and responding to dangerous wandering-related incidents in the autism community.

**Shwachman-Diamond Syndrome Foundation** of Florence, Kentucky, was awarded \$6,380 for their project, “Commonly Used Shwachman-Diamond Syndrome Medical Terms.” This project will create a “Glossary” book that will explain commonly used terms for those kids and parents who suffer from Shwachman-Diamond Syndrome.

**The American Legion National Headquarters** of Indianapolis, Indiana, was awarded \$55,500 for their project “2021 American Legion National Youth Programs Scholarships.” This grant will provide academic scholarships to the following youth programs of The American Legion: Boys Nation, Junior Shooting Sports, Baseball and Eagle Scout of the Year. The Sons of The American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary support this grant.

**The American Legion National Headquarters** of Indianapolis, Indiana was awarded \$203,500 for their project “The American Legion National Oratorical Contest-2021.” This grant will provide scholarships for youth competing in the 2021 American Legion National Oratorical Contest. The Sons of The American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary 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-2021.” This grant will provide temporary financial assistance to the minor child(ren) in the home of an eligible veteran or military servicemember maintain shelter, food, utilities, and clothing. The Sons of the American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary support this grant.

**United Through Reading** of San Diego, California, was awarded \$31,000 for their project, “Special Books Distributions to Military Children.” This project will disseminate books to military children to help promote literacy and maintain critical bonds between the child and their deployed parent. The Sons of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary supports this grant.

The American Legion Child Welfare board of directors meeting on April 21, 2021, was convened virtually due to continued health and safety concerns related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic. At that meeting the following members were elected to board positions until Spring 2022: Dennis R. Boland of Florida, president; Peggy Moon of Minnesota, vice president; George C. Lussier, Jr. of Virginia, secretary; and Robert S. Turner of Georgia, treasurer. Administrative personnel appointed by the board were Shawn Long, assistant treasurer; and Stacy Cope, 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.

**THE AMERICAN LEGION ENDOWMENT FUND**  
**Vincent M. Gaughan, Illinois, 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. Gifts and donations are added to the endowment trust, which is administered by the American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation. The foundation, 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), which include funding for the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program, Department Service Officer school and Board of Veterans Appeals training.

During calendar year 2020, the American Legion Endowment Fund transferred trust earnings of \$263,458 to The American Legion to support the TFA grant program. Donations to the American Legion Endowment during this time totaled \$709,566\*. 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.

(\*subject to final audit)

During this program year the American Legion Endowment Fund approved a marketing strategy and implementation plan as to how the American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation would raise \$25 million dollars. The Marketing strategy calls for the development and creation of the 1919 Society, a donor/organization incentive program. The 1919 Society will create an elevated group of donors who have majorly contributed to the American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation. The marketing strategy also calls for a national fundraising campaign, the 100 Miles for Hope. The inaugural 100 Miles for Hope received tremendous response from Legion Family members in its inaugural run, bringing it back for a second year.

The increased visibility of the American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation has prompted an increase in media coverage promoting awareness of the TFA grant program offered through the Americanism Commission's Committee on Children and Youth and Veteran Affairs & Rehabilitation programs, which includes department service officer training. The American Legion provides these services to the veteran and their family free of charge. Service officers work on an estimated 750,000 claims worldwide from U.S. military veterans at any one time. The TFA grant program is able to provide financial grants to qualified veterans with minor child(ren) in the home to cover the child(ren) basic needs.

At the board of directors meeting conducted virtually on April 27, 2021, the following officers were elected: Hon. Vincent M. Gaughan, president; James Koutz, vice president; and Anthony Jordan, treasurer. Administrative personnel appointed by the board were Shawn Long, assistant treasurer, and Stacy Cope, 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	Legion Posts Reporting	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
<b>REGION 1</b>									
Connecticut	37%	\$3,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$7,073.00	\$1,325.00	\$20,873.00	\$10,840.00	276	\$44,111
Maine	85%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$17,363.00	\$1,035.00	\$13,628.00	\$4,204.00	2,794	\$36,230
Massachusetts	58%	\$0.00	\$2,834.00	\$9,808.00	\$10,892.00	\$30,876.00	\$4,188.79	3,385	\$58,404
New Hampshire	55%	\$0.00	\$1,258.00	\$11,538.00	\$7,200.00	\$82,300.00	\$9,837.00	7,770	\$112,224
Rhode Island	29%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$400.00	\$1,000.00	\$5,450.00	\$450.00	9	\$7,300
Vermont	61%	\$0.00	\$555.00	\$6,850.00	\$2,195.00	\$10,363.00	\$1,375.00	1,606	\$21,338
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>\$3,000.00</b>	<b>\$5,453.00</b>	<b>\$53,032.00</b>	<b>\$23,647.00</b>	<b>\$163,886.00</b>	<b>\$30,894.79</b>	<b>17,842</b>	<b>\$279,867</b>
<b>REGION 2</b>									
Delaware	65%	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$7,137.00	\$500.00	\$14,258.00	\$3,240.00	691	\$25,635
D.C.	26%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$421.00	\$1,000.00	\$200.00	\$0.00	0	\$1,621
Maryland	95%	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$57,495.00	\$54,511.00	\$110,798.00	\$12,905.00	4,033	\$236,667
New Jersey	53%	\$0.00	\$30.00	\$34,982.00	\$13,175.00	\$80,530.00	\$12,929.00	4,078	\$141,646
New York	41%	\$0.00	\$157.17	\$171,960.00	\$29,187.00	\$160,018.00	\$41,771.00	30,028	\$403,111
Pennsylvania	47%	\$0.00	\$405.00	\$74,996.00	\$21,665.00	\$108,684.00	\$28,908.00	4,550	\$232,659
Virginia	81%	\$0.00	\$7,015.00	\$110,903.00	\$50,998.00	\$90,275.00	\$6,270.00	13,173	\$265,461
West Virginia	69%	\$0.00	\$274.46	\$23,236.00	\$4,100.00	\$58,477.00	\$12,900.00	977	\$86,987
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$9,381.63</b>	<b>\$481,160.90</b>	<b>\$176,136.90</b>	<b>\$821,198.90</b>	<b>\$118,924.00</b>	<b>67,539</b>	<b>\$1,405,788</b>
<b>REGION 3</b>									
Alabama	33%	\$0.00	\$75.00	\$20,508.00	\$3,665.00	\$36,767.00	\$3,665.00	1,035	\$64,680
Florida	89%	\$0.00	\$18,054.00	\$57,704.00	\$39,473.00	\$249,428.84	\$32,642.00	23,663	\$487,312
Georgia	49%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$57,870.00	\$7,975.00	\$121,355.50	\$16,729.00	5,088	\$202,729
Kentucky	69%	\$0.00	\$35.00	\$35,632.00	\$7,503.00	\$89,052.00	\$8,650.00	7,423	\$117,920
North Carolina	98%	\$0.00	\$453.83	\$24,279.00	\$8,152.00	\$52,830.00	\$14,041.43	3,198	\$69,756
South Carolina	53%	\$0.00	\$1,363.87	\$32,834.00	\$3,164.00	\$30,320.00	\$14,739.00	1,342	\$82,421
Tennessee	75%	\$2,978.29	\$1,448.75	\$14,453.00	\$7,813.63	\$73,145.00	\$15,530.00	4,225	\$115,386
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>\$2,978.29</b>	<b>\$21,437.26</b>	<b>\$343,978.90</b>	<b>\$77,746.63</b>	<b>\$829,847.84</b>	<b>\$105,996.43</b>	<b>45,874</b>	<b>\$1,181,683</b>
<b>REGION 4</b>									
Arkansas	42%	\$0.00	\$239.00	\$7,159.00	\$755.50	\$13,276.00	\$285.00	233	\$21,715
Louisiana	33%	\$1,900.00	\$605.00	\$6,125.00	\$1,475.00	\$20,834.00	\$1,500.00	453	\$34,039
Mississippi	26%	\$0.00	\$150.00	\$10,560.00	\$4,000.00	\$21,785.00	\$4,725.00	99	\$41,280
Oklahoma	59%	\$622.67	\$972.66	\$16,282.00	\$3,500.00	\$28,240.00	\$8,917.00	1,734	\$58,514
Texas	61%	\$0.00	\$5,023.57	\$85,173.00	\$36,531.00	\$155,895.00	\$22,146.00	8,457	\$304,789
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>\$2,122.67</b>	<b>\$7,090.23</b>	<b>\$127,308.90</b>	<b>\$46,261.50</b>	<b>\$240,930.90</b>	<b>\$37,673.00</b>	<b>10,876</b>	<b>\$466,296</b>
<b>REGION 5</b>									
Illinois	42%	\$1,800.00	\$5,297.00	\$57,181.00	\$12,343.00	\$72,652.00	\$9,418.00	8,330	\$158,391
Indiana	91%	\$4,410.84	\$302.00	\$105,403.00	\$35,328.00	\$130,225.00	\$54,478.00	4,435	\$330,147
Michigan	38%	\$0.00	\$3,458.35	\$13,164.00	\$2,980.00	\$23,888.00	\$4,365.00	2,674	\$47,655
Missouri	63%	\$0.00	\$1,413.00	\$36,576.00	\$12,375.00	\$67,500.00	\$23,466.00	2,804	\$143,329
Ohio	63%	\$0.00	\$480.00	\$200,248.00	\$27,024.00	\$311,636.00	\$45,751.00	35,999	\$585,159
Wisconsin	76%	\$0.00	\$3,205.00	\$53,167.00	\$6,501.00	\$71,911.00	\$42,673.64	7,518	\$177,458
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>\$6,910.84</b>	<b>\$14,165.34</b>	<b>\$487,739.90</b>	<b>\$86,661.90</b>	<b>\$877,612.90</b>	<b>\$180,180.64</b>	<b>61,880</b>	<b>\$1,442,119</b>
<b>REGION 6</b>									
Iowa	66%	\$0.00	\$341.80	\$23,665.34	\$4,703.00	\$40,597.00	\$11,530.00	5,207	\$80,837
Kansas	60%	\$0.00	\$300.00	\$15,983.00	\$2,149.00	\$68,088.00	\$6,872.00	29,794	\$83,392
Minnesota	69%	\$1,424.26	\$4,890.00	\$306,658.00	\$115,348.00	\$237,055.00	\$10,532.00	9,988	\$675,905
Nebraska	100%	\$0.00	\$2,971.11	\$56,484.00	\$7,850.00	\$38,475.00	\$8,718.00	3,612	\$114,495
North Dakota	65%	\$0.00	\$1,199.60	\$102,245.00	\$14,170.00	\$67,896.00	\$10,551.00	4,951	\$186,062
South Dakota	70%	\$0.00	\$1,841.50	\$24,350.00	\$3,000.00	\$75,659.00	\$3,280.00	17,109	\$107,931
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>\$1,424.26</b>	<b>\$11,344.91</b>	<b>\$529,385.34</b>	<b>\$147,218.00</b>	<b>\$827,770.90</b>	<b>\$51,480.00</b>	<b>70,629</b>	<b>\$1,268,622</b>
<b>REGION 7</b>									
Arizona	59%	\$0.00	\$8,020.00	\$147,897.00	\$196,407.00	\$201,482.00	\$19,253.00	5,324	\$573,059
California	81%	\$1,076.00	\$1,160.46	\$66,562.00	\$20,020.00	\$201,661.77	\$23,301.00	6,484	\$313,781
Colorado	61%	\$3,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$17,560.00	\$4,999.00	\$27,118.00	\$2,267.00	4,075	\$56,444
Hawaii	9%	\$1,500.00	\$300.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$20.00	0	\$1,920
Nevada	59%	\$0.00	\$3,988.72	\$3,625.00	\$1,900.00	\$12,591.00	\$623.00	318	\$22,688
New Mexico	99%	\$0.00	\$1,327.72	\$9,171.00	\$10,586.00	\$62,552.00	\$150.00	5,063	\$73,769
Utah	70%	\$0.00	\$285.00	\$8,450.00	\$1,758.00	\$6,290.00	\$2,841.00	424	\$9
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>\$5,876.00</b>	<b>\$16,678.90</b>	<b>\$263,265.90</b>	<b>\$236,669.00</b>	<b>\$901,764.77</b>	<b>\$46,461.00</b>	<b>20,888</b>	<b>\$1,061,303</b>
<b>REGION 8</b>									
Alaska	38%	\$0.00	\$400.00	\$19,978.92	\$2,500.00	\$53,707.00	\$1,060.00	2,156	\$77,646
Idaho	67%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$5,973.00	\$1,350.00	\$14,346.67	\$6,715.00	1,983	\$26,385
Montana	74%	\$1,000.00	\$630.00	\$12,198.00	\$6,500.00	\$29,147.00	\$3,340.00	5,602	\$52,815
Oregon	67%	\$0.00	\$215.93	\$18,422.00	\$3,627.00	\$36,692.00	\$8,305.00	4,195	\$65,262
Washington	54%	\$0.00	\$230.00	\$12,827.00	\$3,715.00	\$16,529.00	\$5,819.00	4,609	\$39,120
Wyoming	69%	\$0.00	\$1,288.02	\$5,240.00	\$900.00	\$16,538.00	\$800.00	11,057	\$26,676
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>\$1,000.00</b>	<b>\$2,764.85</b>	<b>\$72,647.92</b>	<b>\$18,492.00</b>	<b>\$168,959.67</b>	<b>\$26,039.00</b>	<b>29,692</b>	<b>\$289,903</b>
<b>REGION TOTALS:</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>\$22,012.06</b>	<b>\$88,112.92</b>	<b>\$2,327,668.28</b>	<b>\$820,726.13</b>	<b>\$5,530,796.28</b>	<b>\$599,618.86</b>	<b>316,121</b>	<b>\$7,388,721</b>
<b>FOREIGN</b>									
France	18%	\$0.00	\$150.00	\$8,900.00	\$0.00	\$9,802.00	\$655.00	58	\$48,850
Mexico	4%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$25.00	\$36.00	\$2,011.00	\$2,496.00	153	\$16,023
Philippines	20%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,080.00	\$0.00	\$4,150.00	\$150.00	316	\$8,130
Puerto Rico	38%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$13,205.00	\$85.00	\$17,761.00	\$3,826.00	527	\$76,341
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$150.00</b>	<b>\$26,210.90</b>	<b>\$120.90</b>	<b>\$33,724.90</b>	<b>\$7,127.00</b>	<b>1,064</b>	<b>\$149,144</b>
<b>GRAND TOTALS:</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>\$22,012.06</b>	<b>\$88,262.92</b>	<b>\$2,353,879.28</b>	<b>\$820,847.03</b>	<b>\$5,564,474.28</b>	<b>\$606,645.86</b>	<b>316,175</b>	<b>\$7,458,051.51</b>

TABLE #1 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2020 - MAY 31, 2021

Child Welfare Foundation by National Legion \$49,063.62  
 Child Welfare Foundation by National Auxiliary \$39,199.30  
 Child Welfare Foundation by 840 \$6,171.05  
 Child Welfare Foundation by Individuals \$23,687.63  
 Requests to Child Welfare Foundation \$0.00  
 C.W.F. by Sons of The American Legion \$317,190.89  
 CFC/United Way \$260.63  
**Total \$436,873.12**

TABLE NO. 2  
EXPENDITURES FROM NATIONAL TEMPORARY AID FUNDS TO DEPARTMENTS ACCORDING TO YEARS

	1926-1945	1946-1965	1966-1985	1986-1995	1996-2005	2006-2015	2016-May 2021	Grand Total
Alabama	\$29,181.33	\$51,107.06	\$79,790.45	\$152,817.32	\$137,824.69	\$110,931.35	\$53,046.36	\$611,558.56
Alaska	\$0.00	\$1,627.96	\$1,590.00	\$0.00	\$3,900.00	\$2,165.98	\$1,200.00	\$20,943.54
Arizona	\$26,061.70	\$8,752.00	\$21,380.31	\$192,830.21	\$299,426.72	\$492,329.53	\$112,319.78	\$1,143,200.23
Arkansas	\$33,873.20	\$25,902.22	\$2,081.07	\$55,004.98	\$16,181.61	\$26,959.04	\$0.00	\$160,862.12
California	\$30,108.15	\$16,026.45	\$1,550.00	\$7,559.00	\$90,034.44	\$194,533.72	\$118,498.06	\$388,307.82
Colorado	\$41,621.11	\$22,616.11	\$1,395.00	\$12,205.83	\$17,592.15	\$172,131.92	\$86,436.01	\$354,000.13
Connecticut	\$1,854.00	\$440.00	\$450.00	\$1,192.00	\$7,871.58	\$32,258.58	\$21,815.33	\$65,781.45
Delaware	\$2,035.00	\$1,000.00	\$475.00	\$2,535.00	\$0,497.64	\$12,491.00	\$13,350.94	\$40,484.58
DC	\$2,570.00	\$1,203.50	\$600.00	\$28,136.75	\$2,319.00	\$6,375.63	\$600.00	\$39,804.88
Florida	\$33,341.28	\$25,520.50	\$2,530.00	\$27,060.88	\$64,469.81	\$457,310.37	\$269,462.82	\$879,685.56
Georgia	\$99,894.37	\$99,894.42	\$4,885.00	\$8,498.51	\$12,981.80	\$64,941.92	\$26,822.14	\$273,787.86
Hawaii	\$876.00	\$0.00	\$900.00	\$0.00	\$6,168.40	\$2,787.87	\$27,006.00	\$37,706.37
Iaaho	\$7,593.50	\$5,771.85	\$7,368.39	\$20,228.20	\$195,485.15	\$244,319.48	\$16,218.88	\$496,584.43
Illinois	\$30,220.79	\$4,343.53	\$10,525.73	\$92,128.56	\$276,945.19	\$294,819.86	\$142,535.31	\$850,916.96
Indiana	\$21,850.36	\$9,060.40	\$2,920.00	\$126,545.18	\$173,400.66	\$511,401.98	\$190,951.90	\$1,846,126.30
Iowa	\$17,493.08	\$597.00	\$3,928.45	\$13,782.47	\$227,865.82	\$166,627.05	\$42,073.56	\$472,357.43
Kansas	\$20,766.80	\$42,064.35	\$8,923.00	\$9,241.54	\$16,291.60	\$61,187.11	\$11,353.25	\$169,827.85
Kentucky	\$23,843.50	\$45,527.90	\$64,854.96	\$44,238.06	\$12,445.22	\$193,862.00	\$45,082.69	\$399,854.93
Louisiana	\$23,400.50	\$28,454.30	\$3,385.00	\$7,340.45	\$33,897.24	\$15,081.72	\$55,768.28	\$177,807.49
Maine	\$3,618.94	\$1,910.26	\$2,876.55	\$15,912.00	\$22,305.05	\$15,827.26	\$11,100.00	\$73,160.06
Maryland	\$5,887.00	\$3,390.57	\$3,383.00	\$4,770.00	\$31,620.94	\$50,098.67	\$32,618.56	\$131,766.74
Massachusetts	\$2,754.50	\$455.90	\$150.00	\$4,659.00	\$18,888.87	\$22,870.48	\$60,800.19	\$116,588.54
Michigan	\$23,896.33	\$33,281.24	\$15,346.82	\$14,012.24	\$52,676.66	\$80,139.96	\$76,613.16	\$285,965.41
Minnesota	\$8,610.77	\$23,322.79	\$11,840.33	\$137,579.21	\$86,538.19	\$41,094.08	\$12,870.52	\$324,855.87
Mississippi	\$40,293.83	\$83,254.14	\$117,862.56	\$51,214.89	\$84,261.79	\$58,465.38	\$14,504.63	\$430,887.01
Missouri	\$53,073.08	\$47,799.94	\$11,056.00	\$17,869.51	\$38,884.13	\$149,530.46	\$3,073.54	\$322,686.36
Montana	\$5,414.25	\$1,668.95	\$1,573.30	\$38,514.40	\$57,913.91	\$97,516.22	\$19,491.65	\$222,141.58
Nebraska	\$18,470.10	\$17,795.68	\$17,531.06	\$3,373.25	\$759.49	\$18,801.41	\$7,214.11	\$64,945.10
Nevada	\$585.00	\$768.00	\$7,272.00	\$995.00	\$16,818.94	\$81,184.64	\$26,939.66	\$134,541.34
New Hampshire	\$4,290.50	\$4,941.90	\$0.00	\$63,957.78	\$52,129.27	\$12,810.00	\$6,887.74	\$184,189.24
New Jersey	\$8,995.53	\$1,946.00	\$4,478.00	\$55,576.20	\$53,194.60	\$48,721.88	\$48,683.38	\$221,895.59
New Mexico	\$20,074.30	\$53,098.74	\$58,723.89	\$111,071.87	\$49,262.39	\$40,297.73	\$5,939.00	\$338,427.82
New York	\$7,887.54	\$4,803.90	\$1,150.00	\$33,784.24	\$53,432.27	\$47,378.53	\$40,485.26	\$218,918.87
North Carolina	\$46,597.50	\$81,019.80	\$9,740.00	\$20,750.18	\$68,774.55	\$278,311.40	\$199,304.55	\$764,497.84
North Dakota	\$26,017.45	\$11,788.21	\$5,771.32	\$6,499.40	\$11,426.94	\$13,983.32	\$611.00	\$76,997.64
Ohio	\$23,930.43	\$5,116.25	\$11,613.89	\$11,307.85	\$13,289.44	\$108,007.84	\$31,557.82	\$294,873.33
Oklahoma	\$40,458.25	\$65,006.47	\$88,956.03	\$156,914.96	\$203,764.51	\$483,767.24	\$37,872.18	\$1,877,140.44
Oregon	\$1,250.50	\$13,750.15	\$24,595.86	\$42,485.83	\$14,796.00	\$252,933.02	\$120,686.55	\$470,478.00
Panama	\$875.00	\$534.00	\$600.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,809.00
Pennsylvania	\$22,847.41	\$651.00	\$18,204.85	\$38,183.37	\$29,383.12	\$168,089.86	\$11,188.61	\$290,858.04
Puerto Rico	\$17,097.90	\$37,754.00	\$58,496.50	\$43,620.00	\$11,100.00	\$16,844.64	\$22,804.45	\$224,669.80
Rhode Island	\$1,562.00	\$1,641.00	\$1,060.00	\$18,499.38	\$16,182.72	\$5,049.80	\$7,300.00	\$51,295.00
South Carolina	\$88,453.05	\$29,683.34	\$6,339.00	\$500.00	\$13,610.18	\$86,964.71	\$51,302.68	\$262,862.84
South Dakota	\$42,436.27	\$16,362.05	\$735.00	\$30,688.36	\$5,358.30	\$1,000.00	\$7,029.46	\$163,871.46
Tennessee	\$31,144.77	\$54,613.20	\$26,604.30	\$56,065.79	\$36,561.35	\$94,079.68	\$95,121.15	\$388,193.24
Texas	\$35,373.50	\$47,392.43	\$26,714.50	\$7,884.74	\$31,484.75	\$236,342.07	\$136,809.14	\$622,001.13
Utah	\$11,126.48	\$3,248.00	\$3,396.00	\$12,014.42	\$14,034.34	\$31,707.70	\$12,356.42	\$87,886.36
Vermont	\$1,824.50	\$9,251.50	\$0.00	\$4,925.00	\$0.00	\$7,701.44	\$0.00	\$29,706.70
Virginia	\$45,310.31	\$28,037.78	\$17,936.00	\$31,930.40	\$68,509.94	\$377,540.08	\$183,049.02	\$750,313.53
Washington	\$3,378.00	\$427.50	\$625.00	\$66,884.89	\$511,131.89	\$742,910.02	\$137,539.32	\$1,462,896.42
West Virginia	\$27,628.98	\$11,385.94	\$3,460.00	\$17,750.69	\$40,528.59	\$113,016.71	\$49,238.04	\$263,120.94
Wisconsin	\$15,881.98	\$8,087.25	\$9,878.00	\$16,242.78	\$74,327.21	\$95,858.62	\$12,315.00	\$232,668.74
Wyoming	\$6,180.00	\$1,993.00	\$1,350.00	\$979.00	\$13,746.91	\$34,232.42	\$5,459.65	\$65,940.98
Other Depts	\$560.00	\$173.50						\$733.50
Miscellaneous	\$19,499.21							\$19,499.21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,121,872.95</b>	<b>\$1,089,976.73</b>	<b>\$777,325.21</b>	<b>\$1,926,240.98</b>	<b>\$3,327,257.51</b>	<b>\$6,958,291.54</b>	<b>\$2,732,555.78</b>	<b>\$17,933,220.70</b>

**CONVENTION COMMISSION**  
**Michael E. Walton, Illinois, Chairman**  
**Bridget A. Robinson, CMP, CMM, Georgia, Director**

The annual National Convention of The American Legion was to be held in Louisville, Kentucky, August 28 – September 3, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Convention of The American Legion was cancelled. By resolution of the National Executive Committee, the 2026 National Convention would be awarded to Louisville, Kentucky.

**CONVENTION COMMISSION ACTIVITIES**

The Convention Commission conducted two regular meetings during the year. The 2020 Washington Conference was held in person and Fall Meetings held virtually. Spring Meetings were cancelled. Revisions of our request for proposal (RFP) continued in 2020. This process is extremely important as it provides an equal opportunity for all cities to be evaluated 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 2025 National Convention, the Convention Commission received four bids from the following cities: Tampa Bay, Florida; Kansas City, Missouri; St Louis, Missouri; and Salt Lake City, Utah. Following site visits and after listening to formal presentations from each city, the Convention Commission recommended to the National Executive Committee that Tampa Bay, Florida be awarded the 2025 National Convention for the

dates of August 22 – August 28, 2025. The National Executive Committee later approved the recommendation.

**Future conventions and dates:**

Phoenix, Arizona	Aug. 27 – Sept. 2, 2021
Milwaukee, Wisconsin	Aug. 26 – Sept. 1, 2022
Charlotte, North Carolina	August 25 – 31, 2023
New Orleans, Louisiana	August 23 – 29, 2024
Tampa Bay, Florida	August 22 - 28, 2025
Louisville, Kentucky	August 28 – Sept 3, 2026

**FINANCE COMMISSION**

**Gaither M. Keener, Jr., North Carolina, Chairman**  
**Shawn T. Long, CPA, Indiana, National Treasurer**  
**Robert Bradley, Indiana, Corporate Controller**

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 corporate controller and liaison observers from the National Executive Committee.

The national organization had a net operating surplus of \$7,314,980 for 2020. 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 2020 Annual Report.

**INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION**

**Robert E. Newman, Indiana, Chairman**  
**Matthew E. Herndon, Indiana, 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 four standing committees assigned to it for supervision and coordination: American Legion Riders Advisory Committee, National Convention Resolutions Assignment, Constitution and By-Laws, and Membership & Post Activities. The Internal Affairs Commission also provides guidance for the following programs:

**Sons of The American Legion** -- The Sons of The American Legion (SAL) membership is currently more than 349,000 members worldwide. In 2020 COVID impacted the SAL membership; in 2021, the impact continues but is showing signs of the membership decline slowing down as our post and squadrons recover and re-open for business and serving our communities.

Of the SAL detachments (states), 27% reported growth from 1 percent to more than 60 percent above their annual membership goals. The SAL continues with the “Buddy Check” initiative that reaches out to post members and veterans in their communities to check on their health and well-being. During these extraordinary times, with an epidemic being a worldwide threat, the end to the war in Afghanistan and natural disasters occurring throughout the country. It is the SAL a program of The American Legion who raise funds and volunteer to support programs such as the Veteran Affairs Volunteer Services (VAVS), National Emergency Fund (NEF), the Legacy Scholarship Fund (LSF), Operation Comfort Warrior (OCW) and Child Welfare Foundation (CWF), to name a few.

According to the activity reported through the SALs Consolidated Squadron Reports (CSR), SAL squadrons collectively donated cash and volunteered hours to the following:

- **Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Veterans Education and Employment** - volunteered over 142,703 hours, the equivalent of more than \$4 million in wages, and donated over \$1,024,672 in cash.
- **Americanism** - volunteered over 1,193,401 hours, the equivalent of more than \$34 million in wages, and donated more than \$1.5 million in cash.
- **Child Welfare Foundation** - volunteered over 18,430 hours, the equivalent of more than \$525,992 in wages, and donated over \$ 159,090 in cash.

In summary, across all its programs, the SAL volunteered 1,706,138 hours and donated \$5,324,436 with a total cash value of more than \$54 million that went directly to their communities and supported our veterans and veterans’ families.

**The American Legion Riders** -- The American Legion Riders (ALR) continue to be the most highly visible program of our American Legion family-- participating in countless community events throughout the 54 departments. From escorting fallen heroes from flight line to funeral home to raising charitable donations through distance rides for the treatment of breast cancer, the ALR is the tip-of-the-spear and the finest example for “veterans strengthening America.”

The rate of growth for the ALR is astounding. The program is comprised of organized chapters in over 2,100 American Legion posts, and an estimated 121,000 members in 54 departments consisting of 50 states, two U.S. territories, and two foreign countries. All indications are that the program will continue to grow at a rapid rate.

Fortune Business Insights (2020) predicts a 7.2% growth in the global motorcycle market between 2021 and 2028, based largely on fossil fuel prices and unfavorable impressions of public transportation following the global pandemic. Combine that with a statistically significant veteran demographic that is drawn to the motorcycle culture, grounded largely on the thrill, experience of freedom and camaraderie that motorcycle enthusiasts share, and it is likely that The American Legion will see rapid growth in the program as the Global War on Terrorism ends and servicemembers transition back into society. The obvious advantage to the growth in the ALR program is greater awareness of The American Legion to the communities we serve, and significantly more money raised for charitable causes.

With the high visibility and extraordinary growth of the program, and due to an ever-increasing and important presence in our local communities, The American Legion Riders National Committee presented a resolution to the National Executive Committee (NEC) of The American Legion in 2020 to standardize wear of the American Legion Riders brand and encourage standards of professional conduct commensurate with veterans serving the communities. The resolution passed.

Of all the causes the ALR champions, and the millions of dollars raised for local, state, and national charities, no cause is more significant to the riders than The American Legion

Legacy Scholarship Fund. This fund awards education scholarships to children of 9/11 veterans who were either killed in action or assessed with a 50% or higher service-connected disability rating from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Since 2006, the annual American Legion Legacy Run has conducted 16 consecutive Legacy Runs, totaling over 20,000 miles rode on America's streets, and helping our organization raise over \$12 million for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship fund.

**National Emergency Fund** – Since 1989 the National Emergency Fund has provided nearly \$10 million in grant assistance to American Legion and Sons of the American Legion (SAL) members and American Legion posts across the Nation. From January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020, The American Legion provided \$150,923 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 \$236,000. 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 American 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 (CPR) was developed in 1975 to document the various activities a specific post has accomplished during the twelve-month reporting period, June 1<sup>st</sup> through May 31<sup>st</sup>. The CPR may be the most important post document submitted each year. The combined information is referenced when the National Commander and others speak to our representatives and validates our ability to testify on behalf of all veterans. An individual post story and impact is amplified when we speak with a collective voice. During the 2020-2021 reporting year, 62% of posts submitted a CPR.

Throughout the reporting year, American Legion post members provided:

- 244,990 volunteer hours provided to our communities
- 75,959 pints of blood donated by 50,735 American Legion members
- 2,504,183 community service hours at a cost of \$5,332,525
- 105,942 funeral honors performed at a cost of \$1,756,384
- 3,529 American Legion baseball teams sponsored at a cost of \$2,868,556
- 3,498 Scout Units sponsored representing 33,138 Scouts at a cost of \$1,288,944
- \$4,015,805 donated to school assisted programs and scholarships
- 9,872 Boys State Sponsored at a cost of \$2,010,112
- \$304,278 donated to the Temporary Financial Assistance
- \$287,671 donated to the National Emergency Fund
- \$4,199,661 in total donations to Children and Youth activities

**The National American Legion College** -- National American Legion College (NALC) hosts many talented young, ambitious Legionnaires at the National Headquarters in Indianapolis for a week of intensive training. Upon graduation, the 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 working as a team confronting The American Legion. Upon returning home, graduates stay in contact through social media and networking at National American Legion events.

Candidates for the NALC are veterans who demonstrate the potential or have demonstrated their ability to take on higher leadership roles. Student candidates are nominated by their respective departments and ranked by a four-person selection committee comprised of a past national commander who chairs the committee and four NALC graduates, one from the last four graduating classes.

In 2020, due to the pandemic, The American Legion complied with COVID-19 mandates and restrictions by canceling the class. Unfortunately, this also reduced the number of attendees from 55 to 32. However, in 2021 two NALC classes will be convened, which will continue the 22-year tradition of producing National American Legion College graduates.

Over 800 graduates are making a difference in leadership and membership across the country. Many graduates have taken on various roles by either teaching/training their fellow legionnaires, serve in leadership roles, or are appointed to many commission & committees at the national and department levels. Graduates are encouraged to utilize the skills and knowledge by coordinating with their fellow graduates to develop training platforms that will benefit and enhance their American Legion knowledge and the issues that impact our veterans.

**American Legion Training** – American Legion members have access to many training events and materials, both online and in person. Encouraging training at all levels is vital to yield a better-informed membership base who understand the organization and the importance of their participation. The training area of the webpage offers materials to download for use in local training at the district and post level.

Basic Training is The American Legion’s on-line, self-paced training program free to American Legion Family members. It is a ready resource 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.

Training Tuesdays are live webinar events offered on the last Tuesday of each month. These one-hour sessions are open to all and cover a wide variety of topics of interest to post and district leadership.

Live training sessions are conducted each year during the national convention to engage attendees and encourage members to continue sharing the American Legion’s mission and message.

**Operation Comfort Warrior (OCW)** – In 2020, Operation Comfort Warriors approved 22 grant requests totaling over \$208,802 for veterans and organizations serving veterans’ needs in 15 different states providing everything from entertainment access to critical personal care needs. In 2021 through August 31<sup>st</sup>, Operation Comfort Warriors has approved 39 grants totaling over \$200,000.

Every dollar contributed to the fund is used to:

- Demonstrate to wounded warriors that those who have come before them will continue to stand by them in their service to our great nation.
- Support individuals and programs that help wounded warriors wherever they are and in whatever stages of recovery they are in.
- Provide items and events that empower wounded warriors and their families to face their difficulties and come out stronger on the other side. Few programs illustrate The American Legion’s commitment to wounded, injured or ill military service members and veterans more than Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW). OCW defines a “wounded warrior” as those veterans who have or those service members who are still serving honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces and who have become wounded, injured, or ill. OCW supplements the high-quality care provided at military and Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities and transition units throughout the United States and abroad. OCW was established to provide those “non-essential” items not typically found as a budget line on government spreadsheets.

### **NATIONAL CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS ASSIGNMENT COMMITTEE**

**Henry P. Bradley, Massachusetts, Chairman**

The Resolutions Assignment Committee meets at least three days before the convening of the national convention. This committee has the responsibility to receive, consider and transmit all resolutions – with or without recommendation – to the appropriate convention committee for a report to the convention. During an average year, between 200 and 300 resolutions will be assigned.

### **CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS COMMITTEE**

**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**

**John “Jay” Bowen, Colorado, Chairman**

**Matthew E. Herndon, Indiana, Deputy Director**

Membership and programs go hand in hand to make The American Legion an organization able to provide people and resources to serve the needs of veterans and their families.

The Committee has oversight of the implementation of the recommendations of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Relook Committee whose charge was to update the original 21<sup>st</sup> Century report and chart the path for membership operations over the next 10 to 15 years.

#### **Membership:**

Final 2019 membership – 1,809,212

Final 2020 membership – 1,762,061

2021 membership projection – 1,688,000

**58<sup>th</sup> Annual National Membership Workshop** – The 58<sup>th</sup> Annual National Membership Workshop was held virtually from Indianapolis on July 26-29, 2021. This was the second time the membership workshop was not held in person, and it was very successful.

There were eight training modules centered around the theme of “Growing and Retaining Membership.” There were also briefings from various divisions of the National Headquarters, telling attendees how their division can assist for growing and retaining members. It was hosted live through Microsoft Teams with National staff as the presenters and the moderators.

The goal of the workshop remained the same as in the past and that is to provide these essential membership workers with the tools, knowledge, and the desire to conduct an effective American Legion membership program. Whether they are involved in membership recruitment or program implementation, the workshop teaches Legionnaires to help veterans and provide communities the essential programs to maintain a quality of life for which all veterans fought and served to preserve.

When the workshop concluded, the attendees were prepared to face day-to-day membership challenges with a better understanding of The American Legion as it relates to matters involving the ability to recruit new members and retain the ones who are already members.

**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 many post and district revitalizations and new posts developed in the past 24 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. All departments are encouraged to participate in this program. However, success requires a commitment from every level of leadership.

**LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION**  
**Vincent J. Troiola, New York, Chairman**  
**Lawrence Montreuil, Virginia, Director**

This report covers activities of the Legislative Commission from August 24, 2020 through August 24, 2021. During this period, the Commission met one time 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 senior legislative associate, three legislative associates, a legislative associate/grassroots coordinator, and a legislative coordinator. The director and associates are registered lobbyists and submit semi-annual lobbying reports to Congress; in addition, The American 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.

**116th Congress, 2nd Session**

The Second Session of the 116th Congress began on January 15, 2020. Congress has been consumed by partisanship and the House is currently at odds with the Administration on several fronts that impact the legislative agenda. Additionally, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has shifted congressional attention towards necessary relief packages. This has led to a flurry of congressional activity during March and April with the passage of several

relief packages, most notably the *CARES Act*. However, since then, both parties have been unable to agree on a further relief package, which both agree should occur. Negotiations have stalled at this time and there seems to be no deal in sight as both parties have introduced their own bills in the respective chambers of Congress that they control.

Congressional Conferees for the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which has passed for 59 consecutive years, are slated to be confirmed in October to negotiate the final package. However, both the House and Senate versions have language which would require the renaming of certain military installations named after Confederate officers. President Trump has indicated that he may veto the bill if those provision remained in the NDAA.

#### **VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION**

The American Legion has produced 18 letters of support and testified six times before the Senate and the House of Representatives on topics surrounding veterans' healthcare. Most of the letters of support were directed to members of Congress who sought The American Legion's support and input before introducing the legislation. The Legislative Division has been aggressively pursuing various legislative matters to ensure that veteran's healthcare needs are met across several policy areas. Toxic exposures, mental health, and women veterans issue have been the focuses of effort.

The American Legion has testified several times before the House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) on topics ranging from women veterans, mental health, and harassment. On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, Health Policy Deputy Director, Katie Purswell, testified on 20 bills relating to veterans' health and healthcare accessibility. The American Legion was also invited to join several roundtable discussions with other large VSO's hosted by the HVAC's Women Veterans Task Force (WVTF). The American Legion is continuing to generate support among members of Congress for S. 514/H.R. 3224 - *Deborah Sampson Act*, which improves the quality and availability of care provided to our women veterans.

Mental health and suicide prevention continue to be a priority for both The American Legion and Congress. To this end, The American Legion has focused its efforts on S. 785, the *Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019*. This piece of legislation, introduced by Senator Tester, seeks to address veterans' suicide by improving outreach and expanding mental health care options for veterans. S. 785 has several significant provisions to support this goal, including expanding innovative healthcare options, such as telehealth and alternative therapies, reaching veterans, bolstering VA's mental health workforce, and providing a more robust system of oversight VA services. In September, The American Legion testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC) on S. 785. This bill would be one of the largest and most comprehensive mental health bills to pass through Congress since H.R. 203, the *Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act*.

Legislation related to toxic exposures, such as expanding presumptive conditions for Agent Orange exposure or burn pits, continues to gain momentum on Capitol Hill. The American Legion submitted a letter of support for S.4393, the *TEAM Act of 2020*, which was recently introduced. This legislation would potentially be the most comprehensive toxic exposure and burn pits bill if enacted. S.3444, the *Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act of 2020*, was introduced by Senator Tester and was added as an amendment to the NDAA. If enacted this bill would provide a presumption of service-connection for parkinsonism, bladder cancer, and hypothyroidism for veterans exposed to certain herbicide agents while serving in Vietnam.

#### **VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION**

Since October 2019, The Legislative Division has submitted five letters of support for legislation that falls under Veterans Employment and Education.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on all Americans in one way or another, but some unique challenges for our nation's student veterans arose early in the pandemic.

As colleges and universities around the country began to close their doors to in-person classes, student veterans were left asking how these changes would affect their earned G.I. Bill benefits. Seeing these challenges, The American Legion quickly supported legislation to address student veterans' issues and Congress acted quickly to pass the *Student Veterans Coronavirus Act of 2020*. The bill was signed into law on March 21<sup>st</sup> by President Trump, a week before the passage of the *CARES Act*.

The American Legion continues to advocate for H.R. 4625, the *Protect the GI Bill Act*, ensuring that schools receiving GI Bill funding inform prospective students of the cost of attendance, how much their benefits cover, student outcomes, and more. The bill also empowers State Approving Agencies (SAAs) to flag or suspend new enrollments to schools that violate these requirements.

#### NATIONAL SECURITY

Since the Fall of 2019, The American Legion has submitted five letters of support regarding national security-related topics in conjunction with the National Security Division.

The American Legion submitted numerous letters of support to ensure the Coast Guard is paid during government shutdowns. This includes S.21, the *Pay Our Coast Guard Act*, and H.R. 367, the *Pay Our Coast Guard Parity Act of 2019*. These bills would continue appropriations for Coast Guard pay if an appropriations act expires before the enactment of a new one. The U.S. Coast Guard is the only military branch working without pay during the government shutdown. The repeated and all too common threat of government shutdowns brings severe hardship on our Coast Guard members and their families. No member of the U.S. military service should ever live in fear of not being paid.

The American Legion submitted two letters of support regarding H.R. 2500, the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020*. The American Legion supports a defense budget that complies with the Pentagon's 2018 National Defense Strategy in order to modernize the U.S. military to protect against any aggression, especially in a time of growing great power competition. It is also imperative that the government provide fair compensation for all military personnel.

The American Legion also submitted two additional letters supporting S. 1678 - *Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act of 2019* and the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program.

The American Legion continues to support legislation to grant citizenship for honorable service. The American Legion is continuing to work with a variety of offices to ensure the process of naturalization through military service is completed before discharge. This would ensure that immigrant veterans would not be at risk of being deported.

#### AMERICANISM

In February 2019, Representative Steve Womack (AR) introduced a House Joint Resolution (H.J.Res) as a constitutional amendment to protect the flag. The legislation was then assigned to the House Judiciary Committee for consideration where it now boasts 19 cosponsors. A Senate companion measure was introduced on June 14, 2019 (Flag Day) as a Senate Joint Resolution (S.J.Res), and currently has nine 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.

Looking forward to the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, The American Legion is looking for potential sponsors to introduce legislation to amend the United States Flag Code and modify it to reflect current, accepted patriotic practices. The American Legion passed Resolution No. 19: *Flag Code Amendment* in 2016 to codify these patriotic practices.

#### INTERNAL AFFAIRS

The American Legion has worked with Senator Joni Ernst on introducing a bill to require VA to establish a "Buddy Check Week." The bill would require VA to work directly

with VSO's on programming and educational tools to help reach veterans in a crisis and provide for additional resources for the Veterans Crisis Line during the designated Buddy Check Week. In May of 2019, The American Legion passed Resolution No. 18: *Buddy Check*- to require Legion-wide Buddy Check Week, and we look forward to advocating for VA to adopt a similar program.

#### **MARKETING COMMISSION**

**Paul A. Evenson, South Dakota, Chairman**  
**Dean Kessel, North Carolina, Executive Director**

**Legion Racing Platform - IndyCar #48** - The 2021 NTT Data INDYCAR season concluded on September 26, 2021, in Long Beach, CA -- and with it a highly successful inaugural season for The American Legion and its relationship with Jimmie Johnson and Chip Ganassi Racing.

With the season wrapped, we are happy to report Jimmie Johnson was THE number one story in INDYCAR and, frankly, one of the biggest stories in all of motorsports. The American Legion and Johnson appeared in The Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, NBC Today Show, ESPN SportsCenter and across multiple AP news outlets — just to name a few. We saw the coverage of his progress throughout the season increase as he became more comfortable with the car and tracks. Johnson's notoriety and fame helped extend and amplify the voice of The American Legion and its message to millions of veterans and fans that follow the sport.

Among the many noteworthy accomplishments during the 2021 season were:

- The launch of a modern and contemporary Legion marketing brand that is now being utilized across all Legion marketing, media and communication channels
- At-track activation and engagement with Departments and Posts across the country including; Ohio, Wisconsin, Oregon and California just to name a few
- Legion Color Guard presented the colors at multiple race venues and appeared on NBC a number of times
- Chip Ganassi personally purchased and donated 100 tickets per race to Legion members to experience the action – more than 1,200 tickets donated during the season
- Chip Ganassi put The American Legion livery on 2021 NTT INDYCAR Champion Alex Palou's car on four (4) separate races at ZERO cost to The American Legion
- The debut of two (2) dedicated American Legion television commercials that appeared in all 17 national race broadcasts on NBC, NBC Sports and the Peacock Network
- The launch of a national suicide prevention initiative at the Indy 500
- The most efficient media buy in the history of The American Legion with over \$13.7 million in media value through August 2021.

It is important to note that \$13.7 million value exceeds the total cost of the two-year sponsorship investment in the first year.

#### **CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT**

In 2021, we inked a deal with Veterans United Mortgage Company for a \$2M donation toward VCF. We also renewed our relationship with United Healthcare (a Fortune 10 company) for an annual contribution of \$1.3M. And we recently secured a new donation of \$160K from Blue Cross Blue Shield.

TAL is also working with the INDYCAR Series to become the official charity of INDYCAR. Fruitful development discussions continue with several corporations,

including six Fortune 500 companies. In fact, one major fintech brand has committed to purchase 1,000 Paid-Up-For-Life Memberships for their Veteran employees.

**MEMBERSHIP**

**DMS**

The 2022 DMS membership acquisition cycle continues this fall with the second of four campaigns. To date we have acquired more than 32,100 members or about 25.6% of our 125,000 goal. Our campaigns continue to utilize direct mail as our primary tool to attract new members, but we are beginning to transition to digital where relevant.

**Direct Renewal**

As with DMS, the direct renewal program for 2022 started July 1. This too is a program that continues to utilize direct mail as its primary channel but has found success in email and other digital messaging techniques. This program is necessary for stimulating timely renewals from the active membership. It utilizes 6 notices mailed to traditional members throughout the year and a 7<sup>th</sup> notice is sent to recent DMS members encouraging a late cycle renewal to these newer members.

**Paid Up For Life**

The 2021 Paid Up For Life program was paused during the spring and summer months due to the data conversion process but has relaunched this fall with a robust digital and direct mail campaign. We have already begun recording membership conversions from two email deployments leading into a direct mail package scheduled for early October.

**EMBLEM SALES COMMITTEE**

**Sally Nay, Massachusetts, Chairman**

**Mitchell E. Reed, Indiana (SAL), 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 2020 and for the first six months of 2021.

January 1 to December 31, 2020  
(12 months)

Gross Sales .....	\$9,934,831
Cost of Goods Sold.....	5,215,098
Overhead .....	3,632,108
Operating Profit.....	547,625

Total orders processed for the year of 2020 was 88,436

January 1 to June 30, 2021  
(6 months)

Gross Sales .....	\$6,653,216
Cost of Goods Sold.....	3,483,226
Overhead .....	2,075,319
Operating Profit.....	1,094,672

Total orders processed for first 6 months of 2021 was 62,431

### MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

David F. Wallace, Virginia, Chairman

R. Jeffrey Stoffer, Montana (SAL), Director

Henry Howard, Indiana, Deputy Director

The American Legion Media & Communications Commission oversees the vast majority of print and digital media products delivered from National Headquarters, including the monthly magazine, website, a new podcast, social media channels, e-newsletters and more. The commission also supervises portions of the organization's media outreach program, including news releases, press conferences, speeches, appearances in external media and more.

In addition to fulfilling obligations for dozens of print and digital media products as well as media queries, Media & Communications Division staff members promote initiatives by the national commander, key volunteer leadership, American Legion departments and other National Headquarters divisions. The Media & Communications Division also supports and helps coordinate marketing initiatives and corporate relationships.

The flagship of the media program is *The American Legion Magazine*, the nation's best-read and most widely circulated veterans magazine, according to an independent audit. With a circulation of about 1.85 million households and a readership exceeding 3 million, *The American Legion Magazine* ranks No. 1 in readership frequency, according to a survey by researcher GfK MRI. That means subscribers have read three out of the last four issues more often than readers of the other nearly 200 U.S. magazines surveyed. Its 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 advertising sales into the magazine while additional revenue comes from the website, e-newsletters, the monthly *Dispatch* leadership publication and other media products. A \$3 per-member allocation also offsets costs of the division's media production.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the division's activities progressed seamlessly while staff members have largely worked remotely, or in a hybrid working from home/meeting in person environment. The pandemic, however, has had a negative effect on traditional print advertising, largely due to breakdowns in the supply chain preventing companies from promoting products they cannot readily deliver. The division has continued to provide inspiring stories of American Legion members helping their communities during the crisis, fulfilling promotional requirements for various programs, answering various questions via social media accounts, growing a substantial podcast audience and more. Additionally, the division conceived, organized and led the successful 100 Miles for Hope initiative that has raised more than a half million dollars for the Veterans & Children Foundation in less than two years.

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. Additionally, the division fulfills editing and designing needs of about 200 brochures and documents associated with other National Headquarters divisions.

- **Web.** The American Legion national website at [www.legion.org](http://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, receiving more than 1 million page views per month. The website offers news, videos and photography; transactional engagement through donations, membership and merchandising; entrance to special-interest microsites such as Legiontown USA, where veterans and family members are invited to create and share their

own content; and the American Legion Basic Training module. Legion.org is also the entry point to the organization's interactive and transactional platform supporting American Legion Baseball. The American Legion's video vault, called LegionTV, houses the organization's current video content in one microsite. Additionally, an American Legion collection of downloadable videos is available on [www.vimeo.com](http://www.vimeo.com)

- **E-mail.** The division produces a portfolio of popular e-newsletters, led by the weekly American Legion Online Update, which reaches more than 850,000 subscribers every Thursday with links to the top stories of the week on the Legion.org platform. Another e-newsletter with nearly as many subscribers (768,000) is the National Commander's Message, which goes out twice monthly, typically to promote a particular subject or program. The Online Update and the National Commander's Message receive open rates around 20 percent on a frequent basis — a rate far above the industry standard. Other e-newsletters include Dispatch, Flag Alerts, The American Legion Riders, The American Legion Baseball Dugout, Sons of The American Legion, Training, The American Legion Media Alliance and Tango Alpha Lima. Each newsletter has an open rate equal to or above the industry standard.

- **Social.** The American Legion has a fast-growing network of social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram. The American Legion's Facebook community is a little over 162,000 followers, and the national Twitter following has more than 111,000 followers. The Legion's Instagram following has grown to more than 13,000, and LinkedIn followers number more than 28,000.

- **Podcast.** The American Legion's Tango Alpha Lima podcast surged in popularity in August and September 2021 through a special series of firsthand accounts from the 9/11 terrorist attacks and their aftermath. Back-to-back record-breaking download months in August and September led to a total of more than 60,000 downloads since the podcast launched in April 2020. The podcast features three co-hosts, all of whom are American Legion members and post 9/11 veterans. Weekly episodes typically alternate between a roundtable discussion of issues of interest to the military community by the co-hosts to an interview with a featured guest, along with scheduled special episodes addressing a particular topic, such as the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11 or veteran suicide prevention.

- **Apps:** The American Legion Media & Communications Division has produced and developed a collection of mobile apps, including a general American Legion app introduced in 2014 that has generated more than 61,000 downloads; an American Legion World Series app, which has been downloaded more than 15,000 times; along with an annual National Convention app and a Sons of The American Legion app.

- **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, editing and distribution of press releases; regular engagement with national broadcast, print and web media producers; twice-annual radio show tours by the national commander; the development and delivery of media events and press conferences; timely alerts and audience measurement.

- **Training:** Division staff members provide media training to volunteer leadership as well as post members. Each year, the national volunteer leadership team is briefed on media engagement. The media team also supports a training workshop at national convention for volunteers and monthly Training Tuesday sessions.

- **Supporting posts, departments:** Division staff members work with American Legion department and staff members to promote various events. For example, when the coronavirus hit, the division reworked the Buddy Check kit to make it relevant and timely for the circumstances at hand. American Legion posts embraced the change and used the kit as a resource to reach out to veterans in need in their communities. Other media kits, resource information, videos, posters, flyers, press releases and additional materials have been designed and distributed for departments, districts and posts to use in order to generate awareness of programs like the American Legion Legacy Scholarship

- **Internal communication groups.** The division has been actively engaged with two communication groups that help promote Legion activities and programs. After the national convention in 2019, the National American Legion Press Association (NALPA) was disbanded. In its wake, The American Legion Media Alliance (TALMA) was created, under the supervision and with support of the Media & Communications Commission. This was a strategic move to add stability in the communication association's oversight and focus more on arming members with the resources and training they desire. The commission chairman coordinates a task force to work with a staff liaison. Three members of the commission or council are appointed to serve, while the Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary each assign a member, and the top two award winners from the previous awards contest round out the task force. Division staff members provide training and resources to these members so they can efficiently and effectively promote the Legion in their communities. Membership in TALMA now exceeds 500.

- **Physical.** The American Legion Media & Communications Division produces a variety of physical displays, including parade floats, plaques, billboard designs, convention booths, banners, posters 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 ease 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**  
**Steven A. Brennan, Maryland, Chairman**  
**Rhonda Powell, Alabama, Director**

This year, The American Legion took the unprecedented step of cancelling this year's 2020 national convention in compliance with state and federal public-health restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, you have not received a copy of the Report of the Commission on National Security that would have been generated during the 2020 National Convention in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The safety of our members and compliance with state and federal public-health restrictions and guidelines made this decision not only prudent but necessary. The American Legion has taken copious actions to prevent the spread of infections by adhering to federal guidance that restrict large public gatherings and urge social distancing. Local American Legion services such as Buddy Checks, blood drives, meal delivery and volunteer assistance remain the top priority of the organization as we navigate during these challenging times of uncertainty. Because no one can say with any certainty when and in what manner these measures will be lifted, a virtual platform has been established to assist with communicating and carrying out the business of The American Legion.

On September 18, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. eastern daylight time, The National Security Commission, its seven committees, along with the council and consultants met virtually for the safety of our members in compliance with state and federal public-health restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In carrying out the business of The American Legion, the attendees continued conversing, developing and reviewing pertinent matters in the national security and foreign relations arenas. The National Security Commission adopted Six (6) resolutions which, when added to the 2016 - current 68 existing resolutions, comprise the Commission's policy and legislative agendas for the year ahead.

The Legislative Division addressed the Commission and provided a detailed update on the current legislative initiatives. Of importance were the House Majority Leader

announced that the House will vote on a continuing resolution (CR) to keep the government open past October 1, 2020, the President expressed support for the higher levels of COVID-19 relief fund proposed by the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, and Congress will not hold the conference on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to start until the lame duck session after the election.

The Commission Chairmen were also provided an update with highlights of National Security Division's activities. Noteworthy items include the following activities and updates on National Security and Foreign Relation for your review:

#### **A GESTURE OF GOOD WILL**

Taiwan donates 250,000 medical masks to The American Legion due to persistent staff efforts.

American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford accepted a donation of 250,000 masks from Ambassador Bi-khim Hsiao, Taiwan's representative to the United States. A ceremony celebrating the gesture of goodwill took place July 28 at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in Washington, D.C.

"This gift of masks will save lives," Oxford said in his remarks. "Even before COVID-19, it was not unusual to see people – mostly in the Far East – wear facemasks out of consideration for others. It truly is a selfless act. We will ensure that veterans across the country receive these masks."

"We are proud of our longstanding friendship with the American Legion," Hsiao said. "Last August, President Tsai addressed the 101st American Legion National Convention in Indianapolis, where she spoke about our joint values, as well as the sacrifices our veterans have made for democracy and freedom in both our countries."

Rep. Ted Yoho, R-Fla., also attended the event. He addressed the audience on the importance of the relationship between the United States and Taiwan and the commitment of both nations to freedom, democracy and human rights. "I stand here between two flags of two countries that represent peace, democracy, liberty and freedom," he said. "Those will never waiver."

The relationship between Taiwan and The American Legion was furthered during the national commander's trip to the Far East in 2019, when the delegation from The American Legion traveled to Taiwan. While there, Oxford met with President Tsai Ing-Wen to discuss relations between the two nations and the shared values of freedom and democracy.

"When we think about the world situation as it is today... we come to understand the value of our alliances and our friendship," Oxford said during the ceremony. This event was about more than the masks, said Hsiao. It's about a shared commitment between Taiwan and the U.S., as well as a commitment to those who serve in the armed forces of both countries. "Today, we have brought 250,000 medical masks from Taiwan to donate to The American Legion, in part to thank them for their service to veterans and many communities here in the United States," she said, "but also as a symbol of friendship to jointly work to keep our communities and our veterans safe and healthy. "We all owe a debt of gratitude to those that have served in defense of our many shared values."

#### **COMMEMORATION OF THE 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF VJ DAY**

American Legion Past National Commander Daniel Dellinger and National Security Commission Chairman Steven Brennan presented a wreath commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Allied Forces Victory in the Pacific at the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 2.

On Sept. 2, 1945, Japan surrendered to the Allied Powers, when documents were signed aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, officially ending the deadliest military conflict in human history. An estimated 30 to 35 million people died during the war, including 400,000 Americans.

“When America entered the war, they were ill-prepared for what was to come,” Dellinger said. “Only through the leadership exhibited by civilian and military leaders were we able to work together as a nation for the common goal of preserving our democracy.

“The Greatest Generation ... through their shared grit and determination, were able to defeat two of the most powerful militaries in the world and preserve the freedoms that we enjoy today.” Military leaders lauded World War II veterans during the day’s events hosted by Friends of the National World War II Memorial. “The Greatest Generation took up arms against tyranny,” Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley said. “From the ashes of destruction, death and bloodshed of that war, you established a rules-based global order rooted in political and economic liberty that has maintained Great Power peace for over seven decades.”

Milley was joined by representatives from the Embassies of Pacific Theater Allied Nations marking the occasion at the “Freedom Wall,” which is adorned by 4,048 sculpted gold stars, each representing 100 American military deaths during World War II.

### **COVID-19 PANDEMIC RAISE AWARENESS FOR GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY**

While the components of foreign policy include trade, economics and national security, the coronavirus pandemic has brought another component critical to developing and maintaining policy into the limelight: health, defined by experts as health security – a developing but critical part of global relations.

That information was shared during an August 29 National Security Forum conducted through Zoom and open to members of The American Legion’s National Security Commission and Committees, as well as department National Security chairpersons. American Legion National Commander James “Bill” Oxford also took part in the forum. The forum featured guest speakers from the National Security and Foreign Affairs community discussing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on National Security and Defense Global Affairs.

A panel discussion with representatives of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency/Defense Institute for Medical Operations (DIMO) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) discussed the need for health security, especially during the coronavirus pandemic...

The forum’s viewers also heard from former U.S. Ambassador (Ret.) Robert M. Beecroft, whose foreign service included serving as U.S. ambassador in Bosnia, as well as postings in Sarajevo, Brussels, Belgium, Paris, Amman and other stops...

Beecroft said there are three definitions of diplomacy he prefers. “Diplomacy is the art of letting someone else have your way,” he said. “Diplomacy is the art of saying ‘nice doggy’ until you can find a rock. And more seriously, diplomacy is disguised war in which states seek to gain by barter and intrigue the objectives they would have to gain more clumsily by means of war.”...

U.S. diplomats are tasked with being able to think on the fly and look at a wide range of possibilities. “Diplomats appreciate nuance. Instead of an automatic ‘can do’, we’re trained to ask ‘what are our options and how can we exploit them in the U.S. interest?’” Beecroft said. “To some, asking probing questions at times of crisis and confusion may seem like a weakness. Diplomats see it as a strength. It’s sometimes necessary to talk to adversaries, not only friends.”...

The forum’s viewers finally heard from Dr. Alton Frye, Presidential Senior Fellow Emeritus at the Council on Foreign Relations, an independent, nonpartisan member organization, think tank and publisher. He said the United States is best served in advancing its own interests by “understanding and taking account of the interests of other (countries). Not by always agreeing with them. We do not expect identical interests or common interests in every case. But the first task that I find before us is to define a compatible interest among (nations). The objective is not to defer to the interests of others, but to

identify those interests that we can accommodate, rather than to assume that we have to be incompatible.”

Frye said the coronavirus has served to divert attention to what he called “the most protracted, long-term threats that we face. There’s a familiar list: China becoming a global strategic power. Russia. (North) Korea. Iran. Others fall into lower categories.”

Frye said the over-arching danger remains the “nuclear menace.” Great clarity, he said, is needed in the essential goals of managing the nuclear danger. “Mutual assured destruction ... is not a rational policy,” he said. “It is a caricature. It is a technological condition that if nuclear warfare breaks out, the destruction will be on a historic scale.”

#### **FOREIGN RELATIONS**

Participation in the Iowa Department Leadership School with Commander James D. Kessler, Adjutant John A. Derner, and PNC David K. Rehbein was exciting and of critical importance. An inquiry on the posture of the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel peace agreement was presented. As a result, staff moved forward with setting up desk-side briefings with the Department of State and the Department of Defense on the Abraham Accords Peace Agreement - a Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization between those countries.

In a historic signing ceremony hosted by President Donald Trump at the White House, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain on Tuesday became the third and fourth Arab nations to move toward establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel.

“We’re here this afternoon to change the course of history,” Trump said, speaking from the South Lawn of the White House ahead of the signing, presenting himself as a diplomat and dealmaker weeks ahead of the election. “After decades of division and conflict we mark the dawn of a new Middle East.”

Representatives for Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain similarly heralded the historic nature of the agreements between their countries, making slight nods to the absent Palestinians and using soaring rhetoric to portray the dawn of a new era in the Middle East.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented himself as a peacemaker while speaking about strength, declaring “this day is a pivot of history. It heralds a new dawn of peace.”

“This peace will eventually expand to include other Arab states and, ultimately, it can end the Arab-Israeli conflict once and for all,” Netanyahu said.

#### **LEADING THE WAY WHILE PAYING IT FORWARD**

A Microsoft Teams call with a U.S. military staffer in the Defense Attaché’s Office of the U.S. Embassy in Botswana was conducted as a result of a servicemember reaching out to the staff for assistance in lending our experience and lessons learned to begin the works in establishing a VSO. The servicemember is currently assisting the Government of Botswana Veterans Affairs Team develop their own veterans engagement program(s) akin to The American Legion. More background follows in the Defense Ministry Ex-Military ‘Paupers’ Bill:

The permanent secretary in the defense ministry, Matshidiso Bokole, said a majority of the ex-military officers are currently struggling, something that has forced the ministry to come up with a Military Veterans Act to address challenges bedeviling them. Bokole revealed the plan when addressing the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) recently. She went on to share with the committee one of the ministry’s achievements being the introduction of the Military Veterans Affairs Unit meant to address the welfare of retired soldiers. She revealed that a majority of ex-soldiers are currently in the streets struggling because they were previously forced to retire early, especially those of lower ranks, and tend to suffer economic hardships. “Those are issues that even honorable members are aware of through their constituencies. “We are currently working on a military veterans bill in order to take care of them as the bill will be taking care of their welfare and

management of military personnel,” Bokole said. She added it is possible to do so because in some countries ex-military officers are assisted to start businesses to empower them to take care of their families.

Matshidiso Bokole, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Defense in Gabarone, Botswana said through the use of the military veterans’ unit, the ministry would explore issues of bringing them together and help them to empower themselves. She added that it is feasible, especially that in some neighboring countries like Zambia, with military veterans participating in the development of the economy. “Most of them are still active because in the past, especially of lower ranks, they were forced to retire whilst in their 40s with very low pensions to invest in their future.

We have been receiving a lot of such complaints against the Botswana Defense Force (BDF) from some ex-soldiers. Those are issues that we will be following in order to put the matter to rest,” she said. She added that some ex-soldiers claim that during their active duty they served under the United Nations (UN) and those are some of the issues the plan intends to address. Commenting on the matter, the Member of Parliament (MP) for Tonota constituency, Pono Moathodi said ex-military officers are struggling and are unable to feed their families. He went on to ask the PS if she was aware that ex-militia are suffering with some of them having permanent injuries they incurred during their time as soldiers. I am reliably informed that from the rank of sergeant downwards they are not pensionable. Some of them represented us very well during the Somalia wars, some represented the United Nations in past wars, but they are paupers,” Moathodi said. Sharing the same sentiments, Francistown South MP, Wynter Mmolotsi said this is a longstanding matter pleading with the permanent secretary to consider meeting with the BDF commander to resolve it. Mmolotsi said the matter has agitated them. “This is a matter that we should not take lightly anymore. I do not know when it will be put to rest because it has brought a lot of agitation amongst retired soldiers. I believe that it is a matter that the ministry and BDF should interact closely on and put the issues to bed,” Mmolotsi said.

#### **REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS OF THE YEAR**

The American Legion recognizes our nation’s finest of our Law Enforcement Officers. With their steadfast devotion and dedication to duty The American Legion is proud to recognize our Regional Law Enforcement of the Year Award for a job well done from a grateful nation. This award recognizes those Law Enforcement Officers who have selflessly distinguished themselves over and above their normal duties predominately through community service activities and professional achievement. The Regional Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Awards go to, Curt Andrick of Maine in the New England region, Jeffery S. Ginn of Michigan in the Central region, Brandon Medina of North Carolina of the Southern region, and Bradley K. Walther of Oregon in the Western region. It is my pleasure to present these awards of behalf of The American Legion and a grateful nation. Job well done.

#### **REGIONAL FIREFIGHTERS OF THE YEAR AWARD**

The American Legion recognizes the sacrifices and bravery of our nations Fire Fighters. With their steadfast devotion and dedication to duty The American Legion is proud to recognize our Regional Fire Fighters of the Year Award for a job well done from a grateful nation. This award recognizes those firefighters who have selflessly distinguished themselves over and above their normal duties predominately through community service activities and professional achievement. The Regional Firefighter of the Year Awards go to, Donald V. Fletcher of Maryland in the central region, Jeremiah Chisolm of Georgia of the Southern region, Robert Gottbreht of Washington in the western region, and no recipient received from the New England region this year. It is my pleasure to present these awards of behalf of The American Legion and a grateful nation. Job well done.

**POW/MIA UPDATE**

National POW/MIA Recognition Day was established in 1979 through a proclamation signed by President Jimmy Carter. Since then, each subsequent president has issued an annual proclamation commemorating the third Friday in September as National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Our participation in a socially distanced ceremony at the Pentagon, a traditionally national-level held ceremony on every National POW/MIA Recognition Day was paramount. It featured members from each branch of military service. In addition to the national-level ceremony, observances of National POW/MIA Recognition Day were held across the country on military installations, ships at sea, state capitols, schools and veterans' facilities. No matter where they are held, these National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremonies share the common purpose of honoring those who were held captive and returned, as well as those who remain missing.

**ADVANCE REPORT OF THE  
NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION  
TO THE  
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
MARCH 1, 2021 – MARCH 5, 2021  
STEVEN A. BRENNAN (MARYLAND), CHAIRMAN**

The National Security Commission (including its seven committees and council) virtually convened on March 1 during the 61st Annual Washington Conference. National Security Commission Chairman Steven Brennan of Maryland opened the meeting by acknowledging the difficulties of not convening in person this year. "This year is a challenge because of the restrictions COVID brought upon us," he said. "Despite this being virtual, please understand this is equally important. The speakers we bring to this conference are always important to our work and our national resolutions, which steer what our Washington office does with our government's legislative and executive branches. This year is no different." The program proceeded in the following sections:

**Morning:**

- Opening remarks and roll call virtually
- Major General William Walker, the 23rd Commanding General of the District of Columbia National Guard on the posture of the National Guard
- Brigadier General Aaron Dean, II The Adjutant General of the District of Columbia National Guard on the State Partnership Program
- Mr. Kelly McKeague, Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), and Mrs. Fern Sumpter Winbush, Principal Deputy Director of the DPAA, updated us on their Agency's posture.

**Afternoon:**

- Steven Brennan (Maryland) led a discussion on the National Security Commission, the Commission's priorities for the next six months, and a class on the Commission's purpose, its seven committees, and the council.
- George Wehrli (Florida), Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee Chairman, hosted the Regional and National Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year Awards selection committee.
- Joint Panelist Webinar discussion with National Security and Veteran Employment and Education Commission's Guest Speakers – Securing the Industrial Base: Economic Security is a Matter of 21<sup>st</sup> Century National Security

Steven Brennan (Maryland) thanked the more than 170 Legionnaires for attending the Washington Conference and discussed upcoming resolutions. He also addressed the Commission's goal of reviewing all "active" resolutions dating back to 1941 (and how he

assigned each resolution to the appropriate committee). Separately on March 4, Chairman Brennan presented the new resolutions to the Commission for recommendations on the disposition. These resolutions include: Oppose Deportation of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans (RES 20) that would seek to help non-citizen immigrant veterans who honorably served in the military from being deported for reasons other than a felony, thereby honoring the pathway to citizenship; Oppose the Exclusion of Transgender Americans from the Military (RES 2770) that would seek to support lifting the ban on transgender Americans to serve in our armed forces; Support for First Responders and Law Enforcement Officers (RES 2796) to seek further support for our First Responders and Law Enforcement Officers pertaining to internal threats; Review Support to the Republic of China - Taiwan (RES 2797) to promote peaceful dialogue on both sides of the Taiwan Strait; Update The American Legion Spirit of Service Award (RES 23) to include the Space Force as the sixth branch of the United States Armed Forces

Our morning speakers were:

**I. Major General (MG) William Walker, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Commanding General of the District of Columbia National Guard on the posture of the National Guard:**

MG Walker, a Paid Up For Life Legionnaire, serves as the 23<sup>rd</sup> Commanding General of the District of Columbia National Guard, a Presidential Appointment. He is responsible for strategic leadership, training, readiness, operational employment, and performance of the District of Columbia National Guard's army and air force components. MG Walker reports to the Army's Secretary and is charged with ensuring units are manned, trained, equipped, and ready for war and any national emergency. Noted was how particularly proud MG Walker was to serve at our Nation's helm for the last 18 months, where the Nation experienced some of the most challenging times in his 40 years of being a member of the National Guard.

Major General William J. Walker updated attendees about the National Guard's work during these unprecedented times. "We've had some of the most challenging times in my almost 40 years of being in the National Guard," Walker told the Legionnaires. "But I'm especially proud to have had approximately 26,700 Guardsmen come to the Nation's capital that helped ensure the peaceful transition of Presidential power on January 20. I could not be prouder of the men and women of the National Guard of the District of Columbia."

The Nation endured many challenges during the summer, and more recently, here in the nation's capital, as the District of Columbia experienced much civil unrest. MG Walker expressed the National Guard's posture, the Joint Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, Integration (JRSOI), and the legal rules for using force. Logistically guardsmen arrived in the nation's capital from all three airports, by bus, train, and automobile. MG Walker expressed how proud he was of the magnificent job implemented and accomplished by all guardsmen. Around 5,200 Guardsmen remain on duty in the Capitol to provide security and ensure Congress remains safe. Task Force Capitol Response includes the Capitol complex, House, Senate, Supreme Court, and the Library of Congress.

"We're a community-based organization," Walker said. "We have a dual mission to fight and win America's wars along with our active-duty counterparts, and also to be that first military response to homeland security and disasters." He added their next mission to supporting Operation Warp Speed — President Biden's initiative to get Americans vaccinated against the novel coronavirus.

**II. Brigadier General Aaron Dean, II, the Adjutant General of the District of Columbia National Guard; States Partnership Program (SPP)**

BG Dean opened by thanking National Guard members for their response to the January 6 attack. "It was just a tremendous effort and tremendous Americans coming together to protect the Capitol." He led a discussion on the importance of the SPP and what the program is.

The SPP connects a state's National Guard component with an equivalent partner in a different country. These arrangements have built mutually beneficial relationships around the globe and now include 89 allied nations.

"What we do, is we team up with other countries to provide lasting and enduring relationships that further strategic objectives of the United States," he said during his presentation. "The DoD supports and executes the security cooperation programs, that's a state partnership program on a geographical combatant command." The program began after the fall of the Soviet Union to assist Eastern European countries and currently has a growth rate of about two countries per year.

"The vision at the time was to create as pertain to strategic alignment using a small footprint and non-intimidating engagements to build relationships, to facilitate access to infrastructure, information, and leadership." Countries must apply to become state partners. "These are countries that want to be partners with the United States and establish enduring relationships for everything to include training opportunities, educational opportunities, and other operational capabilities and capacities that the United States has that they want to learn about," BG Dean said.

One of the most significant regions for partnership growth has been in Africa. DC. National Guard has an SPP with Burkina Faso. This SPP supports the United States Africa Command's (AFRICOM) mission in the region regarding peacekeeping and defense institution building. The Office of the Secretary of Defense initially approved the partnership in 2017, and it was signed into agreement in Burkina Faso in February 2019. In the Fiscal Year 2019, DC. National Guard completed five engagements with the country. Their focus areas included medical and logistics sustainment, military intelligence, the rule of law, and family support.

"We talked about our institution building, readiness and peacekeeping," said BG Dean. "What we wanted to do was allow them to support themselves as they combatted terrorism along their northern and western border. So we tried to enhance their capability to do that.

"But what we found with Burkina Faso is that they were hesitant to engage outside of cities because they didn't have the medical infrastructure actually to treat patients in that golden hour," he continued. "So what we did was we expanded their medical knowledge and capability on certain methods that they could use to expand that golden hour, to give them confidence, to go outside their city, to discourage terrorists and other groups that are anti-government from going into the cities on the outskirts of their major cities and disrupting government operations."

The SPP is more than just an exchange of military knowledge and capabilities. It's also an exchange of culture. "As we blend to understand each other's cultures, it gives better insight into future engagements and understanding their capabilities and how they use their capabilities as they try to engage and support that then the national government."

One of the most significant values of the SPP is making a call and learning what's going on in a particular country. "You build these enduring relationships," Dean said. "So when there's something that we need to do together, we're not exchanging business cards. And when something happens, we know each other, we make phone calls, we assist each other, and we can move along with enhancing each other's capabilities."

### **III. Kelly McKeague Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA); An unwavering commitment to bring home missing servicemembers**

The efforts to bring home men and women missing in action are a sacred obligation, according to Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) Director Kelly McKeague.

"This mission serves as a marker for those currently in uniform today that their nation will never forget them should they go missing," McKeague told the National Security Commission at The American Legion's annual Washington Conference on March 1. He updated Legionnaires on his agency's progress and the impact the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has had on their efforts.

Nearly 82,000 US servicemembers are still considered to be missing in action, according to the DPAA. Whose mission is to provide the fullest possible accounting for the missing US servicemembers. They are searching for missing personnel from World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the Gulf Wars, and other recent conflicts. Their efforts include coordination with hundreds of countries and municipalities around the world.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted DPAA across all areas from the outset,” he said. “We brought multiple teams home who were deployed, we maximized our telework in our eight locations, and we’ve adjusted our work schedules to optimize access to our laboratory.” The agency’s efforts to protect their employees paid off — out of 725 personnel, only 23 have tested positive for COVID-19, and all have recovered. “Despite having had to cancel or postpone numerous missions last year, it was important for us to build an ambitious operations plan for this fiscal year,” McKeague said. “Not knowing where COVID would take us, most of these missions were either postponed or canceled from October to today.” Many of the cancellations occurred due to partner nations restricting entry. “For us, it’s important that we are ready to resume operations whenever and wherever COVID restrictions allow,” he added.

Despite these obstacles, efforts to recover and repatriate the remains of US servicemembers have pressed on. In Vietnam, three U.S.-trained recovery teams agreed to conduct three consecutive missions when DPAA staff members could not travel. “With over six months of canceled Vietnam missions, there were nine recoveries, nine excavations that were accomplished by these Vietnamese teams,” McKeague said, expressing his gratitude for the Vietnamese government. Another team has been able to travel to Cambodia, and after completing a 14-day quarantine, they began operations two weeks ago. Additionally, six teams deployed last week to Vietnam, and after quarantining and testing for COVID, they will start their operations. “We’re very encouraged again by countries starting to open up their borders to us and allow us entry with which to conduct this important mission,” said McKeague.

Efforts to recover 15 servicemembers whose deaths span four different wars have been progressing with China. A virtual conference held in January with the Chinese Army archival department showed promise. “Despite the challenges that we do have with China, we can discuss these 15 cases from a strategic perspective,” he said. “We also talked about the potential for a joint investigation with our Chinese counterparts.” Most notably is the completion of DPAA’s most successful disinterment project. In 2015, the mission began to disinter and identify the 388 unknowns from the USS Oklahoma, which sank on December 7, 1941, during the attack on Pearl Harbor. “I’m pleased to report that as of today, we have identified and returned to their families, 313 of these sailors and Marines. For these families — not knowing for over 70 years where their loved one was — these 313 families now have answers.”

The American Legion has long advocated for the return of remains from the Korean Peninsula. It is dedicated to a full accounting of the US military classified as missing in action or prisoners of war. About 5,300 of the 7,600 of those missing from the Korean War are believed to be in North Korean territory. Unfortunately, North Korea’s communication has ceased following the most significant single turnover of remains in 2018 and the first since 2007. Of the 55 cases of remains repatriated in 2018, 70 sets of remains of US servicemembers have been identified, and the US returned the remains of 80 additional people to our South Korean partners. “Please let me say thank you to the Legion for your steadfast support to our MIAs,” said McKeague. “You continue to have the impact, and your engagements with members of Congress and advocating the POW/MIA mission to Congress has made a difference.” The American Legion’s advocacy has paid off, he said. This year, Congress awarded DPAA an additional \$25 million in funding, which McKeague said goes toward increasing operations, both in the field and in the laboratory. “You all know that when America sent its sons and daughters off to combat, we have that

moral imperative, that sacred obligation to do everything we can to bring them home, to ensure they do come home

**IV. Mrs. Fern Sumpter Winbush of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) welcoming remarks**

The American Legion is one of the largest and oldest Veterans' service organizations in the country and has been an essential advocate for the past conflict accounting mission. Your consistent messages of support resonate across our government, and for that, we are incredibly grateful. I sincerely appreciate the American Legion for ensuring this humanitarian effort, so essential to us and most importantly, to the families of our fallen, remains a priority for our Nation, even as we come together in this virtual environment.

Covid-19 presented challenges for how DPAA operates, communicates, and conducts its mission. However, as many of you know, it did not completely shut us down, as you heard described by our Director today; even as we recalled our teams, preparations continued for eventual re-entry into a planned field and disinterment locations. As restrictions lessened or as exceptions to the policy were granted, we were ready.

Thanks, American Legion, for your longstanding and unwavering support, and I look forward to us reuniting in person shortly! Thank you.

**V. Joint Panelist Webinar Discussion with National Security and Veteran Employment and Education Division Guest Speakers – Securing the Industrial Base: Economic Security is a Matter of 21<sup>st</sup> Century National Security**

**Moderator: John Berry**, *President, The American & Australia Association; Former US Ambassador to Australia.*

**Panel Speakers:**

- **Brad Markell**, *Executive Director, AFL-CIO Industrial Union Council, AFL-CIO Working for America Institute*
- **Thomas Pickering**, *Vice Chairman, Hills, and Company. Former Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, former US Ambassador to the United Nations, Russia, India, Israel, and Jordan.*
- **Joshua Walker, Ph.D.**, *President & CEO, Japan Society*
- **Richard Passarelli**, *Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA), National Director of Veterans Affairs*

Moderator John Berry started the discussion by asking panelists for their thoughts on strengthening national security. Concerning this, he mentioned two executive orders that President Biden signed on buying American products and securing America's supply chain; both executive orders call for a 100-day study and a one-year review for all agencies to build the resilience of US supply chains that will protect the United States from facing shortages of critical products. Thomas Pickering opened as the first panelist to address Berry's question. "R&D (research and development) is at the heart of our technological development," Pickering said. "And our technological development is the heart of providing us with the goods and services that are very, very important in our strategic economy. How do we support the warfighter, how do we support our national security objectives, whether in space, air, land, or sea? These are all valuable and significant imports. We need to stay on top of the development of that part of our economy. It is in that sense precious and imperative that we have in effect a government-private sector partnership that works there, in many cases informally, but in most cases complementary. Our competition in this area is excellent, and it is increasing. "And both China and the European Union are also major spenders on the question of research and development. We need to be acutely conscious of that competition. And acutely concerned in my humble view about the necessity to remain on top and stay there in terms of those essential technologies."

Brad Markell added that “the United States in many areas still has the best R&D in the world. And our competitive advantage concerning our defense posture and industrial competitiveness can key off that R&D – batteries for grid security and electric vehicles. We have the best research; we can make sure that we create jobs here through the right policies. We can’t make everything here, but I think we need to tighten up quite a bit how we’re thinking about the make-buy decisions, where we want to work with our allies, how do we make sure that we have the technology.” It’s working with our allies and the private sector that Dr. Joshua Walker believes is needed to succeed in securing our economic security. “When I look at Asia, it’s clear that the US and China are on a collision course,” Walker said. “And here’s the bottom line, we can’t win this competition with just government ... it’s going to take the private sector. When I think about the largest area of competition, it’s not necessarily in the military domain. It’s going to be internet hacking; it’s going to be used in a way that our tech companies are going to have to step up. “As we build back stronger and as we think about our economic security, how are we preparing for the next pandemic. This pandemic has made it brutally clear that we can’t do this with just one person ... I believe that we need to bring in our Japanese, our other counterparts across Europe and Asia if we are going to be able to succeed in securing our economic security.” Walker provided a positive example of working with our allies.

The Japan Society “is an American organization that tries to focus on how countries like the US and Japan that had such a troubled past can now be allies,” Walker said. His grandfathers from both sides of his family fought in World War II, and now “a story that we cannot forget is how in 75 years my grandfathers could go from mortal enemies of the Japanese to my parents who serve as Southern Baptist missionaries there, to their grandson and son being the president of the Japan Society.” The national security issue behind organized labor is a statistic that Richard Passarelli shared during the discussion. He said that around 50 percent of the membership in organized labor across the country will be eligible for retirement between seven and ten years from now. Passarelli said they are working on programs “to capture that intrinsic value (that will be lost from those retiring) to be able to pass this on so we can focus on infrastructure, the grid, the cybersecurity teams that we have.” To help fill the gap that will be faced in organized labor, Passarelli said licensing and credentialing is vital to UAW, “getting credit for veterans who are serving in a capacity to date in the military and transitioning those skillsets directly into what our employer needs are. Another big part is trying to find what those gaps are within the industry so we can work on filling those gaps and work with our partners at the Department of Defense to hone those skills when folks are transitioning out to get veterans employed in these companies.”

### **Strength in the 21st Century**

Another question posed by Berry was how the United States remains strong while retaining leadership in the 21st century. Passarelli said it would be through investing in research and development. He provided the example that California is moving toward no fossil fuel within the next couple of years. “Those jobs that we believe will be lost due to fossil fuels going away ... we believe that research and development in the American people is one of the keys for us trying to change what would be doom and gloom of losing jobs, especially in the organized labor side of the house for renewable energies, into positives by pouring a lot of money, time and effort into research and development on hydro, solar, wind energy projects,” he said. Walker said the question is, “how do we turn technology into an asset for us. How do we address the issues that matter to the American people? How do we make sure we have good jobs? How do we make sure those jobs continue to occur in America if those jobs are being transformed by technology to equip our workforce? We have to make sure that everybody is trained to be able to compete in a world in which a lot of other countries have gotten ahead start on us.”

### **Energy Security and Cyber Security**

The ability to remain strong ties in with maintaining our energy security and possible cyber-attacks on our grid or healthcare system is vital. Markell took on the energy security topic. "The energy independence that we have achieved over the past 12 years is itself due to an R&D and tech investment made by the government," he said. "We need to figure out how to use that fossil resource that we have that is less polluting, in a way that leads to hydrogen, leads to carbon capture. And in the end, energy is a big strategic deal. We have to secure our energy supply and our energy future as we reduce our emissions. Because if we don't reduce our emissions, then we all have serious problems ... the military has done an outstanding job with laying out what the potential threat is from climate change in terms of our security posture."

For cyber-security, Passarelli said it's working with utility employers and encouraging them to utilize military veterans. "We believe we have the brightest military folks that are transitioning out to date that will make a major impact on grid security," Passarelli said UWUA is also working with veteran-owned businesses focused on cybersecurity. But a "problem that we are running into is that while supply chains for utility companies across the country are prevalent, our veterans that are trying to get into those supply chains to bid for some of that work have a lot of obstacles in front of them." UWUA is working on this obstacle by creating education components for veteran and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses to access the supply chain in bidding for some of those contracts.

### **Security of the United States**

Berry concluded the panel discussion with the panelists' thoughts on the best base for the United States' security. "A strong economy, a strong technical advantage, and understanding our position of leadership in the world," Markell said. "We are going to have to pay a lot of attention to really understanding where the competition is, where the technology is, and how we're investing – investment in R&D, economic strength is the key to the whole thing."

Walker added that "we are an immigrant nation that embraces that greatness, not just on behalf of ourselves but for that next generation to come. I think that we have to make ourselves stronger together while remaining true to our core. I believe you can't do that without having a strong economy, and you can't do that without leading in innovation. We need to invest in ourselves. We need to look and find that inner strength."

## **REPORT OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION TO THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MAY 5-6, 2021**

The National Security (NS) Commission (along with our seven committees and council) met at the "Virtual" 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Washington Conference on Monday, March 1, and Thursday, March 4, 2021; details of the conference are provided in the Advanced Report.

The NS Commission met virtually via Zoom on Thursday, April 15, 2021, to discuss the proposed resolutions for presentation to the National Executive Committee (NEC) Spring Meeting. This Commission meeting was also the highlight of a six-month study our seven committees conducted - by reviewing 220 resolutions between the years 1941 and 2015 and recommending to the Commission which resolutions should be marked as accomplished, obsolete, or superseded.

Resolutions: Eight resolutions were reviewed (to include the commission resolution to rescind 98 previous resolutions). Four resolutions were submitted to the Resolutions Subcommittee of the NEC for consideration; The American Legion Spirit of Service Award; Oppose Deportation of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans; Oppose Deportation Of

Immediate Family Members Of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans; Rescinding Obsolete Resolutions Dealing with National Security. The remaining four resolutions were placed on Addendum A.

**Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and Firefighter of the Year & Spirit of Service Award Program:**

On January 20, 2021, because we weren't able to provide these awards during last year's National Convention, we flew all the 2020 winners to Washington DC of the Spirit of Service Awards and the National Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter of the Year. This was timed for these outstanding individuals to be here for the President's Inauguration. During the virtual Washington Conference, our Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee Chairman George W. Wehrli, Florida, appointed an awards selection subcommittee for the 2021 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and Firefighter of the Year Awards program. The subcommittee selected the five Regional Law Enforcement Officer of the Year winners and the five Regional Firefighter of the Year winners.

The 2021 American Legion Regional Law Enforcement Officer Winners are:

- New England            Lucas White NH
- Southern                Charles Conyers SC
- Central                 David Hines VA
- Western                Larry Morgan CO
- Midwest                Daniel Martin NE

The 2021 American Legion Regional Fire Fighter Winners of 2021 are:

- New England            Robert Nagle PA
- Southern                Thomas Malone TN
- Central                 Michael Steele MD
- Western                No entry
- Midwest                Peter Boizer SD

**READINESS**

The Department of Defense (DOD) faces a strategic choice: focusing on modernization for high-tech conflicts with China and Russia or expanding forces and improving readiness to meet a superpower's commitments for ongoing conflicts and crisis response. In their FY 2021 budgets, the services all complain that they are too small for the demands being put on them and hedge toward expanding forces and readiness. While 2020 brought its own set of challenges with COVID-19, the Department of Defense (DoD) played a central role in developing vaccines through Operation Warp Speed. DoD augmented civilian hospitals, mobilizing National Guard personnel to provide logistical support and rapid contracting capabilities to tap into the civilian economy. While the effects of sequestration have subsided, many branches look to bolster technology and upgrade weapon systems - to make a more combat-effective fighting force capable of facing global challenges that can arise. The Marine Corps is shifting away from large land operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to a more agile force in the sea. This has been seen in UDPs (Unite Deployment Programs) and MEUs (Marine Expeditionary Unit) increases in operation tempos throughout the Indo Pacific and Europe.

The new administration emphasized readiness in its FY 2021 and FY 2022 budgets. Nevertheless, readiness data are conflicting. Like Army rotations to Combat Training Centers, service flying hours, and Navy ship steaming days, some metrics have recovered from post-2013 lows, but others, like Navy and Marine Corps aircraft availability, remain depressed. High readiness is desirable in forces and equipment; however, readiness is also very expensive and highly perishable --- it must be renewed constantly. In the new DOD strategy developed for 2021 and beyond, the services hope to pursue all three goals—

expand forces, improve readiness, and increase modernization—but the fiscal future is highly uncertain. They will likely have to make difficult trade-offs. Military recruiting was hit particularly hard since the COVID-19 pandemic. Recruiters relied on face-to-face interactions with potential recruits for years. Recruiters have also depended on heavily trafficked locations such as malls, schools, and sporting events that have been shut down for the better part of 2020. In response, recruiters have pivoted to more modern, digital approaches typically viewed as secondary to face-to-face efforts (phone, social media, and outreach).

Reports indicate that Army enlistments fell to about half of their typical levels during the early stages of the pandemic, though they have moved back up to about 80% of mission targets in June. Still, the armed services have expressed optimism in their ability to meet year-end recruiting goals. The Marine Corps noted that it was ahead of schedule on contracts before the pandemic and adjusted sufficiently to the new environment to be on track to achieve its annual recruiting mission. The Navy has tapped into a reserve of last recruits waiting in the Delayed Entry Program to keep up with shipping requirements and expects to meet its year-end goals.

#### **MILITARY AND VETERAN QUALITY OF LIFE**

##### **Military Family Housing**

Several hearings took place earlier this year to discuss the state of housing for military families. A Military Family, Advisory Network survey, was released just before the first hearing. It reported more than half of military families surveyed about their privatized housing reporting a negative experience with problems ranging from mold, vermin, and lead paint.

The staff has participated in several meetings, and conference calls with senior defense officials to receive updates on how DoD addresses this issue. At this point, rush works orders have been fulfilled on life emergency repairs. Commanders have been mandated to get involved and have held town halls at all installations to address issues. Customer service has been discussed where families should have a more accurate date when their maintenance repairs are made. We will continue to track this issue closely as our service members and their families deserve to live in safe and affordable housing.

##### **Defense Health**

The staff has attended bi-monthly meetings with senior defense officials from the Defense Health Agency and discussed Tricare changes that have been implemented since 2020, and ushering in fee changes for almost all beneficiaries, a new plan name, a new regional map, and new regional contractors. The plan would have also closed about 50 MTFs and moved approximately 200,000 patients from getting care using their TRICARE insurance to get assistance from private providers.

##### **Impacts for All Users**

After a tumultuous year of pauses and reconsiderations, military hospitals and clinics are still on track to move under the management of the Defense Health Agency by the end of the year. How that will affect patients of those facilities may change from the original plan, though, after the military's centralized medical administrator was forced to rethink what role private healthcare providers can play in the plan after COVID-19. "We are absolutely on track to meet our timelines, and that's our expectation with us," Dr. Brian Lein, DHA assistant director for healthcare administration, told Federal News Network. The transition includes 721 MTFs and 174,000 healthcare personnel, including active-duty service members, civilian employees, and contractors, which provide care to 9.5 million TRICARE beneficiaries. The facilities are clustered into 21 large markets that encompass about two-thirds of patient interactions. The rest are in 16 small market regions or stand-alone hospitals and clinics (rural areas with a sizeable military presence).

Congress initiated the transition in the 2017 defense authorization bill to better integrate healthcare instead of continuing the decentralized system of each military service overseeing its MTFs. “What we found in our review is that many of these facilities do not have the type of patient caseload, volume, acuity that we need for our providers to be proficient in what they do downrange,” Thomas McCaffery said in early 2020 when he was the assistant secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. “And so by limiting the scope of services, that will allow us to take some of those providers and place them at other MTFs that do have that direct match for their readiness requirements.”

#### **TRICARE Prescription Drug Categories**

- Generic formulary drugs: These drugs are widely available. You have the lowest out-of-pocket costs for these drugs.
- Brand-name formulary drugs: These drugs are generally available to you. Plus, they offer you the second-lowest copayment.
- Non-formulary drugs These drugs may have limited availability. You have higher copayments for these drugs. Also, there’s generally an alternative formulary drug that you can get. It’s often more cost-effective and equally or more clinically practical.
- If you choose to purchase a non-covered drug, you’ll pay 100% of the drug’s cost. These drugs are either not clinically effective or as cost-effective as other drugs offered. They may also pose a significant safety risk that may outweigh any potential clinical benefit.
- 

#### **Military Treatment Facility Pharmacy Copayment Changes**

- Beneficiaries can still fill their prescriptions for a \$0 copay at MTF pharmacies.

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 enrollment fees paid by enrollees in TRICARE. The American Legion urges Congress to decisively reject these unjust proposed increases in the military retirees’ TRICARE enrollment fee, deductibles, or premiums.

### **APPROVED RESOLUTIONS (2020-2021)**

RESOLUTION NO. 26:

SUBJECT: Support For The United States Space Force

ORIGIN: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Executive Committee assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, October 14-15, 2020, That The American Legion urge Congress to appropriately support the United States Space Force’s commitment to attract, retain, and train quality people and to mold them into a force capable of flexibly responding to threats to America’s national and economic security; to enhance readiness through its continued focus on total force integration and modernization programs that will maintain America’s dominance space well into the 21st century.

RESOLUTION NO. 24:

SUBJECT: Support For Peaceful Conflict Resolution In The Country Of Georgia

ORIGIN: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on October 14-15, 2020, That the American Legion support peaceful conflict resolution in the country of Georgia, in conjunction with the

Russian Federation, and urges the Russian Federation to fully implement the European Union-mediated ceasefire agreement of August 12, 2008; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress mandate a detailed assessment of Russian disinformation and propaganda efforts across all media platforms targeting Georgia, to include an assessment of Georgia's capabilities to deter and combat Russian disinformation campaigns.

RESOLUTION NO. 24:

SUBJECT: Funding For Protection Of The National Power Grid Against Electromagnetic Pulse Attack

ORIGIN: Resolution No. 2778 (IL) 2020 Department Convention

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion, in regular meeting assembled virtually on October 14-15, 2020, That the American Legion urge Congress to approve funding to harden and protect the deteriorating US Power Grid, such action being necessary for the continued defense of the US should an EMP attack on the US occur.

RESOLUTION NO. 23:

SUBJECT: Pharmaceutical Independence Long-Term Readiness Reform

ORIGIN: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on October 14-15, 2020, That The American Legion support efforts to provide a more stable and sustainable American-made and sourced raw materials, medications, and vaccines to ensure no shortages impact combat readiness and force protection while diversifying our supply chain to safeguard against potential threats from peer threats, state actors, and non-state actors.

RESOLUTION NO. 22:

SUBJECT: Addressing The 'Forever War'

ORIGIN: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on October 14-15, 2020, That The American Legion urge a renewal of a proper Constitutional balance to American foreign policy decision-making by encouraging Congress to repeal and replace outdated Authorizations for Use of Military Force (AUMF); and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion advocate for the importance of a civilian-led approach of elevating development and diplomacy alongside a strong defense in order to build a better, safer world.

RESOLUTION NO. 27:

SUBJECT: Sustaining Counterterrorism Efforts

ORIGIN: National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Executive Committee assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, October 14-15, 2020, That The American Legion fully supports the men, women, and leadership of our armed forces as they are engaged in ongoing counterterrorism efforts; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion fully supports a Joint Force with a long-term strategic plan, ability to rapidly disperse new technologies, and devise new concepts of warfare that span the entire spectrum of conflict; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion fully supports a more effective lethal, resilient, and rapidly innovative Joint Force, combined with a robust constellation of allies and partners, to sustain American influence and ensure favorable balances of power in order to safeguard the free and open international order.

**RESOLUTION NO. 19:**

**SUBJECT:** Oppose Deportation of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans

**ORIGIN:** Resolution No. 20 (TX) 2019 National Convention

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on May 5-6, 2021, That The American Legion supports proposed legislation allowing a military veteran immigrant patriot who either separated or retired and was honorably discharged not be deported for any non-felony, or if they were deported for a non-felony, that they are allowed to return to the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That non-citizen immigrant veterans should be permitted to complete the process, as if they were still in the military toward lawful permanent residence and citizenship

**RESOLUTION NO. 23:**

**SUBJECT:** The American Legion Spirit of Service Award

**ORIGIN:** National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on May 5-6, 2021, That The American Legion shall provide each of the seven The American Legion Spirit of Service Award recipients of the year with one roundtrip coach airfare or vehicle mileage under its employee mileage reimbursement rates within the continental United States to the National Convention and four nights lodging at a convention hotel; one ticket (two tickets if accompanied by spouse or supervisor) for the national commander's banquet; staff per diem for five days; and an engraved glass and marble award-trophy not exceeding the cost of \$350, adjusted as needed for inflation; and, be it further RESOLVED, That the total number of awards each year shall not exceed seven: one from each branch of service, and the National Guard Bureau; and, be it further RESOLVED, That the national commander will provide each of the seven recipients one-year membership in The American Legion; and, be it further RESOLVED, That the Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials Manual be updated following this change in eligible candidates; and, be it finally RESOLVED, That National Executive Committee Resolution No. 23, October 2011, titled "The American Legion Spirit of Service Award," and National Executive Committee Resolution No. 6, October 2015, titled "Include National Guard and Reserve Members in the Spirit of Service Awards" are hereby superseded and rescinded.

**RESOLUTION NO. 20:**

**SUBJECT:** Oppose Deportation Of Immediate Family Members Of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans

**ORIGIN:** National Security Commission

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on May 5-6, 2021, That The American Legion supports legislation opposing the deportation of immediate family members of non-citizen immigrant veterans who served honorably, provided those family members have not committed a felony; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That family members of non-citizen immigrant veterans and servicemembers should be allowed the opportunity to apply for Parole in Place and Deferred Action while in removal proceedings; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the pathway to lawful permanent residence and citizenship for family members of non-citizen immigrant veterans and servicemembers should be strengthened.

**RESOLUTION NO. 37:**

**SUBJECT:** Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization Between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel

ORIGIN: Convention Committee on National Security

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 31, September 1, 2, 2021, That the administration continue to pursue agreements between Israel and other Middle East countries similar to those developed under the name 'Abraham Accords'; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the administration and the United States Congress maintain a tough stance and resist any agreement that could undermine the strategic rationale for the normalization agreements between Israel and the Middle Eastern Gulf states; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the administration and the United States Congress maintain and enhance the normalization pacts between Israel and a number of Arabs states in the Middle East, easing Israel's economic and diplomatic isolation and building a regional coalition of allies.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATES**

One of the essential parts of the work of the National Security Division is the preparation and presentation of congressional testimony and letters of support on issues of national security and the quality of life of service members. This year, the National Security Commission supported H.R. 256 which would repeal the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002, S.J. Res. 10 which is a joint resolution to repeal the Authorizations for Use of Military Force against Iraq, a letter to the President of the United States and a letter the Secretary of State to express serious concerns regarding the plight of present and former Afghan interpreters, who assisted the United States in the Global War on Terrorism, and to express our unwavering support for the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program for Afghan civilians, hosted a press conference on capitol hill highlighting demands that the U.S. government act now to extract Afghan interpreters who assisted U.S. troops during the Global War on Terrorism, a statement for the record on veteran deportation and support for the military naturalization process regarding citizenship for honorable service, and a letter of support to reauthorize funding for the Department of Defense Troops To Teachers (TTT) program.



**THE AMERICAN LEGION**  
*Veterans Strengthening America*

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER

WWW.LEGION.ORG • 1608 K ST. N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006-2801 • P. (202) 861-2700

April 7, 2021

The Honorable Barbara Lee  
United States House of Representative  
2470 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Lee:

On behalf of the nearly two million members of The American Legion, I am pleased to express support for H.R. 256, which would repeal the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002. Congress passed the 2002 AUMF to authorize force against Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime in order to defend the United States against the threat posed by the regime's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction. This threat proved unfounded and the mission undertaken pursuant to the 2002 Iraq AUMF – designated "Operation Iraqi Freedom" – officially ended on December 11, 2011.

Our servicemembers have accomplished their original objectives in Iraq, a dangerous regime was removed, and the authorization for the war should end. With the understanding that complex global threats cannot be solved by military power alone, we value the importance of sustaining a civilian-led approach of elevating diplomacy and development alongside a strong defense. The American Legion stands ready to assist members of Congress with strengthening our nation's interests and ensuring that diplomacy is the first instrument of national power considered at the highest level.

In accordance with American Legion Resolution No. 22: *Addressing the 'Forever War'*, passed unanimously by our National Executive Committee in meetings held October 14-15, 2020, which urges a renewal of a proper constitutional balance to American foreign policy decision-making by encouraging Congress to repeal and replace outdated Authorizations for Use of Military Force, we strongly support this bill.

We applaud your leadership in addressing this critical issue facing our nation's servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

For God & Country,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James W. 'Bill' Oxford".

James W. "Bill" Oxford  
National Commander



**THE AMERICAN LEGION**  
*Veterans Strengthening America*

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER

WWW.LEGION.ORG • 1608 K ST. N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006-2801 • P. (202) 861-2700

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.  
 President of the United States  
 The White House  
 Washington, DC

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of the nearly two million members of The American Legion, I write to express serious concerns regarding the plight of present and former Afghan interpreters, who assisted the United States in the Global War on Terrorism, and to express our unwavering support for the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program for Afghan civilians. Given your announcement that all American troops are to be withdrawn from Afghanistan by the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, quick action is required to protect the Afghans who have risked their lives in service to this country and utmost consideration must be given for the price they have already paid for an opportunity in our country. Time is of the greatest essence.

As you know, the United States employed thousands of local Afghan translators following the September 11<sup>th</sup> terror attacks. Our wartime allies saved countless American lives and directly contributed to every level of tactical, operational, and strategic accomplishment during the mission in Afghanistan despite grave danger to themselves and their families. Unfortunately, these men, women, and their families now face death threats from ISIS, the Taliban, al Qaeda, and other hostile groups because of their service to the U.S. and our allies. That is why Congress created the SIV program, which provides a life-saving path to safety for those who worked alongside U.S. troops, diplomats, and contractors. SIV recipients go through the strictest vetting and approval process of any category of person coming to the U.S. already, but we must balance security concerns with a commitment to those who fought alongside us.

The American Legion foresaw this issue in 2018 when our National Executive Committee unanimously passed Resolution No. 16, which called for Congress and the president to recognize Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa recipients who "stood shoulder to shoulder" with U.S. troops and diplomats. Right now, military equipment is being removed from Afghanistan. But people are our greatest asset. No one will help us in future fights if we leave them behind to be killed.

We strongly urge your Administration to prioritize the protection of our heroic allies and their families by developing a plan to significantly increase SIV slots for Afghans. The American Legion has confidence that you will not fail or forsake the heroes who have sacrificed so much for our nation. The American Legion is full of veterans who served alongside these Afghan interpreters and we stand ready and willing to assist in the development of plans and policies to ensure we take care of America's partners in Afghanistan. Allies make this nation's military stronger and it is only right and just that we fulfill our promise to them. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

For God & Country,

*James W. "Bill" Oxford*  
 James W. "Bill" Oxford  
 National Commander



**THE AMERICAN LEGION**  
*Veterans Strengthening America*

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER

WWW.LEGION.ORG • 1608 K ST. N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006-2801 • P. (202) 861-2700

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Antony J Blinken  
 United States Secretary of State  
 2201 C Street NW  
 Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary, Blinken:

On behalf of the nearly two million members of The American Legion, I write to express serious concerns regarding the plight of present and former Afghan interpreters, who assisted the United States in the Global War on Terrorism, and to express our unwavering support for the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program for Afghan civilians. Given your announcement that all American troops are to be withdrawn from Afghanistan by the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, quick action is required to protect the Afghans who have risked their lives in service to this country and utmost consideration must be given for the price they have already paid for an opportunity in our country. Time is of the greatest essence.

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We strongly urge your Department to prioritize the protection of our heroic allies and their families by developing a plan to significantly increase SIV slots for Afghans. The American Legion has confidence that you will not fail or forsake the heroes who have sacrificed so much for our nation. The American Legion is full of veterans who served alongside these Afghan interpreters and we stand ready and willing to assist in the development of plans and policies to ensure we take care of America's partners in Afghanistan. Allies make this nation's military stronger and it is only right and just that we fulfill our promise to them. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

For God & Country,

*James W. "Bill" Oxford*  
 James W. "Bill" Oxford  
 National Commander

**STATEMENT OF**  
**ARIEL A. DEJESUS**  
**SENIOR NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY ADVISOR, NATIONAL SECURITY**  
**DIVISION**  
**THE AMERICAN LEGION BEFORE THE**  
**SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP, AND BORDER SAFETY**  
**ON**  
**“HONORING VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES: AN EXAMINATION**  
**OF IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP POLICIES FOR US MILITARY**  
**SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS, AND THEIR FAMILIES”**

**JUNE 23, 2021**

Chairman Padilla, Ranking Member Cornyn, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, on behalf of our National Commander, James W. “Bill” Oxford, and our nearly 2 million members, we thank you for inviting The American Legion to submit a statement for the record on veteran deportation and the military naturalization process.

The American Legion believes in and endorses naturalization – the legal act or process by which a non-citizen of this country may acquire citizenship or nationality of this country. Providing assistance and instruction to those following the legal path to citizenship has been a longstanding and proud American Legion tradition since our founding. The American Legion has fought for servicemembers and veterans to receive U.S. citizenship through military service for more than 100 years. The American Legion’s first position on U.S. citizenship through honorable military service is stated in a 1919 resolution which recommends “that American Indians who honorably served in the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps of the United States during the World War be given the full rights of citizenship.” Over the next century, numerous resolutions were passed urging the federal government to continue providing naturalization classes open to all who are seeking citizenship instruction, urging Legion posts to assist with naturalization programs, and several more which will be noted in more detail below.

In short, The American Legion believes in honoring the promise this nation makes to immigrants who seek naturalization through military service: if you enlist and serve honorably, this nation will make you a citizen.

**Background**

Since the founding of our nation, non-citizen immigrants have served in the United States military and have served faithfully in every major conflict. Around 760,000 immigrants have gained U.S. citizenship through military service during the past century.<sup>1</sup> The *Lodge Act of 1950* permitted non-citizen Eastern Europeans to enlist between 1950 and 1959, and in the late 1940s the United States recruited Filipinos to enlist in the Navy. Under a July 2002 Executive Order, military branches have worked closely with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to streamline citizenship processing for servicemembers since September 11, 2001.<sup>2</sup> Following September 11, 2001, over

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<sup>1</sup> Jeanne Batalova Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova Jie Zong, “Immigrant Veterans in the United States,” migrationpolicy.org, February 2, 2021, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigrant-veterans-united-states-2018>.

<sup>2</sup> “Expedited Citizenship Through Military Service: Current Law, Policy, and Issues.” EveryCRSReport.com. Congressional Research Service, February 25, 2009. [https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL31884.html#\\_Toc223754272](https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL31884.html#_Toc223754272).

109,250 members of the Armed Forces have attained their citizenship through honorable service.<sup>3</sup> Each year, around 24,000 non-citizen immigrants actively serve in the military and 5,000 join. These servicemembers come from a wide range of countries like Mexico, the Philippines, South Korea, and Jamaica.<sup>4</sup>

### **Veteran Deportation**

In recent years, it has been reported from citizenship organizations, national and local news sources, and members of Congress that hundreds, possibly thousands, of veterans have been deported. Many of those deported who were interviewed said they were led to believe that citizenship was automatically granted due to their service. In reality, the branches of the Armed Services must work with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to begin the process of establishing citizenship for the servicemember. As such, the servicemember was unaware of the need to begin the process through USCIS and the individual service branches failed to inform the servicemember while on active duty. Many of the veterans deported are as a result of minor, non-violent, and/or substance related crimes. According to the Texas Civil Rights Project, substance abuse is highest amongst veterans.<sup>5</sup> Substance abuse is often related to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health concerns resulting from military service.<sup>6</sup>

The *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996* toughened U.S. immigration laws, adding penalties for undocumented immigrants who commit crimes while in the United States. The Act also allows for the deportation of non-citizen servicemembers who commit a misdemeanor or a felony.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, despite their honorable service, non-citizen immigrant veterans are not shielded from deportation. Between 2013 and 2018, 250 non-citizen immigrant veterans were placed in extradition proceedings resulting in the deportation of 92 US veterans.<sup>8</sup>

Roughly 200,000 servicemembers transition from the military each year. Transitioning veterans can face multi-layered challenges, including unemployment, poor mental health, and other factors which could result in criminal charges. The process is exacerbated when a non-citizen immigrant veteran transitions from the military, has encounters with law enforcement agencies, and faces deportation. Many veterans are deported due to non-felony crimes. Some of these crimes may even result in being barred from naturalization for life, despite meeting all the other criteria.

Those deported face significant hurdles applying for citizenship or having their cases appealed. Some crimes permanently bar deported veterans from ever returning to the United States. Those not permanently barred must go through the already complicated immigration process to remedy their status. Very few of those deported are allowed to

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<sup>3</sup> “DOD Fact Sheet on MAVNI Recruitment Pilot Program,” American Immigration Lawyers Association, accessed June 17, 2021, <https://www.aila.org/infonet/dod-fact-sheet-mavni-recruitment-pilot-program>.

<sup>4</sup> “Naturalizations for Non-Citizens in Military Service.” AAF, October 29, 2020. <https://www.americanactionforum.org/insight/naturalizations-for-non-citizens-in-military-service>

<sup>5</sup> “Land of the Free, No Home of the Brave, A Report on the Social, Economic, and Moral Cost of Deporting Veterans.” [txcivilrights.org](https://txcivilrights.org). Accessed June 17, 2021. <https://txcivilrights.org/reports-and-publications/report-land-of-the-free-no-home-of-the-brave/>.

<sup>6</sup> “PTSD and Substance Abuse in Veterans.” VA.gov. [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/related/substance\\_abuse\\_vet.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/related/substance_abuse_vet.asp).

<sup>7</sup> “Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act.” Legal Information Institute. Legal Information Institute. Accessed June 17, 2021. [https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/illegal\\_immigration\\_reform\\_and\\_immigration\\_responsibility\\_act](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/illegal_immigration_reform_and_immigration_responsibility_act).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Government Accountability. “Immigration Enforcement - Actions Needed to Better Handle, Identify, and Track Cases Involving Veterans.” GAO, June 2019. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-19-416>

return and receive their citizenship. The toll on these veterans and their families can be severe.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Immigration and Customs Enforcement Deportation Process Problems**

If a non-citizen veteran violates immigration law, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) may seek to remove the veteran from the country. However, ICE policies require it to take additional steps prior to removal actions, such as considering their service record.<sup>10</sup> A 2019 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report indicates ICE agents were largely unaware of their own policies regarding veterans and did not consistently follow these policies from 2013- 2018.<sup>11</sup> The GAO report found over 20 percent of immigration interview cases involving veterans failed to note their veteran status.<sup>12</sup> Not designating potential deportees as veterans prevents those veteran's honorable service from being considered during deportation proceedings. Between 2013 and 2018 the United States knowingly deported 92 U.S. veterans.<sup>13</sup> It is highly likely the actual number of veterans deported during this time far exceed the numbers reported, due to a lack of tracking by ICE.

#### **Naturalization Problems**

At its root, the problem is that immigrant servicemembers who served honorably are at risk of deportation if they did not receive citizenship prior to leaving service. It is a failure of all those involved that servicemembers do not receive citizenship, unless they specifically do not desire citizenship or had done something during their service which resulted in a dishonorable discharge.

New policies have made naturalization more difficult for immigrant recruits. By extending the amount of time the Department of Defense (DoD) is required to wait before servicemembers can begin the process, they are no longer able to begin applying during basic training. This Basic Training Initiative, administered by USCIS, provided on site resources so enlistees could begin naturalization during basic training was terminated in 2018.<sup>14</sup> Prior to its elimination, the Basic Training Initiative allowed a single controlled point where all immigrant soldiers could learn about and begin the naturalization process.

Access to continue the naturalization process have caused problems as well. Deployments abroad, lost applications, unit transfers, lack of access to facilities and other factors affect how quickly servicemembers can apply for naturalization. For example, in 2019 USCIS reduced the number of locations overseas where non-citizen servicemembers can be naturalized from 23 to four. Those deployed may not have any ability to continue the naturalization process at all until they return from their deployment. This could delay their application for months or years through no fault of their own as they serve in the U.S. military.

Some immigrants, particularly those who entered the U.S. Armed Forces in the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI) program, have had the rules

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<sup>9</sup> "Thank You & Goodbye," The American Legion Magazine, June 2021. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12knzujMrNBRsX4J2mMYjuPDJ8F6ERZWA/view?usp=sharing>.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Government Accountability. Immigration Enforcement: Actions Needed to Better Handle, Identify, and Track Cases Involving Veterans, April 15, 2021. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-19-416>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> "Immigrants in the Military: 5 Things To Know." FWD.us, May 27, 2021. <https://www.fwd.us/news/immigrants-in-the-military/>.

change on them.<sup>15</sup> Not only does this cause confusion in the process but leaves them in danger of losing their legal status and subsequent deportation while they wait for their application and security clearances to receive final approval.

There is also a fundamental misunderstanding among immigrant servicemembers on how the naturalization process operates. Many servicemembers and veterans did not receive appropriate information about the application process such as misunderstanding that their oath of enlistment constituted them becoming citizens.

These new policies and the pre-existing barriers have caused a severe decline in naturalizations among military personnel. The latest data from 2018, shows that 4,135 service members were naturalized that year, down 43 percent from 2017.<sup>16</sup> 2018 saw the lowest number of naturalizations since 2002, when 2,434 service members were naturalized. USCIS has denied military naturalization applications at a higher rate than civilian applications for every quarter since the beginning of FY2018.<sup>17</sup> This exacerbates the abovementioned issue which is the deportation of immigrant servicemembers who did not receive their citizenship prior to discharge.

### Recommended Solutions

Men and women who served honorably should not face barriers to citizenship or face deportation from the country they served or fought to defend. That is why The American Legion has passed many resolutions as part of our advocacy on the issue of immigrant and deported veterans. Most recently, these include: Resolution No. 15: *Expedited Citizenship Through Military Service*;<sup>18</sup> Resolution No. 10: *Expedited Citizenship Applications For Deported Veterans*;<sup>19</sup> Resolution No. 19: *Oppose Deportation of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans*;<sup>20</sup> and Resolution No. 20: *Oppose Deportation of Immediate Family Members of Non-Citizen Immigrant Veterans*.<sup>21</sup> Together these resolutions urge Congress to pass legislation to stop deporting veterans, ensure immigrant servicemembers can expeditiously become citizens, and bring deported veterans home.

Based on these resolutions, The American Legion recommends the following changes:

- Implement measures within the DoD to ensure the process of naturalization through honorable military service is completed prior to discharge.
- Maintain the requirement that immigrants must have a completed background check prior to going to basic training but reinstitute the USCIS Naturalization at Basic Training Initiative to provide onsite immigration resources and staff to support recruits beginning the naturalization process.
- Reopen the 19 field offices abroad to support the naturalization process for deployed service members.
- Permit the reopening of naturalization applications that were denied or abandoned when an applicant was unable to follow the naturalization process through to completion.

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<sup>15</sup> Lolita C. Baldor, The Associated Press. "How Trump Administration Policies Stymie the Pentagon's Immigrant Recruit Program." *Military Times*. Military Times, September 30, 2018. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2018/09/30/how-trump-administration-policies-stymie-the-pentagons-immigrant-recruit-program/>.

<sup>16</sup> "Naturalizations for Non-Citizens in Military Service." AAF, October 29, 2020. <https://www.americanactionforum.org/insight/naturalizations-for-non-citizens-in-military-service/>.

<sup>17</sup> "Immigrants in the Military: 5 Things To Know." FWD.us, May 27, 2021. <https://www.fwd.us/news/immigrants-in-the-military/>.

<sup>18</sup> <https://archive.legion.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12203/9912>

<sup>19</sup> <https://archive.legion.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12203/9277>

<sup>20</sup> <https://archive.legion.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12203/14650>

<sup>21</sup> <https://archive.legion.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12203/14652>

- Provide training to military recruiters and military chain of command about the naturalization process for servicemembers and veterans.
- Provide expedited citizenship applications and the resources to complete the applications to deported veterans if their discharge is honorable and they do not have a felony conviction.
- On an annual basis, mandate the DoD and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to report to Congress the number of non-citizens serving at that time in the U.S. Armed Forces, including in each branch of the military, the numbers of naturalization applications filed by U.S. servicemembers, and the status and results of those applications.
- Cease the deportation of immediate family members of non-citizen servicemembers and veterans who have not been convicted of a felony.
- Allow immediate family members of noncitizen servicemembers and veterans who are at risk of deportation to apply for Parole in Place and Deferred Action while in removal proceedings.
- Establish a pathway to lawful permanent residence for immediate family members of noncitizen servicemembers and veterans and strengthen the pathway to citizenship.

The American Legion supports two bills which would implement some of these recommendations. In the Senate, we support the *Veterans Visa and Protection Act of 2021*. It amends the *Immigration and Nationality Act* to adjust the treatment of eligible noncitizen veterans by the DHS:

- Prohibits the deportation of noncitizen veterans.
- Establishes a visa program through which deported veterans may enter the United States as legal permanent residents and allows noncitizen veterans in the U.S. who are ordered for removal to adjust their immigration status to that of a legal permanent resident.
- Enables legal permanent residents to obtain naturalization through military service.
- Extends military and veterans benefits to those who were deported who would otherwise be eligible for those benefits.

In the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, we support H.R. 1182, the *Veteran Deportation Prevention and Reform Act*. This legislation is a comprehensive reform package that would implement critical reforms across agencies for noncitizen veterans and prevent their deportation. The bill would specifically direct the DHS to create a program and application process to allow eligible deported veterans residing outside of the U.S. to return to the country as noncitizens lawfully admitted for permanent residence. The package also calls for the DoD and DHS to jointly establish a program to ensure members of the Armed Services and their spouses and children have a pathway to citizenship.

Currently, the U.S. lacks consistent statistics on the scope and magnitude of the deportation of U.S. military veterans. Under this bill, the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security would be mandated to conduct a joint study and report on all veterans that have been deported in the past two decades. In June 2019, the GAO found that ICE has not been tracking the number of veterans who have been deported or been adhering to internal policies regarding potentially removable veterans. This study would allow Congress to better understand how many veterans have been forcibly removed. In addition, it directs DHS to establish a Military Family Immigration Advisory Committee that would provide recommendations on whether an individual should be granted a stay of removal, deferred action, parole, or be removed from the country. It also provides a pathway to citizenship for spouses and children of members of the Armed Services through a joint program between DoD and DHS.

### Conclusion

Immigrants have served in the United States Military since the founding of our nation. In recognition of their honorable service, we have promised the opportunity to become American citizens. Although the pathway to citizenship has been accomplished for many non-citizen immigrant servicemembers and veterans, there are still many barriers. The American Legion's position is clear. These brave men and women served our nation honorably. It is only right that we recognize their service with the pathways to citizenship they deserve.

The American Legion thanks this subcommittee for the opportunity to explain the position of the nearly 2 million veteran members of this organization.



## THE AMERICAN LEGION

*Veterans Strengthening America*

WASHINGTON OFFICE

WWW.LEGION.ORG • 1608 K ST. NW, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006-2801 • P. (202) 861-2700

July 13, 2021

The Honorable Todd Young  
United States Senate  
185 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Young:

On behalf of the nearly two million members of The American Legion, I am pleased to express support for S.J.Res.10 - a joint resolution to repeal the authorizations for use of military force (AUMFs) against Iraq.

Congress passed the 1991 and 2002 AUMFs to authorize force against Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime. These AUMFs are no longer relevant. Saddam's regime was overthrown in 2003, and a formal end to the U.S. mission in Iraq was declared at the end of 2011. According to the State Department, Iraq "is now a key partner" in the Middle East.

The vast majority of military actions overseas rely on the 2001 AUMF for approval. In the rare occasions that presidents have cited the 2002 AUMF—like the 2014 airstrikes in Syria or 2020 killing of Qassem Soleimani—it was in combination with other legal authorities. Thus, the 2002 AUMF is legally irrelevant for any modern operations and allowing it to stay on the books allows for future abuse. Too often, the Executive Branch interprets congressional authorizations in a way that maximizes executive power while minimizing congressional responsibility. This is contrary to Congress's constitutional role of deciding when the country goes to war.

In accordance with American Legion Resolution No. 22: *Addressing the 'Forever War'*, which urges a renewal of a proper constitutional balance to American foreign policy decision-making by encouraging Congress to repeal outdated AUMFs, we strongly support this bill.

We applaud your leadership in addressing this critical issue facing our nation's servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

For God & Country,

James W. "Bill" Oxford  
National Commander



**THE AMERICAN LEGION**  
*Veterans Strengthening America*

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER

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The Honorable Tim Kaine  
 United States Senate  
 231 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510

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For God & Country,

*James W. "Bill" Oxford*  
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 National Commander



**THE AMERICAN LEGION**  
*Veterans Strengthening America*

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER

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The Honorable Adam Smith  
 The Honorable Mike Rogers  
 House Committee on Armed Services  
 2216 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Rogers:

We write you to reauthorize funding for the Troops to Teachers (TTT) program through the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Reauthorization Act (NDAA). Congressionally authorized under the 1993 NDAA as an official Department of Defense (DOD) program, the program has successfully supported veterans transitioning to careers in education for over 27 years.

We believe the value of Troops to Teachers cannot be understated. It provides employment assistance to transitioning veterans including those retiring with service disabilities, which aids in lowering veteran unemployment; it alleviates nationwide teaching shortages, which improves education quality; and it increases access and representation among traditionally less-represented groups to teaching careers. DOD reported that the program placed over 21,000 veteran teachers in classrooms since its inception.

Studies have shown that Troops to Teachers educators fill thousands of vacancies in high-needs schools and subject areas; are more likely to not relocate after they are employed as teachers; are considered effective instructors; have high job and life satisfaction; and even have a positive effect on increasing student likelihood to serve.

Allowing the Troops to Teachers program to sunset would go against America's critical need to support our children's education. We implore you to champion this established program and stand with veterans by protecting Troops to Teachers from termination.

Sincerely,

James W. "Bill" Oxford  
 National Commander  
 The American Legion

Vincent "BJ" Lawrence  
 Executive Director  
 VFW Washington Office

Jared Lyon  
 CEO & President  
 Student Veterans of America

Joy J. Ilem  
 National Legislative Director  
 Disabled American Veterans

Carrie  
 Wofford  
 President  
 Veterans Education Success

**NATIONAL SECURITY LEGISLATIVE BILL TRACKER**

Bill #	Topic
S10	A bill to repeal the 1991 and 2002 Iraq AUMF.
<u>S 21</u>	A bill to extend the period of the temporary authority to extend contracts and leases under the ARMS Initiative.
<u>S70</u>	A bill to amend title 32, United States Code, to authorize cybersecurity operations and missions to protect critical infrastructure by members of the National Guard connected with training or other duty.
<u>S130</u>	A bill to extend to the Mayor of the District of Columbia the same authority over the National Guard of the District of Columbia as the Governors of the several States exercise over the National Guard of those States concerning the administration of the National Guard and its use to respond to natural disasters and other civil disturbances, and for other purposes.
<u>S781</u>	A bill to provide for the continuation of paid parental leave for members of the Armed Services in the event of the death of the child.

- S1488 A bill to give the proper financial assistance to low-income active military families as well as active service members to fight food insecurity.
- SXXX A bill to provide clarification and limitations with respect to the exercise of national security powers, and for other purpose.
- HJ 29 A bill to direct forgiveness or offset of an overpayment of retired pay paid to joint account for a period after the death of the retired member of the Armed Forces.
- HR 256 To repeal the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002
- HR 350 A bill to authorize dedicated domestic terrorism offices within the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to analyze and monitor domestic terrorist activity and require the Federal Government to take steps to prevent domestic terrorism.
- HR 464 A bill to realign the Federal Government's nuclear forensics and attribution activities from the Department of Homeland Security to the National Nuclear Security Administration.
- HR 467 A bill that would prohibit the Defense Finance and Accounting Services (DFAS) from clawing back the final retirement benefit paid to a veteran the month they pass away.
- HR 475 A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, improve dependent coverage under the TRICARE Young Adult Program, and for other purposes.
- HR 567 A bill provides statutory authority for the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program.
- HR 598 Georgia Support Act, to support Georgia's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and for other purposes.
- HR 624 A bill to prohibit the use of Federal funds to close or realign the Marine Corps Recruit Depot located at Parris Island, South Carolina.
- HR 923 A bill that allows the President to impose entry and property-blocking sanctions against foreign persons responsible for or complicit in serious human rights abuse in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia that are occupied by Russia.
- HR 1088 A bill to direct the Secretary of Defense to implement specific recommendations regarding screening individuals who seek to enlist in the Armed Forces.
- HR 1119 A bill that provides statutory authority for Executive Order 13920, which set forth requirements related to securing the US bulk-power system.
- HR 1182 A bill to provide benefits for non-citizen members of the Armed Forces and other purposes.
- HR 1183 A bill to establish a military family immigration advisory committee, and for other purposes.
- HR 1186 A bill that modifies the application of requirements for drug packaging to include certain information, such as the products lot number and expiration date.
- HR 1938 A bill to amend title 37, United States Code, to ensure that a member of a reserve component of a uniformed service, who performs active service for more than 30 consecutive days under multiple calls or orders to active service that specify periods of 30 days or less, is paid the same basic allowance for housing as a similarly situated member of a reserve component called or ordered to active service for a period of more than 30 days.
- HR 2336 A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a communications and outreach campaign to educate veterans about cyber risk, and for other purposes.

- HR 2339 A bill to give proper financial assistance to low-income active military families as well as active service members to fight food insecurity.
- HR 3261 A bill to repeal the 1991 Iraq AUMF.

**VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION COMMISSION**

**Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado, Chairman**

**Mario Marquez, California, Director**

The following report covers the activities of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission and Division during the program year from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021.

**Resolutions**

The 2020 Annual National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The fall 2020 and spring 2021 meetings of the National Executive Committee in Indianapolis, Indiana, approved positions expressed in resolutions submitted to those bodies through the national Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission. The approved resolutions are as follows:

2020 National Executive Committee Meeting

*Virtual*

*October 14-15, 2020*

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
3	Accuracy in Reporting Survivor Benefits and COVID-19	NY
4	Appropriate Procedures for Compensation & Pension Examinations	VA&R
5	Engraving Military Insignia on Government-Furnished Headstones	VA&R
6	Minority Veterans	VA&R
7	Restore Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQ) to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Website	VA&R
8	Department of Veterans Affairs Revise the Definition of "Vietnam Era"	VA&R
9	Support Walkway in Arlington National Cemetery on Chaplains Hill	NC
10	Stellate Ganglion Block (SGB) Research for Treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	CA
11	Mare Island Naval Cemetery	CA

2021 National Executive Committee Meeting

*Virtual*

*May 5-6, 2021*

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
9	Expand Use of Virtual Hearings by the Board of Veterans Appeals	VA&R

Resolution Number	Title	Origin
10	Increased Use of Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) Examinations as an Alternative to Compensation and Pension (C&P) Examinations	VA&R
11	Lethal Means and Suicide Prevention	VA&R
12	Enhance Ability of the National Personnel Records Center to Respond to Records Requests from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	MN
13	Newborn Care Through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	VA&R
14	Quality Assurance for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Contracted Compensation and Pension (C&P) Examinations	VA&R
15	Recognizing Presumptive Conditions for Toxic Exposure at Karshi-Khanabad (K2) Base in Uzbekistan	VA&R
16	Reproductive Assistance and Pregnancy Counseling	VA&R
17	Updates to Chaplains Hill Monuments at Arlington National Cemetery	VA
18	Veteran Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Claims Training	VA&R

#### Commission/Committee Meetings

##### VA&R Commission Meetings

The VA&R Commission met once during this program year. The meeting was held virtually on March 2, 2021, in conjunction with the 61st Annual Washington Conference. It was the 98th consecutive year the VA&R Commission met.

The following officials addressed the Commission: Denis McDonough, Secretary, United States Department of Veterans Affairs; Dr. Richard Stone, Acting Under Secretary, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; Thomas J. Murphy, Acting Under Secretary for Benefits, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; Mr. Ronald E. Walters, Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; and Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer, MD, MPH, Chief Healthcare Transformation Officer and Senior Executive Vice President, Atlas Research, LLC.

##### Health Administration Committee Meetings

Members of the Health Administration Committee met once during this program year during the virtual 61st Annual Washington Conference on March 2, 2021. The following official addressed the committee: Ms. Andrea N. Goldstein, MALD, Senior Policy Advisor, Women Veterans Task Force, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States House of Representatives.

#### National Cemetery Committee Meetings

National Cemetery Committee members met once during this program year. The meeting was held virtually, in conjunction with the Washington Conference on Monday, March 2, 2021. Ms. Renea Yates, Director, Office of Army Cemeteries, Arlington National Cemetery, addressed the committee.

#### TBI/PTSD Committee Meetings

Members of the TBI/PTSD Suicide Prevention Committee met once virtually during this program year on March 3, 2021. This year's meeting had a record-breaking number of Legionnaires in attendance at 87. The guest speakers included Matt Wetenkamp, Veteran Suicide Prevention Coordinator, and Kelley Tubbs, Acting Transition and Care Management Program Manager at the Washington DC VA Medical Center.

#### Veterans Benefits Committee Meetings

Members of the Veterans Benefits Committee met once during this program year. The meeting was held virtually, in conjunction with the Washington Conference on Monday, March 2, 2021. Mr. William J. Smith, Chairman, Veterans Benefits Committee, addressed the committee.

#### Awards

##### William F. Lenker National Service Trophy

National Executive Committee 2006, Resolution No. 2, *Revised Rules Governing The Award Of The William F. Lenker National Service Trophy*, established the current rules governing the National Service Trophy. This award is presented annually to a department of The American Legion that excelled in the welfare and rehabilitation work for war veterans and their dependents. The Department of Pennsylvania received the award for 2020-2021.

##### Department of Veterans Affairs Health-Care Provider and Physician of the Year

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 awards presented by The American Legion. These awards recognize the contributions that VA health-care providers and physicians have made to the veterans they serve.

For 2020, The American Legion honored all VA Health-care Providers and Physicians for their distinguished public service and commitment to the care of America's veterans during the 2020 COVID-19 global pandemic. National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford and National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Chairman Ralph P. Bozella presented these awards to United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Denis McDonough.

##### VA Voluntary Service Award

National Executive Committee 2015, Resolution No. 21, *Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Award*, established the award presented by the National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission. This award is presented to the outstanding volunteer hospital worker by the National Commander at the Washington Conference. As a result of

VA facilities restricting volunteer visits due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no award was presented for 2020

### **Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division**

#### Who We Serve

We serve veterans and their families directly or indirectly through the VA&R Commission, its committees, and subcommittees.

#### Our Services

We assist veterans with:

- Access to high quality and timely healthcare through the Department of Veterans Affairs
- Processing service-connected disability claims and appeals
- Certifying, training, and tracking American Legion accredited service officers and representatives
- Assisting with representation before Veterans Law Judges, Veterans Law Courts, and Decision Review Officers located at VA Regional Offices
- Coordinating and organizing VA volunteer hours
- Access to debt management services when resulting from VA overpayments
- Assistance and representation before Military Evaluation Boards, Military Discharge Review Boards and Physical Evaluation Boards
- Access to combat veteran pensions for indigent veterans
- Assistance with insurance and pension programs through the VA
- Assistance with burial benefits and services provided by VA's National Cemetery Administration
- On-site representation and site visits at VA Medical Centers and Regional Offices across the country.

#### Additional Duties

While our primary duties involve direct veteran representation, the VA&R Division supports the VA&R Commission and its committees administratively at all meetings and gatherings of The American Legion, to include National Executive Committee meetings, National Convention, Washington Conference and as required.

The division staff also participate in congressional research and testimony; evaluation of policy in relation to veterans' law; attendance at professional briefings, seminars, workgroups, and similar types of sessions at both the national and local levels.

We conduct regular visits to Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities and Regional Offices to analyze their strengths and weaknesses. We also host one resident service officer training course and two virtual courses annually that teach and refresh a range of advanced skills for claims processors.

The division director oversees and manages a contractual relationship with the law firm Bergmann & Moore, LLC, one of the nation's foremost authorities on veterans law. Services range from training to legal representation of our veteran claimants, to amicus and Supreme Court briefs written and submitted on behalf of The American Legion.

## Personnel and Organization

## National Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Director	1
Deputy Director for Claims Services	1
Deputy Director for Health Policy	1
Veterans Program Manager	1
Senior Veterans Disability Claims Specialist	2
Claims Service Coordinator	2
Health Policy Coordinator	5
Administrative Assistant	1

## VA Board of Veterans Appeals, Washington D.C.

Team Leader, BVA	1
Team Trainer, BVA	2
Veterans Disability Claims Specialist	8
Claims Administrative Coordinator	2

## John H. Geiger Operations Center, Indianapolis, Indiana

Team Leader, BVA	1
Team Trainer, BVA	2
Veterans Disability Claims Specialist	8

## VA Regional Office, St. Paul, MN

Team Leader, PMC	1
Veterans Benefits Specialist	2

## VA Regional Office, Philadelphia, PA

Veterans Benefits Specialist	1
<b>Total VA&amp;R Division Staff</b>	<b>42</b>

Legislative Activities

The VA&R Division staff participated in a total of eleven (11) hearings:

Date	Committee/Subcommittee	Testimony	Subject
22-Jul-20	House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations	Katie Purswell	Safety for All: Ending Sexual Harassment in the Department of Veterans Affairs.
23-Jul-20	House Veterans Affairs Committee	Katie Purswell	Pending and Draft Legislation
9-Sep-20	Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs	Katie Purswell	Examining S.785 - To Improve VA Mental Health Care

Date	Committee/Subcommittee	Testimony	Subject
10-Sep-20	House Veterans Affairs Committee	Statement for the Record	Pending and Draft Legislation
2-Dec-20	House Veterans Affairs Committee	Jeffrey Steele	Assessing Need to Modernize VHA's Veteran Eligibility Criteria
9 Dec-20	House Veterans Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs	Statement for the Record	Assessing The Process for Determining Presumptive Conditions
18-Mar-21	House Veterans Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Health	Statement for the Record	Improving Healthcare for America's Women Veterans
28-Apr-21	Senate Veterans Affairs Committee	Marty Callaghan	Pending Veterans Health Care and Benefits Legislation
5-May-21	House Veterans Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight, and Investigations	Marty Callaghan	Pending Toxic Exposure Legislation
12-May-21	House Veterans Affairs Committee	Marty Callaghan	Supporting Disabled Veterans: The State of Claims Processing During and After COVID-19
23-Jun-21	Senate Veterans Affairs Committee	Mario Marquez	Pending and Draft Legislation

#### Informational Services and Distribution

The American Legion has several pamphlets and brochures available upon request to veterans and organizations in need. The VA&R Division offers the following publications:

- System Worth Saving Annual Report
- Agent Orange Benefits & Programs
- From Crisis To Confidence
- Gulf War Era Benefits & Programs
- Know Your Benefits
- Longman-Gordon Report – VA Healthcare: A System Worth Saving
- Missing In America Project Brochure
- Post Service Officer Guide
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Service Officer Code of Procedure
- The Road Home – Treatment of TBI and PTSD
- The War Within – Treatment of Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-Traumatic Stress
- Veteran Suicide White Paper
- Veterans Affairs Service Brochure

- Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Handbook
- What To Do Before a Veteran Dies

### Claims Services

The Claims Services staff assists veterans, servicemembers, and their families on issues pertaining to the filing of disability and pension claims to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the appeal of denied claims to the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA), burial benefits and memorial affairs, the Department of Defense (DoD) Medical Evaluation Process, and Discharge Review and Correction of Military Records.

#### Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA)

Veterans Disability Claims Specialists represent veterans before the BVA. They review VA claim files, interview claimants in preparation for personal or virtual hearings, write informal hearing presentation (IHPs), and act as counsel on behalf of claimants at their BVA hearings.

During this program year, The American Legion's Board (BVA) Unit prepared nearly 15,000 informal hearing presentations (IHPs) on behalf of veterans' claims appeals, for a monthly average of about 1,250. For the 10,705 appeals that received BVA dispositions during the program year, about 29 percent of them were granted, 45 percent were remanded to agencies of jurisdiction for further development, and 21 percent were denied.

As of June 30, 2021, there were 3,357 legacy cases and 2,419 AMA cases assigned to the Legion's Board Unit (20 claims specialists, 2 team leaders and 2 administrative staff).

The American Legion has found that VA Regional Offices continue to develop veterans' claims inadequately and deny them without good cause. The VBA's lack of proper claim development initially results in further adjudication of those claims, thus extending the time veterans must wait before final decisions are made.

Through continuous professional training and thorough knowledge of federal law and VA regulations, American Legion staff achieves more favorable outcomes in their advocacy efforts. The American Legion's legal and training partner, Bergmann & Moore, LLC, provides critical training to new claims specialists so they may successfully represent claimants. Additionally, Bergmann & Moore's legal team provides unit and individual training that covers significant changes to federal law or regulations, and recent court decisions that influence veterans' law.

#### Memorial Affairs

Claims Services staff ensures that veterans and dependents are honored at their final resting places in VA national cemeteries, Arlington National Cemetery, state, tribal or private cemeteries. They provide assistance on National Cemetery Administration (NCA) burial benefits, including headstones, markers, medallions, Presidential Memorial Certificates, military honors, burial flags, burial allowances and survivor benefits.

#### Discharge Review and Correction of Military Records

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 since then has represented veterans who petition them for relief.

Assistance is provided by representing applicants before such boards, educating veterans on their due process and how to apply, review and submit applications, and conducting outreach to veterans with "bad paper" discharges. The American Legion is the

only major veterans service organization that still helps with applications for discharge upgrades.

Applications for upgrades involve a variety of issues, including character of service upgrades, narrative reason for discharge changes, entitlement or amendment of physical disability severance or retirement, issuance or reissuance of military decorations, requests for military personnel files and service medical records, and administrative corrections to official military records.

Claims Services has two Senior Veterans Disability Claims Specialists (SVDCSs) in its Washington, D.C. office who help veterans with discharge upgrades, disability claims, appeals, and other matters related to veterans' benefits. From July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021, these senior service officers helped 470 veterans with discharge upgrade applications and/or correction of military records. They also assisted 1,726 veterans with their VA Compensation & Pension claims.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, VA Regional Offices (VAROs) were closed to the public on March 19, 2020 and many of them remained closed – at least partially – through June 2021. As most of The American Legion's department service officers (DSOs) are co-located at VAROs, their offices were closed as well. Subsequently, many veterans who contacted our SVDCSs in Washington were calling from all parts of the country seeking assistance when they were unable to reach their Legion DSOs.

Before the pandemic, our SVDCs mainly assisted veterans within D.C.'s greater metro area, usually referring out-of-area callers to their respective Legion departments for assistance. The prolonged lack of local/regional assistance meant that more veterans had to contact our Washington, D.C. office for help

### **Health Policy**

The Health Policy staff ensures the VA healthcare system remains the healthcare system of choice for veterans. The Health Policy portfolio includes: Cancer, Cannabis, Caregivers, Dental, Electronic Health Record Modernization, Geriatric and Extended Care, Infrastructure, Insurance, Mental Health, Minority Health, Military Sexual Trauma, Peer Support, Pharmacy, Post Traumatic Stress, Recruitment and Retention, Rehabilitation and Prosthetics, Rural Health, Spinal Cord Injury and Disease, Substance Use Disorder, Suicide Awareness and Prevention, Traumatic Brain Injury, Telehealth, Toxic Exposure, and Women's Health.

### **System Worth Saving (SWS)**

In 2003, then-National Commander Ron Conley visited and assessed the delivery of health care at more than 60 Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities across the country. Commander Conley assessed the delivery of health care delivered to the nation's veterans to determine if the VA health care system was a "System Worth Saving."

The following year, The American Legion passed a resolution making System Worth Saving a permanent program under the National Commander. The American Legion's National Executive Committee later realigned the program under the VA&R Commission.

Annually, commission members and staff conduct a series of site visits to VA medical facilities and regional offices. While on site, they meet with veterans, their families, and VA administrators and employees to discuss successes, challenges, and limitations. Each site visit culminates with a report that informs the members of The American Legion and provides additional insight to the President of the United States, members of Congress, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. After nearly two decades, The American Legion has conducted more than 150 System Worth Saving visits to VA facilities in the United States, its territories, and the Philippines.

The American Legion remains true to one of its original purposes stated in the original chartering documentation in 1919, "to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual

helpfulness and service to the country.” Since then, The American Legion remains committed to mutual helpfulness by ensuring that the VA continues intact and properly funded to achieve President Abraham Lincoln’s charge, “To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan.” The American Legion believes in the quality of care at VA facilities, and we stand behind our mantra that it’s a “System Worth Saving.”

Health Policy Coordinators conduct SWS site visits in Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISN) managed by the VA Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The purpose of SWS site visits is to understand what works best at medical centers, identify challenges, and make recommendations to help overcome them. Health Policy staff selects VA/VHA sites through a ranked selection process and recommendations to the VA&R Commission. Health Policy staff ranks and recommends visits to VA/VHA health facilities based on requests from American Legion departments, reports from the VA Office of the Inspector General (VAOIG) and Government Accountability Office (GAO), VA’s Nationwide Access Reports, Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) model, and the media. A SWS site visit covers two and a half days: consists of a veteran-focused town hall meeting, a visit to the local VA healthcare facility, and a meeting with the medical center executive leadership team. At the end of each SWS site visit, a report is issued that and shared with the medical center, the VA secretary and under secretary of health, members of congress, and the President of the United States.

The VA&R division was unable to conduct SWS visits during the period covered in this report due to COVID-19 restrictions. The American Legion intends to commence these visits as soon as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, and it is safe for all parties involved to conduct such visits. The Department of Veterans Affairs requested that all remaining 2021 visits that were on the schedule be delayed until 2022.

Proposed SWS site visits for 2022:

- Columbia, SC
- San Juan, PR
- Sacramento, CA
- Leavenworth, KS
- Bronx, NY
- Chicago, IL

#### TBI and PTSD Programs

In 2020, The American Legion declared suicide prevention as one of its top priorities. Increasingly concerned by the number of veterans taking their own lives, The American Legion established a Suicide Prevention Program and aligned the program under the TBI/PTSD Suicide Prevention Committee. This committee reviews methods, programs, and strategies that can be used to treat TBI and PTSD. To reduce veterans’ suicide, this committee seeks to influence legislation and operational policies that can facilitate quality healthcare for veterans - regardless of their era of wartime service.

To stay informed on suicide prevention issues, the Health Policy Coordinators attended 35 summits and events, including the 2021 Suicide Prevention Summit, which covered topics such as: Innovation in Men’s Mental Health; Using Humor, Media, and Digital Engagement to Promote Mental Health and Prevent Suicide for High-Risk Men; A Strengths-Based Approach to Suicide Assessment and Treatment; and Planning for Safety and Post-traumatic Growth.

Additionally, Health Policy Coordinators attended Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program listening sessions, and discussion of critical issues impacting veterans and associated VA budget recommendations for fiscal years 2022 and 2023.

#### VA Voluntary Services

The American Legion’s Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) program continues to support VA initiatives that support the care and treatment of veteran

patients in VA medical facilities. Unfortunately, due to VA's limitations on volunteers visiting their local facilities as a precaution against the spread of COVID-19, many Legionnaires could not volunteer at the normal rates to which the organization is accustomed. The past program year saw a significant decrease in hours volunteered by Legionnaires at VA facilities, which include VA medical centers, community clinics, Vet Centers, Fisher Houses, state Veteran's Homes and national cemeteries.

A total of 2,244 regularly scheduled volunteers contributed 206,013 hours, and 3,340 occasional visits contributed an additional 17,372 hours, for a grand total of 223,385 hours volunteered by Legionnaires – saving VA over \$6 million in 2020-2021.

Also, in early 2021, the VAVS Program Office was realigned to the VA's Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations (AUSHO) to more accurately reflect the scope of its services. To further support this clarification of mission and scope, VAVS also underwent a name change to become the VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE). This name change allows for the maintaining of the core mission established in 1946, to "integrate volunteers, donations and community partners into VA operations so that they may supplement and sustain the care and services provided to America's veterans, their families and caregivers".

The bottom line for all Legionnaires is that this name change has no fundamental operational change to volunteering, and the VAVS name and current logos can and will still be used by volunteers, VA facilities and partnering organizations.

#### **Veterans Benefits**

The Veterans Benefits staff improves the quality of veterans' lives by developing policy and activities relative to the VA's benefits programs, as well as providing input to VA's Debt Management Center, Pension Management Center, and the Life Insurance program.

During the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of General Counsel (OGC) staff responsible for processing VA Form 21s (Application for Accreditation as Service Organization Representative) resigned from their positions. A new employee was hired and spent several weeks in training. During this staffing changeover, The American Legion's veterans benefit coordinators were informed by OGC that an IT issue caused many accreditation applications to be lost. After rectifying the email issue, OGC staff then informed the American Legion they had another project that took precedent over the approval of accreditation applications and the recertification of accredited representatives. OGC had only one full-time employee responsible for processing VA Form 21s for not only The American Legion, but for all veterans service organizations. Eventually, OGC hired more staff members to assist with the accreditations. Subsequently, the average length of time spent for the approval process was reduced from several weeks to approximately seven business days.

During the program year, the Veterans Benefits team has certified the applications of 500 Legion-accredited representatives and forwarded them to OGC for approval

#### **Regional Office Action Review (ROAR)**

Scheduled ROAR site visits were not carried out during the program year because of the continuing pandemic, which included the spread of a COVID-19 Delta variant that caused an infection "spike" across the country.

Proposed ROAR site visits for 2022:

- Little Rock, AR
- San Juan, PR
- Oakland, CA
- St. Petersburg, FL
- Huntington, WV
- Chicago, IL

### Department Service Officers (DSO) School

Since 1985, The American Legion has authorized the VA&R Commission to conduct Department Service Officer (DSO) schools twice a year for accredited representatives of The American Legion. This bi-annual school represents the organization's ongoing commitment to developing a network of highly trained and experienced service officers to effectively advocate for veterans and their families. During the 2020-2021 year, DSO school was modified due to COVID-19 and online courses were conducted for the first time in the school's history.

The purpose of the DSO school is to provide current information about changes in veterans law, VA regulations and VA adjudication policies. The DSO school enables American Legion service officers and other accredited representatives to improve their advocacy skills.

The program of instruction includes training suitable 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 precedential decisions by the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans' Claims and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

The American Legion conducted two online sessions of DSO School:

- Summer 2020: An online DSO School was conducted August 5-31, which included 29 lessons plus a course evaluation and final exam. A total of 201 students graduated from the course, completing all lessons, and passing the final examination.
- Spring 2021: A second online school (with 26 lessons) was conducted March 8-26; an additional "overflow" session was held April 5-23. For the March session, 180 students graduated and another 179 graduated in April.
- A grand total of 560 Legion-accredited representatives graduated from DSO School during the program year.

### Pension Management Center (PMC)

The VA PMC processes adjustments of benefits for individuals in receipt of nonservice-connected disability pension, death pension and dependency indemnity compensation. Nonservice-connected pension is a need-based benefit available for "most at need" wartime service veterans and their dependents. The American Legion's Veterans Benefits Specialists are in St. Paul, Minnesota and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. They expedite the delivery of benefits when beneficiaries meet the criteria for receipt to reduce a financial hardship. This is accomplished by reviewing all claims for accuracy, ensuring that supporting material is included, acting as the counsel, and presenting verbal arguments on behalf of a claimant before VA, and preparing claimants for their hearings. This program year, the following activities were reported: 3,531 new pension claims and 179 appeals.

### Debt Management Center (DMC)

The VA DMC assists veterans and dependents facing collection actions or garnishment of VA benefits for debts owed to the VA. Assistance is provided by acting as the point of contact between the beneficiary and DMC, submitting documentation to stop garnishment of funds, establishing payment plans when appropriate, requesting waivers of debt, and reviewing all casework presented to DMC to ensure accuracy and completeness. The St. Paul office assisted in 600 cases where waiver grants were approved.

### Restricted Access Claim Center (RACC)

Sensitive files belonging to current and former senior government officials, VA employees and Veterans Service Organization representatives are handled at the St. Paul Restricted Access Claim Center. This program year, 244 restricted access compensation claims were processed.

### VA Life Insurance

VA life insurance, including Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI), Veterans Group Life Insurance and Family SGLI, TSGLI, and Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance, are handled at the VA Insurance Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The American Legion's Veterans Benefits Specialists assist surviving beneficiaries to file for disbursement of policy at the time of need and ensure that veterans are aware of eligibility windows for enrollment. This program year, the Legion assisted 966 insurance beneficiaries.

### VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

**Rev. Daniel J. Seehafer, Wisconsin, Chairman**

**Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Director**

This report covers the programs, activities, and accomplishments of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, its two standing committees (Employment and Veterans Preference and Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness), and the staff from July 1, 2020; through June 30, 2021. 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 Daniel J. Seehafer (WI). The division consists of Director Joseph Sharpe, Jr., Employment & Transition Policy Associate, Ariel De Jesus, Jr., Education & Credentialing Policy Associate, John Kamin, Employment and Education Policy Coordinator, Adam B. Treece, and Administrative Assistant Edwin Cruz.

### National Veterans Employment & Education Commission

- Employment & Veterans Preference Committee
- Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness Committee
- Veterans Employment & Education Council
- Awards Subcommittee
- Employment Innovation Task Force Advisory Board
- Small Business Task Force Advisory Board
- Homeless Veteran Task Force Advisory Board

### 2020-2021 Meetings

During the period this report covers, the commission met for three regularly scheduled executive sessions. A list of those meetings follows:

- (1) The chairman of the commission addressed the National Executive Committee, held at The American National Headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana, and virtually on October 14, 2020. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceeding of the National Executive Committee of The American Legion, October 14-15, 2020 & November 17, 2020.

- (2) At the 61<sup>st</sup> Washington Conference, held virtually from March 1-4, 2021, commission members and guests met to hear the latest on subjects of concern to them.
- (3) The chairman of the commission met May 5, 2021, in the headquarters office of The American Legion, in Indianapolis, Indiana. A complete report of that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, May 2021.

### **Legislative Appearances**

A vital part of the work of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission is the preparation and presentation of congressional testimony as well as letters of support 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 July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, on matters about the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission

- On July 22, 2020, VE&E staff submitted a letter of support for H.R. 7566, a bill to allow the Administrator of the General Services Administration to transfer certain surplus computers and technology equipment to nonprofit computer refurbishes for repair and distribution and for other purposes.
- On July 23, 2020, VE&E staff testified before the Veterans Affairs Committee on H.R. 7111 – Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2020: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a retraining assistance program for unemployed veterans based on the previous Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act authorizing the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP).
- On August 11, 2020, VE&E staff submitted a letter of support, Verification Alignment, and Service-disabled Business Adjustment Act to streamline and improve the verification process for veteran-owned small businesses.
- On August 27, 2020, VE&E staff submitted a letter of support, Veteran Employment Transition Act “VET ACT”, to provide (VSOs) the contact information of transitioning servicemembers to disseminate information regarding benefits, employment, and events for veterans in the area in which they live.
- On August 27, 2020, VE&E staff submitted a letter of support, Veterans Educational Assistance Transparency and Accountability Improvement Act of 2020, improving the G.I Bill Comparison Tool requiring VA to include pertinent information of educational institutions.
- On September 16, 2020, VE&E staff testified before the Subcommittee on Investigation, Oversight and Regulation Committee on Small Business Veterans Affairs Committee, Implementation of Sections 1832 and 1833 of the FY17 National Defense Authorization Act, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and explore where the shortages came from.
- On October 13, 2020, VE&E staff submitted a letter of support, Building Credit Access for Veterans Act, a bill aiming to break barriers for those with issues in obtaining a mortgage when they return from service by allowing lenders to use alternative data for approval and formalize the process in the VA.
- On December 8, 2020, VE&E staff testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, Committee on Veteran Affairs, Identifying

Congressional and Administration Priorities for the next congress: How we can support our veterans through and after COVID-19

- On January 9, 2021, VE&E staff communicated to Senator Rosen's staff support for S. 94, the Hire Student Veterans Act.
- On February 23, 2021, VE&E staff communicated to Senator Durbin's staff support to close the 90-10 rule in the budget reconciliation package.
- On April 21, 2021, VE&E staff testified before the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations on The West Los Angeles VA Campus Improvement Act of 2021; VA Supply Chain Resilience Act; and H.R. 1319 - American Rescue Plan Act.
- On April 29, 2021, VE&E staff communicated to Senator Hassan's staff support for S.1480, the Recognizing Service in PSLF Act.
- On May 4, 2021, VE&E staff communicated to Representative Lieu's staff support for H.R. 711, the West LA VA Campus Improvement Act of 2021.
- On May 28, 2021, VE&E staff communicated to Representative Franek's staff support for H.R. 3586, the Veteran Education Empowerment Act.
- On June 5, 2021, VE&E volunteers provided public comment expressing support for the implementation of the 90-10 rule at a Department of Education public hearing.
- On June 16, 2021, VE&E staff communicated to Representative Levin support for H.R. 1836, the Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act.
- On June 16, 2021, VE&E staff communicated to Senator Tester's office support for S. 2172, the Building Solutions for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness Act.
- On June 23, 2021, VE&E staff testified before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs on Pending Legislation on S.612 – Improving Housing Outcomes for Veterans Act of 2021; S.887 – VA Supply Chain Resiliency Act; and a Discussion Draft – the Building Solutions for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness 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. 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 that 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 have established outstanding records in the employment and

retention of veterans, workers with disabilities, and older workers, and to exceptional 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. Before this year's Washington Conference, the chairman of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, Daniel J. Seehafer (WI), appointed a seven-person subcommittee to review all of the nominations that had been received during 2020 in the Employer of Veterans Awards Program.

The Commission's Awards Subcommittee met to select the following National winners:

- **Large Employer:** TriWest Healthcare Alliance, Phoenix, Arizona
- **Medium Size Employer:** Cyber Defenses, Inc., Round Rock, Texas
- **Small Employer:** Nardis Gun Club, San Antonio, Texas

#### **Employment Service Awards**

Three awards beginning in 1993 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 genuinely outstanding veteran-dedicated staff members.

National winners are as follows:

- **LVER of the Year:** Lee Ware, Ft. Worth, Texas
- **DVOP of the Year:** Trevor Wilson, Fort Collins, Colorado
- **Employment Local Office:** Workforce Solutions Borderplex Lower Valley American Job Center, El Paso, Texas

Other Awards

- **Employer of Older Workers:** Lynden Air Cargo, LLC, Anchorage, Alaska
- **Michael Guty's Homeless Veterans Outreach Award:** Department of Ohio – Ride with Valor, Delaware, Ohio
- **Enhance the Lives of Disabled Person Award:** Veteran Outdoors Inc., Georgetown, Texas

#### **EMPLOYMENT & VETERANS PREFERENCE COMMITTEE**

**James Fratolillo, Massachusetts, Chairman**  
**Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., District of Columbia, 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., District of Columbia, 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. Also, 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 Veteran 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. The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission addresses employment, education, homeless & housing, and small business concerns regarding veterans and their families. A synopsis of the meetings (and events preceding) follows.

**Education**

On Monday, March 1, 2021, Zoom briefings were presented by the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) about education programs and benefits to the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission.

DOD's office of Force Education and Training is responsible for service and joint training policy, cyber training policy, professional military education, training capability modernization, voluntary education, credentialing, and apprenticeship policy. Boris Kun, the office's Director of Credentialing and SkillBridge Programs, briefed Commission members on a new concept for DOD voluntary training: Career Investment Programs.

Career Investment Programs is currently an unofficial portfolio, which includes policy and oversight alignment of the Voluntary Education Directorate and the Credentialing and Apprenticeship Programs Office. Specifically, these programs are:

- Voluntary Education, which primarily refers to the Services' Tuition Assistance programs that pay up to \$4,500 a year in college tuition.
- Credentialing – the Services' Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) programs that pay for civilian certificate exams.
- The United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP) [all Services, except the United States Air Force (USAF)], which allows servicemembers to log work hours, leading to a Department of Labor apprenticeship certificate.
- The SkillBridge transition program (Army/Marines: Career Skill Program) which allows servicemembers to participate in employment training, including apprenticeships and internships, beginning up to six months before their service obligation is completed.
- Office of Financial Readiness, which prescribes regulations to implement the Military Lending Act.

All the above programs are designed to produce servicemember outcomes, either while on active duty, post-active duty, or as part of a life-long learning continuum that starts with active-duty.

This alignment builds and expands upon the concept that education opportunities are historically among the top three reasons that people cite for choosing to enlist for military service. It further allows DOD to elevate the recognition, importance, and value of

obtaining credentials and in-demand skills while simultaneously supporting recruiting, retention, and skills improvement while on active duty. Ultimately, it sets up our servicemembers for a successful transition and acquisition of post-Service employment. Director Kun stated, "Because at the end of the day, the Department of Defense, we're a workforce machine,"

DOD's presentation was followed by a briefing from the VA's Education Service Director Charmaine Bogue on improvements to the VA's education benefits. With a greater budget for IT improvements, VA is focused on modernizing claims processing and customer service for GI Bill users by providing direct, online, one-stop access to GI Bill benefits and information. VA has coined this initiative "Digital GI Bill," with a vision of moving beyond the technical modernization of claims processing by transitioning to a holistic service that improves user experiences across VA's entire ecosystem.

This vision rests on four pillars:

- Improved Customer Service to provide world-class customer and financial services to enable timely and accurate calculation of awards, real-time eligibility, benefits information, and first contact resolution.
- End to End Management, to create a management perspective to ensure proper compliance and oversight of GI Bill programs and the use of data and business intelligence to monitor and measure school and student outcomes.
- Electronic Outreach, to allow for GI Bill students to engage with VA through electronic outreach, intake, and communication tools for point-of-inquiry service.
- Legislative Compliance to support new legislative requirements and adapt to policy changes. Increase capacity to meet legislative/program requirements to determine eligibility, entitlement, and benefits levels based on complex business rules. 64 Proceedings of Wednesday, May 5, 2021, While the Digital GI Bill will be an ongoing multi-year project, VA Education Service is in the process of gathering resource requirements to determine a measurable timeline of execution.

Ms. Bogue also shared their first update on the implementation of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (Isakson Roe Act), signed by President Trump on January 5, 2021. The 133-page bill contains 32 provisions affecting veterans' education benefits, with 15 of them having implementation deadlines within the first year.

As of the Commission meeting, VA had implemented 7 of the 15 "date of enactment" provisions and is working to have the remainder accomplished by August 1. With much of these changes affecting school certifying official procedures, VA staff have worked to regularly communicate with external stakeholders. Real-time updates to the Isakson Roe Act implementation will be shared online at <https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/isaksonroe.asp>.

Also, the following curriculum was presented featuring prominent speakers such as President Richard Trumka, of The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), James D. Rodriguez, Acting Assistant Secretary, Veterans Employment and Training Services (ASVETS) of the Department of Labor (DOL), and Senator Tammy Duckworth (IL), an Iraq War Veteran and Purple Heart recipient. The meeting was moderated by Dr. Joseph Wescott, American Legion National Higher Education Consultant. This event highlighted the many obstacles that veterans and their families face when separating from the military and, specifically, the need for greater action to ensure veterans achieve financial stability as they enter the civilian workforce.

### **Licensing & Certification**

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission planned and executed a virtual SkillBridge roundtable on June 29, 2021. The roundtable facilitated a discussion

between relevant stakeholders to support hiring initiatives for transitioning servicemembers by bringing together key leaders from government, military, and industry. The roundtable was attended by over 50 stakeholders and featured presentations by The DoD Military-Civilian Transition Office (MCTO), the U.S. Department of Labor's Acting Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), Solutions for Information Design (SOLID), ABF Freight, the Dixon Center for Military and Veterans Services, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and many other supportive organizations. The keynote speaker for the event was Daniel C. Dailey, 15th Sergeant Major of the Army.

The Department of Defense (DoD) SkillBridge program enhances the separation process for service members as they transition from the military to the civilian workforce. The program promotes civilian job training and employment for transitioning service members by partnering with public and private organizations which provide apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training. Service members who are within six months of being released from active duty are eligible to apply for the SkillBridge program. Since its inception in 2014, the DoD SkillBridge program has expanded to serve more than 25,000 service members at over 100 different employer locations. The continued demand for the unique skills that service members bring to an organization and, likewise, the demand for civilian training opportunities for those transitioning has made the SkillBridge program an undeniable success.

#### **Employment And Career Fairs**

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission also found ways to adapt to the pandemic, which derailed its annual career fair normally conducted during the National Convention. On September 15, 2020, nearly 800 veterans and military family job seekers from across the nation participated in a free virtual employment event with more than 220 hiring companies, presented by the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, The American Legion Department of Texas, the Texas Veterans Commission, and the Texas Workforce Commission.

National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford welcomed job hunters with a video message, as did VE&E Commission Chairman Daniel Seehafer, from their homes in North Carolina and Wisconsin, respectively. Earlier in the summer, the VE&E Commission organized an online workshop featuring the leader of military and veteran services for LinkedIn, Sarah Roberts, who offered tips to set up effective professional profiles on the social media platform. The American Legion's national LinkedIn page saw a surge in followers, to nearly 20,000 by the end of the summer, as social media connections grew in importance during the time of self-isolation.

Following the success in Texas, the Veterans Employment & Education Commission worked with the Department of North Carolina to host a job fair on November 17, 2020, which drew 176 job seekers from 19 different states, the District of Columbia and Japan.

In 2021, the National Veterans Employment and Education Commission of The American Legion collaborated with the Department of Texas and the Texas Veterans/Workforce Commission to host a virtual career fair on February 9 through the Premier Virtual platform. There were 260 employers from various industries and 910 preregistered job seekers. Job seekers consisted of Active Duty servicemembers, veterans, spouses, and family members. Applicants came from across the nation, overseas (Italy, Germany, Japan, Australia, Botswana, Guam, Ghana, Bahrain), and two Active-Duty sailors currently out to sea aboard a U.S. Destroyer. Overall, the employers and participants at this event were pleased with the outcome. The employers noted the participant's professionalism and overall high level of qualifications. The participants commented that they were impressed with the variety of employers from different industries and their willingness to hire veterans.

On June 10, 2021, The National Veterans Employment and Education Commission of The American Legion once again supported the Department of Texas and the Texas Veterans/Workforce Commission in hosting a virtual career fair through the Premier Virtual platform. The event gathered 322 local, nationwide, and international employers as well as 838 preregistered job seekers. In honor of Women Veterans, Past National Commander Denise Rohan and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy for the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service, James D. Rodriguez, welcomed job hunters with a video message.

The American Legion's National Veterans Employment & Education Division, through its established partnerships, continues to play a vital role in assisting American Legion Posts in their production of successful Job Fairs, small business development workshops, and employment training services throughout America. Also, the staff of the National Veterans Employment & Education Division is involved in several advisory committees, such as the Small Business Administration's 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. The American Legion has a representative on the Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development. Lastly, The American Legion participates in the Veterans Entrepreneurship Task Force (VET-Force) business forums and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Service Member's Affairs meetings.

To help hiring managers to understand veterans' unique skill sets, we've also released our landmark 60-page report, "The Future of Credentialing Servicemembers and Veterans: Leveraging Partners, Policies, and Resources," to empower employers to make successful veterans hiring pipelines happen.

Also, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division has participated in numerous Career Fairs throughout the nation, allowing The American Legion to connect with more than 25,000 veterans and their families. The American Legion has been invited to participate in over 12 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; as a result of our presence, the Legion was tasked with coordinating and moderating the YRRP employer panel. The panel consisted of employers sharing advice and information to help servicemembers land their dream job. The recruiters were asked a variety of questions to help understand what runs through the mind of hiring managers or HR professionals while interviewing them and what it takes to get the job. Locations for the YRRP included but were not limited to Florida, California, Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii.

#### **National Veterans Employment & Education Commission Forum**

On March 1, 2021, the Veterans Employment & Education staff and National Security held a panel titled "Securing the U.S. Industrial Base: Economic Security is a Matter of 21st Century National Security"; co-hosted with the Institute of Technology, Economics, and Diplomacy (INTED), a globe-spanning organization that serves as a platform to discuss global issues, exchange ideas, and implement solutions. Distinguished panelists, including former US ambassadors, discussed the impact of economic security on international relations, particularly regarding the vulnerable U.S. Industrial Base and explored what actions could be taken to strengthen national security in the 21st century. The panel was made up of Brad Markell, Executive Director, AFL-CIO Industrial Union Council; Thomas Pickering, Vice Chairman Hills and Company; Dr. Joshua Walker, President & CEO of Japan Society; Richard Passarelli, National Director of Veterans Affairs, Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA); and was moderated by John Berry,

President of the American Australian Association and former U.S. Ambassador to Australia.

### **Veteran Entrepreneurship**

VE&E staff is continuing its relationship with the SBA Office of Veterans Business Development to increase participation in the Boots to Business entrepreneurial education and training program. VE&E is also promoting the establishment of at least two new Veteran Business Opportunity Centers to expand access to business training and counseling for veteran-owned small businesses. VE&E is collaborating with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to establish a procurement advisory board to provide feedback on current VA procurement policies, procedures, and practices; encourage competition at the VA and ensure VA procurement officials are using procurement best practices to maximize procurement competition. Also, VE&E is in the process of addressing small business development in rural areas. We are currently identifying Federal, State, and local resources throughout the United States that can be accessed by veterans, such as business loan guarantees and counseling services.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, two companies owned by members of The American Legion Business Task Force – Global Procurement Solutions and Aldevra – worked around the clock to manufacture and deliver needed PPE to healthcare facilities as the supply chain continued to weaken in April. Legionnaire-owned companies in California and Ohio also swiftly transformed their business to manufacture masks and meet the urgent nationwide needs. Held on August 27, 2019, the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission hosted a Veterans Small Business Policy Roundtable with focus on AbilityOne programming. The meeting was attended by The American Legion's Small Business Taskforce members, various veteran service organizations, military service organizations, the former Surgeon General of the US Army, and representatives from the US Small Business Administration

### **Veteran Homelessness**

VA and HUD reported roughly 580,466 homeless veterans on a single night in 2020 (2020 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 to retain or acquire: 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  
Nicole Clapp, Iowa**

*A Community of Volunteers Serving  
Veterans, Military, and their Families*

**2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

**The Value of American Legion Auxiliary Members' Volunteer Service: \$253,307,385**

**Impact of Volunteer Hours and Resources Raised and Spent**

- Volunteer hours serving veterans and military: 3,037,026
- Volunteer hours serving military families: 328,330
- Volunteer hours serving youth, scholarships, communities: 3,378,766
- Total volunteer hours: 6,744,122
- Resources raised & spent on veterans and military: \$6,076,262
- Resources raised & spent on military families: \$600,838
- Resources raised & spent on youth, scholarships, communities: \$6,892,618
- Total Money Raised and Spent: \$13,569,718

**Auxiliary Reporting**

- Number of American Legion Auxiliary departments: 52
- Percentage of departments reporting: 94%
- Number of units: 7,946
- Percentage of units reporting: 46%
- Average percentage of members reporting: 22%

**Impact Made Serving America's Veterans/Military**

- Volunteer hours serving veterans and military: 3,037,026
- Total dollars spent serving veterans and military: \$2,913,711
- Total number of veterans assisted: 467,794
- Veterans in Community Schools presentations: 6,424
- In-kind donations: \$2,085,750
- Total number of poppies distributed: 684,662
- Total dollars raised from poppies: \$852,656

**Impact Made Serving Military Families**

- Hours volunteers: 328,330
- Dollars spent: \$600,838
- Number of military families served: 84,441

**Impact Made Through Scholarships**

- Total number of scholarships presented and awarded: 2,416
- Total dollar amount of scholarships presented: \$1,069,304

**Impact Made Through ALA Girls State**

- Hours volunteered for ALA Girls State: 76,163
- Total dollar amount spent on ALA Girls State: \$1,534,657

**Impact Made in Youth Development**

- Hours serving American Legion Family youth activities: 271,622
- Total dollars raised/spent to benefit children: \$1,595,092

- Total dollars in direct aid to help children in need: \$345,876
- Total number of children served: 205,646

**Impact Made Through Service to Our Communities**

- Total number of volunteer service hours in community service not included above: 3,030,981
- Total dollars spent on community projects not included above: \$2,347,689



Crowe LLP  
Independent Member Crowe Global

## 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, 2020 and 2019, and the related consolidated statements of activities, functional expenses 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 from 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, 2020 and 2019, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance 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 LLP*  
Crowe LLP

Indianapolis, Indiana  
April 26, 2021

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
December 31, 2020 and 2019

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,357,289	\$ 2,312,619
Accounts receivable	4,458,259	7,123,577
Interest receivable	1,029,840	1,008,765
Prepaid expenses and deposits	3,566,909	2,403,235
Deferred membership expense	3,675,147	4,183,155
Inventory	3,847,011	3,508,922
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	42,097	37,307
Beneficial interest in trust	-	36,264
	<u>18,976,552</u>	<u>20,613,844</u>
Investments		
General	32,042,798	21,551,826
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved Funds	39,527,477	37,361,797
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	26,327,303	26,539,113
Samsung scholarship fund	7,894,494	7,669,826
Building funds	8,004,132	7,254,020
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	16,701,655	16,341,850
Special account – Endowment Fund	2,181,347	2,066,042
General account – Endowment Fund	9,997,425	9,094,112
National Emergency Fund	7,374,556	6,658,915
American Legion Charities	5,627,624	5,255,325
Other	4,611,388	4,315,975
	<u>160,290,199</u>	<u>144,108,801</u>
Property, plant and equipment, net	<u>4,599,235</u>	<u>4,062,080</u>
	<u>\$ 183,865,986</u>	<u>\$ 168,784,725</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 1,324,285	\$ 4,777,975
Scholarships payable	717,297	1,589,399
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	487,635	586,078
Deferred income	1,848,229	1,439,307
Deferred dues income	23,838,285	24,071,863
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	3,282,655	3,428,607
Accrued vacation benefits	829,099	802,152
Accrued pension expense	24,539,006	20,709,800
Other liabilities	1,991,018	1,323,678
Notes payable	3,824,000	215,148
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life membership	24,482,851	23,908,398
Life memberships due to state and local posts	27,853,299	26,766,460
	<u>115,017,659</u>	<u>109,618,865</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Without donor restriction	19,388,183	10,986,426
With donor restriction	49,460,144	48,179,434
Total net assets	<u>68,848,327</u>	<u>59,165,860</u>
	<u>\$ 183,865,986</u>	<u>\$ 168,784,725</u>

*See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.*

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES  
Year ended December 31, 2020

	Without Donor Restriction	With Donor Restriction	Total
<b>Revenue, gains and other support</b>			
National member dues	\$ 28,411,650	\$ -	\$ 28,411,650
Direct membership solicitations	5,985,220	-	5,985,220
Member service fees income	389,317	-	389,317
Affinity income	4,000,000	-	4,000,000
Sales of emblem items	9,372,107	-	9,372,107
Advertising	6,913,995	-	6,913,995
Contributions	16,826,216	1,876,745	18,702,961
Label and printing fees	292,176	-	292,176
Interest and dividends, net of fees	1,724,952	1,222,686	2,947,638
Net realized gains (losses) - investments	112,431	(12,146)	100,285
Other	<u>2,353,911</u>	<u>5,292</u>	<u>2,359,203</u>
	76,381,975	3,092,577	79,474,552
Net assets released from restriction	<u>3,668,476</u>	<u>(3,668,476)</u>	<u>-</u>
Total revenues, gains, and other support	80,050,451	(575,899)	79,474,552
<b>Expenses</b>			
Salaries	15,142,083	-	15,142,083
Employee benefits	5,792,389	-	5,792,389
Cost of sales - Legion	5,210,529	-	5,210,529
Department and magazine costs	1,121,962	-	1,121,962
Direct publications	9,601,714	-	9,601,714
Executive, staff and program travel	518,865	-	518,865
Commission and committee	425,732	-	425,732
Printing and postage	14,827,089	-	14,827,089
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,918,996	-	1,918,996
Office and other operating	11,865,810	-	11,865,810
Occupancy and usage	2,209,718	-	2,209,718
Special projects and programs	<u>2,848,469</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,848,469</u>
	<u>71,483,356</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>71,483,356</u>
Change in net assets from operations	8,567,095	(575,899)	7,991,196
Net unrealized gain - investments	2,292,488	1,856,609	4,149,097
Net change in PUFL	959,270	-	959,270
Amortization of pension loss	(2,224,672)	-	(2,224,672)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	<u>(1,192,424)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(1,192,424)</u>
<b>Change in net assets</b>	8,401,757	1,280,710	9,682,467
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>10,986,426</u>	<u>48,179,434</u>	<u>59,165,860</u>
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 19,388,183</u>	<u>\$ 49,460,144</u>	<u>\$ 68,848,327</u>

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES  
Year ended December 31, 2019

	Without Donor <u>Restriction</u>	With Donor <u>Restriction</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>Revenue, gains and other support</b>			
National member dues	\$ 29,293,372	\$ -	\$ 29,293,372
Direct membership solicitations	5,887,420	-	5,887,420
Member service fees income	449,344	-	449,344
Affinity income	4,000,000	-	4,000,000
Sales of emblem items	14,283,830	-	14,283,830
Advertising	8,032,884	-	8,032,884
Contributions	12,863,986	5,747,894	18,611,880
Label and printing fees	347,473	-	347,473
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,044,411	1,172,374	3,216,785
Net realized losses - investments	(110,044)	(162,997)	(273,041)
Other	<u>3,412,106</u>	<u>1,441,758</u>	<u>4,853,864</u>
	80,504,782	8,199,029	88,703,811
Net assets released from restriction	<u>3,721,305</u>	<u>(3,721,305)</u>	<u>-</u>
Total revenues, gains, and other support	84,226,087	4,477,724	88,703,811
<b>Expenses</b>			
Salaries	14,587,909	-	14,587,909
Employee benefits	6,662,698	-	6,662,698
Cost of sales – Legion	7,834,317	-	7,834,317
Department and magazine costs	1,381,692	-	1,381,692
Direct publications	10,004,545	-	10,004,545
Executive, staff and program travel	3,671,878	-	3,671,878
Commission and committee	1,772,354	-	1,772,354
Printing and postage	14,480,642	-	14,480,642
Scholarships, grants and awards	3,323,903	-	3,323,903
Office and other operating	14,495,363	-	14,495,363
Occupancy and usage	2,197,550	-	2,197,550
Special projects and programs	<u>3,809,444</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,809,444</u>
	<u>84,222,295</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>84,222,295</u>
Change in net assets from operations	3,792	4,477,724	4,481,516
Net unrealized gain – investments	2,765,626	2,001,018	4,766,644
Net change in PUFLL	497,406	-	497,406
Amortization of pension loss	(1,996,688)	-	(1,996,688)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	<u>(36,751)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(36,751)</u>
<b>Change in net assets</b>	1,233,385	6,478,742	7,712,127
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>9,753,041</u>	<u>41,700,692</u>	<u>51,453,733</u>
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 10,986,426</u>	<u>\$ 48,179,434</u>	<u>\$ 59,165,860</u>

*See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.*

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
 CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES  
 Years ended December 31, 2020 and 2019

	Program Services		Supporting Services			2020 Total
	Veterans Programs Services	Americanism and Children and Youth Activities	Management and General	Member Development	Fundraising	
<b>2020</b>						
Salaries	\$ 6,400,098	\$ 533,307	\$ 7,380,577	\$ 848,101	\$ -	\$ 15,142,083
Employee benefits	657,568	54,967	4,993,365	86,489	-	5,792,389
Cost of sales - Legion Department and magazine costs	5,210,529	-	-	-	-	5,210,529
Direct publications	1,057,416	-	1,367	-	63,179	1,121,962
Executive, staff and program travel	9,601,714	-	-	-	-	9,601,714
Commission and committee	279,410	24,896	200,692	13,867	-	518,865
Printing and postage	344,403	4,384	75,592	1,353	-	425,732
Scholarships, grants, and awards	1,440,775	5,492	58,436	2,792,547	10,529,839	14,827,089
Office and other operating	962,284	772,212	217	184,283	-	1,918,996
Occupancy and usage	2,385,094	109,378	2,044,383	6,797,112	529,843	11,865,810
Special project programs	24,422	1,264	1,657,309	526,723	-	2,209,718
	<u>1,993,031</u>	<u>186,804</u>	<u>668,634</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,848,469</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 30,356,744</b>	<b>\$ 1,692,704</b>	<b>\$ 17,080,572</b>	<b>\$ 11,250,475</b>	<b>\$ 11,122,881</b>	<b>\$ 71,483,356</b>

	Program Services		Supporting Services			2019 Total
	Veterans Programs Services	Americanism and Children and Youth Activities	Management and General	Member Development	Fundraising	
<b>2019</b>						
Salaries	\$ 6,602,790	\$ 527,288	\$ 6,652,509	\$ 805,322	\$ -	\$ 14,587,909
Employee benefits	665,970	52,406	5,864,674	79,648	-	6,662,698
Cost of sales - Legion Department and magazine costs	7,834,317	-	-	-	-	7,834,317
Direct publications	1,305,222	-	10,473	-	65,997	1,381,692
Executive, staff and program travel	10,004,545	-	-	-	-	10,004,545
Commission and committee	1,226,242	1,428,626	964,338	52,672	-	3,671,878
Printing and postage	937,731	248,545	470,592	115,486	-	1,772,354
Scholarships, grants, and awards	2,257,816	9,123	79,817	2,602,858	9,531,028	14,480,642
Office and other operating	458,074	2,673,634	-	191,985	210	3,323,903
Occupancy and usage	3,567,474	147,054	3,788,554	6,742,187	250,094	14,495,363
Special projects and programs	27,249	1,352	1,639,670	529,279	-	2,197,550
	<u>2,175,806</u>	<u>725,275</u>	<u>908,363</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,809,444</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 37,063,236</b>	<b>\$ 5,813,303</b>	<b>\$ 20,378,990</b>	<b>\$ 11,119,437</b>	<b>\$ 9,847,329</b>	<b>\$ 84,222,295</b>

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS  
Years ended December 31, 2020 and 2019

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Change in net assets	\$ 9,682,467	\$ 7,712,127
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash from operating activities		
Depreciation expense	590,089	726,941
Realized (gain) loss on sale of investments	(100,285)	273,041
Unrealized gain on investments	(4,149,097)	(4,766,644)
Net change in Paid-Up-For-Life annuity	959,270	(497,406)
Amortization of pension loss	2,224,672	1,996,688
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	1,192,424	36,751
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	(709,567)	(1,147,682)
Changes in assets and liabilities:		
Accounts receivable	2,665,318	(1,663,269)
Interest receivable	(21,075)	(123,225)
Prepaid expenses and deposits	(1,163,674)	351,864
Deferred membership expense	508,008	(105,677)
Inventories	(338,089)	(647,720)
Beneficial interest in trust	36,264	40,465
Accounts and scholarships payable	(4,325,789)	966,211
Deferred income	632,971	3,143,504
Accrued pension expense	412,110	837,982
Other accrued liabilities	<u>694,286</u>	<u>326,087</u>
Net cash from operating activities	8,790,303	7,460,038
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Purchase of property and equipment	(1,353,874)	(1,037,776)
Sales of property and equipment	-	2,046
Loss on disposal of property and equipment	226,628	-
Purchase of investments	(93,285,016)	(100,808,016)
Sales and maturities of investments	81,353,000	92,774,212
Investments in affiliate (CFA)	<u>(4,790)</u>	<u>(26,237)</u>
Net cash from investing activities	(13,064,052)	(9,095,771)
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>		
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	709,567	1,147,682
Paycheck Protection Program loan proceeds	3,824,000	-
Repayment on notes payable	<u>(215,148)</u>	<u>(211,550)</u>
Net cash from financing activities	<u>5,148,809</u>	<u>936,132</u>
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	44,670	(699,601)
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	<u>2,312,619</u>	<u>3,012,220</u>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents, end of year</b>	<b><u>\$ 2,357,289</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 2,312,619</u></b>
<b>Supplemental cash flows information</b>		
Interest paid	\$ 30,786	\$ 12,204
Investment maturities	\$ -	2,556,599

*See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.*

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
December 31, 2020 and 2019

**NOTE 1 – NATURE OF OPERATIONS AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES**

**Nature of Organization:** The American Legion National Headquarters ("Legion") is a national veterans organization, which was declared to be a corporate body by an Act of the United States Congress on September 16, 1919.

According to the Original Act and Subsequent Amendments, the purpose of the Legion is "To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to promote peace and goodwill among the peoples of the United States and all the nations of the earth; to preserve the memories and incidents of the two World Wars and the other great hostilities fought to uphold democracy; to cement the ties and comradeship born of service; and to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual helpfulness and service to their country."

Approximately 40% of the Legion's income is derived from membership dues (including amounts allocated for magazine subscriptions). Contributions generate an additional 18 - 22% of revenue. Advertising for the American Legion Magazine derives approximately 10% of income. 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 without donor restriction and with donor restriction.

The following classes of net assets are maintained:

**Net Assets Without Donor Restriction** – The net asset without donor restriction 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 net asset without donor restriction of the Legion may be used at the discretion of management to support the Legion's purposes and operations. There are \$1,496,506 and \$1,367,990 of board designated net assets included in the net assets without donor restrictions as of December 31, 2020 and 2019, respectively. These funds have been designated by the American Legion Charities Board for quasi endowment.

**Net Assets With Donor Restrictions** – The net asset with donor restriction 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 are classified as net asset with donor restriction. As the restrictions are met, the net assets are released from restrictions and included in net assets without donor restriction. Contributions for which the restrictions are met in the same period in which the contribution is received are also recorded as net assets with donor restrictions and released from restrictions. The net asset with donor restriction class also 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, 2020 and 2019.

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, 2020 and 2019.

**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. Interest and dividends are shown net of fees on the statements of activities.

**Property, Plant, and Equipment:** Expenditures for property, plant, 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, 2019 and 2018.

**Collections:** The Legion owns many collectible military related items and historical documents, which were not recorded as they were acquired. It is often impracticable to determine a value for collections and accordingly, the Legion has concluded that they need not be capitalized. Some of these items have been appraised for insurance purposes.

**Support and Revenue:** The Legion reports gifts of cash and other assets as restricted support if they are received with donor stipulations that limit the use of the donated assets. When a donor restriction expires, that is, when a stipulated time restriction ends or purpose restriction is accomplished, temporarily restricted net assets are reclassified to unrestricted net assets and reported in the statement of activities as net assets released from restrictions.

**Revenue Recognition:** The Legion recognizes revenue either as performance obligations are materially satisfied, contracts expire or are invalidated, and/or as applicable terms warrant. This includes affinity income, sales of emblems, advertising and other revenue streams not specifically outlined in note 1.

**Member Dues Income and Expense:** Member 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 2019 and 2018, 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, 2019 and 2018, 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, 2019 and 2018.

**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:** Expenses have been classified as program services, management and general, member development and fund raising based on actual direct expenditures. Additionally, salary and employee benefits expenses are allocated among departments based upon estimates of the amount of time spent by Legion employees performing services for these departments.

**Recent Accounting Pronouncement:** In May 2014, the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) issued Accounting Standards Updated (ASU) 2014-09, *Revenue from Contracts with Customers Topic (606)*. This ASU affects any entity that either enters into contracts with customers to transfer goods or services or enters into contracts for the transfer of nonfinancial assets unless those contracts are within the scope of other standards (e.g., insurance contracts or lease contracts). This ASU has superseded the revenue recognition requirements in *Topic 605, Revenue Recognition*, and most industry-specific guidance. The core principle of the guidance is that an entity should recognize revenue to depict the transfer of promised goods or services to customers in an amount that reflects the consideration to which the entity expects to be entitled in exchange for those goods or services. The Legion applied the amendments in this ASU for the year ended December 31, 2019, but was not materially impacted by the ASU and as a result, no cumulative effect adjustment was recorded upon adoption.

In June 2018, the FASB issued ASU 2018-08 – *Not-for-Profit Entities (Topic 958): Clarifying the Scope and Accounting Guidance for Contributions Received and Contributions Made*. The amendments in this Update provide a more robust framework to determine when a transaction should be accounted for as a contribution under Subtopic 958-605 or as an exchange transaction accounted for under other guidance (for example, Topic 606). The amendments also provide additional guidance about how to determine whether a contribution is conditional. The Legion applied the amendments in this ASU for the year ended December 31, 2019.

The Legion implemented ASU 2018-08 using a modified retrospective method of application. There were no changes to the recognition or presentation of revenue as a result of the application of ASU 2018-08. As a result, no cumulative effect adjustment was recorded upon adoption.

**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. Interest and dividends are shown net of fees on the statements of activities.

**Property, Plant, and Equipment:** Expenditures for property, plant, and equipment and items, which substantially increase the useful

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
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December 31, 2020 and 2019

**NOTE 1 – NATURE OF OPERATIONS AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES** (continued)

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 30-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, 2020 and 2019.

**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.

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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, 2020 and 2019, 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, 2020 and 2019.

**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:** Expenses have been classified as program services, management and general, member development and fund raising based on actual direct expenditures. Additionally, salary and employee benefits 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, 2020, to determine the need for any adjustments or disclosures to the financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2020. Management has performed their analysis through April 26, 2021, the date the financial statements were available to be issued.

**NOTE 2 – CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

In December 2019, a novel strain of coronavirus surfaced in Wuhan, China, and has spread around the world, with resulting business and social disruption. The coronavirus was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization on January 30, 2020. The Legion's revenues and expenses were both down from 2020, however the change in net assets increased by \$1,970,340 from 2019. Assets increased approximately \$15,100,000 in 2020 and liabilities increased approximately \$5,400,000 in 2020. The Legion received a Paycheck Protection Program Loan for \$3,824,000 as part of the CARES Act. The loan is included within notes payable in footnote 8. As the pandemic continues in 2021, business results of the Legion will continue to be affected based on the national, state, and local events designed to contain the coronavirus.

**NOTE 3 – 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 4 – 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 \$4,790 and \$26,237 in 2020 and 2019, 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 2020 and 2019.

**NOTE 5 – BENEFICIAL INTEREST IN CHARITABLE LEAD TRUST**

The ALEF was named a beneficiary of a charitable lead trust. Under the charitable trust, the ALEF was to receive quarterly distributions in the amount of \$9,919 until December 2020, or until the funds of the trust are exhausted. In 2020 the funds from the trust were exhausted.

**NOTE 6 – 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 obligations, 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:

Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2020 using			
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
<b>Assets:</b>			
Money market accounts	\$ 26,245,946	\$ -	\$ -
U.S. Government obligations	-	19,325,615	-
State and municipal bonds	-	66,198,886	-
Corporate bonds	-	47,994,252	-
Common Stock	525,500	-	-
	<u>\$ 26,771,446</u>	<u>\$ 133,518,753</u>	<u>\$ -</u>

The tables below present a reconciliation and statement of activities classification of gains and losses for all assets measured at fair value on a recurring basis using significant unobservable inputs (Level 3) for the years ended December 31, 2020 and 2019:

## Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2019 using

	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
<b>Assets:</b>			
Beneficial interest in trust	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 36,264
Money market accounts	24,497,357	-	-
U.S. Government obligations	-	30,139,064	-
State and municipal bonds	-	42,225,724	-
Corporate bonds	-	46,783,508	-
Common Stock	463,148	-	-
	<u>\$ 24,960,505</u>	<u>\$ 119,148,296</u>	<u>\$ 36,264</u>

	Beneficial Interest in Trust
Beginning balance, January 1, 2019	\$ 76,729
Change in value of split interest agreements	(789)
Distributions from trust	(39,676)
Ending balance, December 31, 2019	<u>\$ 36,264</u>
Beginning balance, January 1, 2020	\$ 36,264
Change in value of split interest agreements	-
Distributions from trust	(36,264)
Ending balance, December 31, 2020	<u>\$ -</u>

**NOTE 7 – PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT**

The Legion's property and equipment, and the related accumulated depreciation at December 31, 2020 and 2019 are as follows:

	2020	2019
Washington, D.C., real estate		\$
Land	\$ 80,000	80,000
Building	5,692,323	5,661,735
Indianapolis real estate		
Land	389,264	389,264
Building	4,230,713	4,134,868
Furniture, fixtures and equipment		
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	7,013,456	6,966,263
Washington, D.C.	714,532	710,450
Construction in progress	1,924,939	975,402
	<u>20,045,227</u>	<u>18,917,982</u>
Less: accumulated depreciation	(15,445,992)	(14,855,902)
	<u>\$ 4,599,235</u>	<u>\$ 4,062,080</u>

Depreciation expense for the years ended, December 31, 2020 and 2019 was \$590,089 and \$726,941, respectively.

**NOTE 8 – NOTES PAYABLE**

In 2013, the Legion refinanced its long-term debt. Principal and interest was payable in monthly installment, and the final payment was made in December 2020. The stated interest rate was 1.35% plus the 30-day London Inter Bank Offered Rate ("LIBOR"). The outstanding balance on long-term debt was \$215,148 at December 31, 2019. The outstanding balance was paid off during 2020.

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**NOTE 8 – NOTES PAYABLE** (continued)

Interest expense was \$4,070 and \$12,204 for the years ended December 31, 2020 and 2019, 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 provided 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 \$215,148 at December 31, 2019. The interest rate swap matured in 2020.

In May 2020, The Legion obtained a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan under a program offered by the United States Small Business Administration (SBA) in the amount of \$3,824,000. The Legion is accounting for the PPP loan as debt under ASC 470 and will not recognize the revenue until formal forgiveness has been obtained, which the Legion expects to happen during 2021. If the SBA does not forgive any portion of the PPP loan, the remaining balance would have a two-year repayment period and the interest rate on the loan would be 1%.

**NOTE 9 – LEASES**

The Legion has several non-cancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment, and copiers that expire at various dates through 2023. Rent expense under these leases for the years ended December 31, 2020 and 2019 was \$349,105 and \$367,262, respectively.

Minimum lease commitments are as follows:

2021	\$ 335,731
2022	171,038
2023	38,568
	<u>\$ 545,337</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 2020 and 2019 was \$753,348 and \$818,248, respectively. Insurance coverage is included in the Legion's general insurance policy.

**NOTE 10 – 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 without donor restriction, 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 11 – RESTRICTED AND RESERVE DESIGNATED FUNDS**

The restricted fund is designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee and reported as without donor restriction, 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 2020 and 2019. As of December 31, 2020 and 2019, the restricted fund had an investment balance of \$37,247,800 and \$35,164,769, respectively.

The reserve fund is also designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee and reported as without donor restriction, 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. As of December 31, 2020 and 2019, the reserve fund had an investment balance of \$2,279,677 and \$2,197,028, respectively.

**NOTE 12 – NET ASSETS WITH DONOR RESTRICTION**

Net assets with donor restrictions have assets that are donor-restricted for specific purposes or have assets that 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. service men and service women 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.

**NOTE 12 – NET ASSETS WITH DONOR RESTRICTION** (continued)

At December 31, 2020 and 2019, net assets with donor restriction by specific purpose and in perpetuity are as follows:

	2020	2019
<u>With specific purpose</u>		
Overseas graves decoration fund	\$ 1,002,680	\$ 958,750
Samsung scholarship	2,428,886	1,942,279
American Legacy Fund	16,161,942	15,391,936
National Emergency Fund	7,514,002	7,075,265
Boy Scouts	467,899	467,899
Operation Comfort Warrior	3,921,651	3,705,001
John DeVore	364,508	342,187
Edwin J. Dentz VA Boy's State	710,152	631,277
Samsung American Legion Alumni Association	316,668	390,716
Commemorative coin	-	1,441,758
Others	546,515	874,520
Total with specific purpose	33,434,903	33,221,588
<u>In perpetuity</u>		
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000	5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	11,025,241	9,957,846
Total in perpetuity	16,025,241	14,957,846
Total assets with donor restriction	\$ 49,460,144	\$ 48,179,434

**NOTE 13 – 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.

	2020	2019
<u>Purpose restrictions accomplished</u>		
Overseas graves decoration	\$ 10,592	\$ 27,791
Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)	1,276,396	1,925,948
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth programs	2,381,488	1,767,566
	\$ 3,668,476	\$ 3,721,305

**NOTE 14 – ENDOWMENT COMPOSITION**

The Legion's endowments include donor restricted endowment funds that 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, 2020

	Without Donor Restriction	With Donor Restriction	Total
Donor restricted endowment funds	\$ 122,078	\$ 18,387,512	\$ 18,509,590
Total Funds	\$ 122,078	\$ 18,387,512	\$ 18,509,590

Endowment net asset composition by type of fund as of December 31, 2019:

	Without Donor Restriction	With Donor Restriction	Total
Donor restricted endowment funds	\$ 56,600	\$ 16,929,275	\$ 16,985,875
Total Funds	\$ 56,600	\$ 16,929,275	\$ 16,985,875

Changes in endowment net assets for the year ended December 31, 2020:

	Without Donor Restriction	With Donor Restriction	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ 56,600	\$ 16,929,275	\$ 16,985,875
Investment gain:			
Investment income, net of fees	51,080	415,525	466,605
Net depreciation (realized and unrealized)	76,473	628,320	704,793
Total investment gain	127,553	1,043,845	1,171,398
New gifts	-	709,567	709,567
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	(62,075)	(295,175)	(357,250)
Net assets, end of year	\$ 122,078	\$ 18,387,512	\$ 18,509,590

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**NOTE 14 – ENDOWMENT COMPOSITION** (continued)

Changes in endowment net assets for the year ended December 31, 2019:

	Without Donor Restriction	With Donor Restriction	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ 270	\$ 15,258,711	\$ 15,258,981
Investment gain/(loss)			
Investment income, net of fees	47,872	422,518	470,390
Net depreciation (realized and unrealized)	53,863	580,626	634,489
Total investment gain	101,735	1,003,144	1,104,879
New gifts	-	1,147,682	1,147,682
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	(45,405)	(480,262)	(525,667)
Net assets, end of year	\$ 56,600	\$ 16,929,275	\$ 16,985,875

**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 can be spent, along with the interest, net of fees, according to the spending policy. Endowment fund principal, unless otherwise directed by the donor, shall not be disbursed except for emergency situations. In order to make a principal disbursement, a majority vote by the Legion National Executive Committee will be required.

**Funds with Deficiencies:** 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. As of December 31, 2020 and 2019, 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 \$367,225 and \$365,022 in 2020 and 2019, 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, 2020 and 2019:

	2020	2019
Benefit obligation	\$ (64,148,563)	\$ (59,971,338)
Fair value of plan assets	46,182,398	44,389,962
Funded status	\$ (17,966,165)	\$ (15,581,376)
Interest cost	\$ 1,705,130	\$ 2,202,980
Actual return on assets	(5,342,125)	(5,213,436)
Amortization of prior service costs	442,267	442,267
Amortization of loss	2,075,549	1,996,688
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	2,372,988	2,359,848
Net periodic pension cost	\$ 1,253,809	\$ 1,788,347
Net gain	\$ 1,573,247	\$ 63,675
Prior service cost	(442,267)	(442,267)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	\$ 1,130,980	\$ (378,592)
Prepaid benefit cost	\$ 3,912,225	\$ 5,166,034
Accumulated benefit obligation	64,148,563	59,971,338
Vested benefit obligation	64,148,563	59,014,117
Net periodic pension cost	1,253,809	1,788,347
Benefits paid	3,549,689	3,562,743
Measurement date	12/31/2020	12/31/2019

Estimated future benefit payments:

2021	\$ 3,753,917
2022	3,791,421
2023	3,804,199
2024	3,757,096
2025	3,711,090
Years 2026-2028	17,559,908

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, 40-70% in fixed income and 30-60% in equities. Prohibited investments include real estate investment trusts, real estate partnerships, mutual funds, private equity, hedge funds and guaranteed investment certificates.

**NOTE 15 – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS** (continued)

The fair value of Plan A assets at December 31, 2020 and 2019 are as follows. See Note 6 for descriptions of inputs for each type of asset.

	Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2020, using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Accrued interest	\$ 200,659	\$ -	\$ -
Money market accounts	2,028,625	-	-
U.S. Government and agency obligations	-	5,248,648	-
Municipal bonds	-	3,479,407	-
Corporate bonds	-	16,225,676	-
Common stock:			
Materials	1,326,313	-	-
Industrials	1,203,820	-	-
Consumer discretionary	2,290,126	-	-
Consumer staples	1,499,687	-	-
Energy	264,680	-	-
Health care	2,758,026	-	-
Financials	3,644,941	-	-
Telecommunication	1,004,952	-	-
Technology	4,463,473	-	-
Utilities	543,365	-	-
	<u>\$ 21,228,667</u>	<u>\$ 24,953,731</u>	<u>\$ -</u>

  

	Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2019, using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Accrued interest	\$ 239,242	\$ -	\$ -
Money market accounts	2,000,374	-	-
U.S. Government and agency obligations	-	4,820,249	-
Municipal bonds	-	5,812,686	-
Corporate bonds	-	16,740,929	-
Common stock:			
Materials	437,671	-	-
Industrials	1,299,715	-	-
Consumer discretionary	1,178,680	-	-
Consumer staples	1,150,380	-	-
Energy	706,459	-	-
Health care	2,367,315	-	-
Financials	2,123,496	-	-
Telecommunication	1,564,105	-	-
Technology	3,528,392	-	-
Utilities	420,269	-	-
	<u>\$ 17,016,098</u>	<u>\$ 27,373,864</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	2020	2019
Discount rate	2.09%	2.94%
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, 2020 are \$2,075,549 and (\$442,267) 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, 2020 and 2019:

	2020	2019
Benefit obligation	\$ (10,261,920)	\$ (7,499,979)
Fair value of plan assets	3,689,079	2,371,555
Funded status	<u>\$ (6,572,841)</u>	<u>\$ (5,128,424)</u>
Service cost	\$ 809,893	\$ 584,473
Interest cost	239,107	215,705
Actual return on assets	(324,245)	(88,808)
Amortization of prior service costs	370,027	370,027
Amortization of loss	149,123	-
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	139,068	(35,074)
Net periodic pension cost	<u>\$ 1,382,973</u>	<u>\$ 1,046,323</u>
Net loss	\$ 431,471	\$ 785,370
Prior service cost	(370,027)	(370,027)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	<u>\$ 61,444</u>	<u>\$ 415,343</u>
Prepaid benefit cost	\$ (1,149,353)	\$ (829,305)
Accumulated benefit obligation	6,116,637	4,067,950
Vested benefit obligation	7,069,775	4,765,899
Net periodic pension cost	1,382,973	1,046,323
Benefits paid	69,646	46,063
Measurement date	12/31/2020	12/31/2019
Estimated future benefit payments:		
2021	\$ 116,963	
2022	143,144	
2023	183,986	
2024	215,477	
2025	250,135	
Years 2026-2029	2,037,475	

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**NOTE 15 – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS** (continued)

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, 40-70% in fixed income and 30-60% 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, 2020 and 2019 are as follows. See Note 6 for descriptions of inputs for each type of asset.

	Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2019 using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Accrued interest	\$ 15,609	\$ -	\$ -
Money market accounts	31,639	-	-
U.S. government and agency obligations	-	116,558	-
Municipal bonds	-	1,004,149	-
Corporate bonds	-	926,724	-
Common stock:	-	-	-
Materials	110,858	-	-
Industrials	102,754	-	-
Consumer discretionary	194,065	-	-
Consumer staples	124,464	-	-
Health care	230,684	-	-
Financials	211,267	-	-
Telecommunication	84,963	-	-
Technology	467,453	-	-
Utilities	67,892	-	-
	<u>\$ 1,641,648</u>	<u>\$ 2,047,431</u>	<u>\$ -</u>

	Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2019 using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Accrued interest	\$ 12,823	\$ -	\$ -
Money market accounts	31,639	-	-
U.S. government and agency obligations	-	501,794	-
Municipal bonds	-	513,236	-
Corporate bonds	-	673,406	-
Common stock:	-	-	-
Materials	20,360	-	-
Industrials	57,136	-	-
Consumer discretionary	55,507	-	-
Consumer staples	52,048	-	-
Energy	32,276	-	-
Health care	107,157	-	-
Financials	98,897	-	-
Telecommunication	69,978	-	-
Technology	125,527	-	-
Utilities	19,771	-	-
	<u>\$ 683,119</u>	<u>\$ 1,688,436</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	2020	2019
Discount rate	2.48%	3.21%
Expected return on plan assets	7.00	7.00
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, 2020 are \$149,123 and \$370,027, respectively.

**NOTE 16 – LIQUIDITY AND AVAILABILITY**

The Legion's financial assets available within one year of the statement of financial position date for general expenditure are as follows:

	2020	2019
Financial assets at year-end:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,357,289	\$ 2,312,619
Accounts receivable, net	4,458,259	7,123,577
Interest receivable	1,029,840	1,008,765
Investments	168,135,587	131,581,394
Total financial assets	<u>\$ 168,135,587</u>	<u>\$ 154,553,762</u>
Less amounts not available for general expenditure within one year:		
Donor-restricted endowment funds	\$ (16,025,241)	\$ (14,921,582)
Financial assets not available to be used within one year	<u>\$ (16,025,241)</u>	<u>\$ (14,921,582)</u>
Financial assets available to meet general expenditures within one year	<u>\$ 152,110,346</u>	<u>\$ 139,632,180</u>

As part of the Legion's liquidity management, the Legion invests its financial assets to be available as its general expenditures, liabilities, and other obligations come due.

**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.

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	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
<b>ASSETS</b>						
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 913,660	\$ 308,576	\$ 895,686	\$ 239,467	\$ -	\$ 2,357,289
Accounts receivable	4,581,279	432,872	50,000	-	(605,892)	4,458,259
Interest receivable	827,220	47,119	91,208	64,293	-	1,029,840
Prepaid expenses and deposits	3,566,909	-	-	-	-	3,566,909
Deferred membership expense	3,675,147	-	-	-	-	3,675,147
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventory	3,847,011	-	-	-	-	3,847,011
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	42,097	-	-	-	-	42,097
	<u>19,453,223</u>	<u>788,567</u>	<u>1,036,894</u>	<u>303,760</u>	<u>(2,605,892)</u>	<u>18,976,552</u>
<b>Investments</b>						
General	32,042,798	-	-	-	-	32,042,798
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	39,527,477	-	-	-	-	39,527,477
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	26,327,303	-	-	-	-	26,327,303
Samsung scholarship fund	7,894,494	-	-	-	-	7,894,494
Building funds	8,004,132	-	-	-	-	8,004,132
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	16,701,855	-	-	-	-	16,701,855
Special account – Endowment Fund	-	-	2,181,347	-	-	2,181,347
General account – Endowment Fund	-	-	9,997,425	-	-	9,997,425
National Emergency Fund	-	-	-	7,374,556	-	7,374,556
American Legion Charities	-	5,627,624	-	-	-	5,627,624
Other	4,611,388	-	-	-	-	4,611,388
	<u>135,109,247</u>	<u>5,627,624</u>	<u>12,178,772</u>	<u>7,374,556</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>160,290,199</u>
Property, plant and equipment, net	4,599,235	-	-	-	-	4,599,235
	<u>\$ 159,161,705</u>	<u>\$ 6,416,191</u>	<u>\$ 13,215,666</u>	<u>\$ 7,678,316</u>	<u>\$ (2,605,892)</u>	<u>\$ 183,865,986</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>						
Accounts payable	\$ 1,706,286	\$ 870	\$ 68,347	\$ 154,674	\$ (605,892)	\$ 1,324,285
Scholarships payable	717,297	-	-	-	-	717,297
Due to American Legion National Headquarters	-	-	2,000,000	-	(2,000,000)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	487,635	-	-	-	-	487,635
Deferred income	1,848,229	-	-	-	-	1,848,229
Deferred dues income	23,838,285	-	-	-	-	23,838,285
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	3,282,655	-	-	-	-	3,282,655
Accrued vacation benefits	829,099	-	-	-	-	829,099
Accrued pension expense	24,539,006	-	-	-	-	24,539,006
Other liabilities	1,981,378	-	-	9,640	-	1,991,018
Notes payable	3,824,000	-	-	-	-	3,824,000
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Membership	24,482,851	-	-	-	-	24,482,851
Life memberships due to state and local posts	27,853,299	-	-	-	-	27,853,299
	<u>115,390,020</u>	<u>870</u>	<u>2,068,347</u>	<u>164,314</u>	<u>(2,605,892)</u>	<u>115,017,659</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>						
Without donor restriction	16,956,722	2,309,382	122,079	-	-	19,388,183
With donor restriction	26,814,963	4,105,939	11,025,240	7,514,002	-	49,460,144
	<u>43,771,685</u>	<u>6,415,321</u>	<u>11,147,319</u>	<u>7,514,002</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>68,848,327</u>
	<u>\$ 159,161,705</u>	<u>\$ 6,416,191</u>	<u>\$ 13,215,666</u>	<u>\$ 7,678,316</u>	<u>\$ (2,605,892)</u>	<u>\$ 183,865,986</u>

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	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National, Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
<b>ASSETS</b>						
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,051,217	\$ 303,982	\$ 606,454	\$ 350,966	\$ -	\$ 2,312,619
Accounts receivable	6,959,578	107,291	124,724	5,665	(73,681)	7,123,577
Interest receivable	818,879	43,316	86,851	59,719	-	1,008,765
Prepaid expenses and deposits	2,403,235	-	-	-	-	2,403,235
Deferred membership expense	4,183,155	-	-	-	-	4,183,155
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventory	3,508,922	-	-	-	-	3,508,922
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	37,307	-	-	-	-	37,307
Beneficial interest in trust	-	-	36,264	-	-	36,264
	<u>20,962,293</u>	<u>454,589</u>	<u>854,293</u>	<u>416,350</u>	<u>(2,073,681)</u>	<u>20,613,844</u>
Investments						
General	21,551,826	-	-	-	-	21,551,826
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	37,361,797	-	-	-	-	37,361,797
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	26,539,113	-	-	-	-	26,539,113
Samsung scholarship fund	7,869,826	-	-	-	-	7,869,826
Building funds	7,254,020	-	-	-	-	7,254,020
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	16,341,850	-	-	-	-	16,341,850
Special account – Endowment Fund	-	-	2,066,042	-	-	2,066,042
General account – Endowment Fund	-	-	9,094,112	-	-	9,094,112
National Emergency Fund	-	-	-	6,658,915	-	6,658,915
American Legion Charities	-	5,255,325	-	-	-	5,255,325
Other	4,315,975	-	-	-	-	4,315,975
	<u>121,034,407</u>	<u>5,255,325</u>	<u>11,160,154</u>	<u>6,658,915</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>144,108,801</u>
Property, plant and equipment, net	4,062,080	-	-	-	-	4,062,080
	<u>\$ 146,058,780</u>	<u>\$ 5,709,914</u>	<u>\$ 12,014,447</u>	<u>\$ 7,075,265</u>	<u>\$ (2,073,681)</u>	<u>\$ 168,784,725</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>						
Accounts payable	\$ 4,761,185	\$ 90,471	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (73,681)	\$ 4,777,975
Scholarships payable	1,589,399	-	-	-	-	1,589,399
Due to American Legion National Headquarters	-	-	2,000,000	-	(2,000,000)	-
Deposits on emblems merchandise sales	586,078	-	-	-	-	586,078
Deferred income	1,439,307	-	-	-	-	1,439,307
Deferred dues income	24,071,863	-	-	-	-	24,071,863
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	3,428,607	-	-	-	-	3,428,607
Accrued vacation benefits	802,152	-	-	-	-	802,152
Accrued pension expense	20,709,800	-	-	-	-	20,709,800
Other liabilities	1,323,678	-	-	-	-	1,323,678
Notes payable	215,148	-	-	-	-	215,148
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Membership	23,908,398	-	-	-	-	23,908,398
Life memberships due to state and local posts	26,766,460	-	-	-	-	26,766,460
	<u>109,602,075</u>	<u>90,471</u>	<u>2,000,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(2,073,681)</u>	<u>109,618,865</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>						
Without donor restriction	9,116,245	1,813,581	56,600	-	-	10,986,426
With donor restriction	27,340,460	3,805,862	9,957,847	7,075,265	-	48,179,434
Total net assets	<u>36,456,705</u>	<u>5,619,443</u>	<u>10,014,447</u>	<u>7,075,265</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>59,165,860</u>
	<u>\$ 146,058,780</u>	<u>\$ 5,709,914</u>	<u>\$ 12,014,447</u>	<u>\$ 7,075,265</u>	<u>\$ (2,073,681)</u>	<u>\$ 168,784,725</u>

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**  
**THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**  
**CONSOLIDATING STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**  
Year ended December 31, 2020

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
<b>Revenue, gains and other support</b>						
National member dues	\$ 28,411,650	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-	\$ 28,411,650
Direct membership solicitation	5,985,220	-	-	-	-	5,985,220
Member service fees						
Income	389,317	-	-	-	-	389,317
Affinity income	4,000,000	-	-	-	-	4,000,000
Sales of emblem items	9,372,107	-	-	-	-	9,372,107
Advertising	6,913,995	-	-	-	-	6,913,995
Contributions	16,701,584	1,070,607	709,564	236,206	(15,000)	18,702,961
Label and printing fees	292,176	-	-	-	-	292,176
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,343,987	132,867	263,458	199,646	7,680	2,947,638
Net realized losses – investments	113,220	(2,138)	(9,951)	(846)	-	100,285
American Legion Endowment Fund income	242,649	-	-	-	(242,649)	-
Other	2,366,883	-	-	-	(7,680)	2,359,203
	<u>77,132,788</u>	<u>1,201,336</u>	<u>963,071</u>	<u>435,006</u>	<u>(257,649)</u>	<u>79,474,552</u>
<b>Expenses</b>						
Salaries	15,142,083	-	-	-	-	15,142,083
Employee benefits	5,792,389	-	-	-	-	5,792,389
Cost of sales – Legion	5,210,529	-	-	-	-	5,210,529
Department and magazine costs	1,121,962	-	-	-	-	1,121,962
Direct publications	9,601,714	-	-	-	-	9,601,714
Executive, staff and program travel	518,865	-	-	-	-	518,865
Commission and committee	425,732	-	-	-	-	425,732
Printing and postage	14,827,089	-	-	-	-	14,827,089
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,129,407	492,667	242,648	311,923	(257,649)	1,918,996
Office and other operating	11,830,014	20,606	10,858	4,332	-	11,865,810
Occupancy and usage	2,209,718	-	-	-	-	2,209,718
Special projects and programs	2,710,910	137,559	-	-	-	2,848,469
	<u>70,520,412</u>	<u>650,832</u>	<u>253,506</u>	<u>316,255</u>	<u>(257,649)</u>	<u>71,483,356</u>
Change in net assets from operations	6,612,376	550,504	709,565	118,751	-	7,991,196
Net unrealized gains – investments	3,160,430	245,374	423,307	319,966	-	4,149,097
Net change in PUFLL	959,270	-	-	-	-	959,270
Amortization of pension loss	(2,224,672)	-	-	-	-	(2,224,672)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	(1,192,424)	-	-	-	-	(1,192,424)
<b>Change in net assets</b>	7,314,980	795,878	1,132,872	438,737	-	9,682,467
Net assets, beginning of year	36,456,705	5,619,443	10,014,447	7,075,265	-	59,165,860
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 43,771,685</u>	<u>\$ 6,415,321</u>	<u>\$ 11,147,319</u>	<u>\$ 7,514,002</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 68,848,327</u>

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**  
**THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**  
**CONSOLIDATING STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**  
Year ended December 31, 2019

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Charities	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Eliminations	Total
<b>Revenue, gains and other support</b>						
National member dues	\$ 29,293,372	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 29,293,372
Direct membership solicitation	5,887,420	-	-	-	-	5,887,420
Member service fees income	449,344	-	-	-	-	449,344
Affinity income	4,000,000	-	-	-	-	4,000,000
Sales of emblem items	14,283,830	-	-	-	-	14,283,830
Advertising	8,032,884	-	-	-	-	8,032,884
Contributions	16,193,544	1,157,564	1,147,682	492,945	(379,855)	18,611,880
Label and printing fees	347,473	-	-	-	-	347,473
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,657,609	107,870	241,141	184,455	25,710	3,216,785
Net realized losses – investments	(211,077)	(7,579)	(1,065)	(53,320)	-	(273,041)
American Legion Endowment Fund income	211,372	-	-	-	(211,372)	-
Other	4,879,574	-	-	-	(25,710)	4,853,864
	<u>86,025,345</u>	<u>1,257,855</u>	<u>1,387,758</u>	<u>624,080</u>	<u>(591,227)</u>	<u>88,703,811</u>
<b>Expenses</b>						
Salaries	14,587,909	-	-	-	-	14,587,909
Employee benefits	6,662,698	-	-	-	-	6,662,698
Cost of sales – Legion	7,834,317	-	-	-	-	7,834,317
Department and magazine costs	1,381,692	-	-	-	-	1,381,692
Direct publications	10,004,545	-	-	-	-	10,004,545
Executive, staff and program travel	3,666,761	-	5,117	-	-	3,671,878
Commission and committee	1,772,354	-	-	-	-	1,772,354
Printing and postage	14,480,642	-	-	-	-	14,480,642
Scholarships, grants and awards	2,904,280	711,033	211,372	88,445	(591,227)	3,323,903
Office and other operating	14,441,664	30,852	22,184	663	-	14,495,363
Occupancy and usage	2,197,550	-	-	-	-	2,197,550
Special projects and programs	3,651,984	157,460	-	-	-	3,809,444
	<u>83,586,396</u>	<u>899,345</u>	<u>238,673</u>	<u>89,108</u>	<u>(591,227)</u>	<u>84,222,295</u>
Change in net assets from operations	2,438,949	358,510	1,149,085	534,972	-	4,481,516
Net unrealized gains – investments	3,855,405	252,420	265,173	393,646	-	4,766,644
Net change in PUFL	497,406	-	-	-	-	497,406
Amortization of pension loss	(1,996,688)	-	-	-	-	(1,996,688)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	(36,751)	-	-	-	-	(36,751)
<b>Change in net assets</b>	4,758,321	610,930	1,414,258	928,618	-	7,712,127
Net assets, beginning of year	31,698,384	5,008,513	8,600,189	6,146,647	-	51,453,733
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 36,456,705</u>	<u>\$ 5,619,443</u>	<u>\$ 10,014,447</u>	<u>\$ 7,075,265</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 59,165,860</u>